



Testimony by
Marcia Leclerc, Mayor, East Hartford, and
Vice Chair, Capitol Region Council of Governments

Before the Planning and Development Committee
March 4, 2016

**SUPPORT SB-19:
AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE TRANSIT CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT
ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY**

Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is Marcia Leclerc and I serve as Mayor of East Hartford and Vice Chair of the Capitol Region Council of Governments. I come before you today in support of **SB-19: An Act Establishing the Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority**.

Today I am bringing support for SB 19 from Mayor Erin Stewart, New Britain, Mayor Scott Kaupin, Enfield, Chip Beckett, Chair of Glastonbury Town Council and Chair of the Capitol Region Council of Governments. Our towns and cities want the option for accelerating development around rapid transit and rail stations in our communities that is described in this bill.

Let me provide testimony in two areas: benefits of the bill as written and responses to possible concerns relating to the bill.

Benefits of the Bill

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) strongly believes that there is a need for the activities outlined in SB-19 to facilitate the development around transit stations in the state. In fact, some five years ago CRCOG proposed the creation of such an authority to facilitate the development of station areas into transit oriented development.

While many of the communities in the CT**fastrak** and CT**rail**-Hartford line have been actively involved in planning for transit oriented development, only a few possess the specific in-house expertise and sufficient staff to bring to fruition complex TOD projects. That is where a Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority can help. Benefits include:

- The TCDA will serve as a completely voluntary tool for municipalities to encourage TOD around rail and bus-rapid transit stations. Working only in municipalities that ask for assistance, the TCDA will aid municipalities to bring in and execute projects of varying complexity in order to capitalize on investment and stimulate tourism, art, culture, history, education and entertainment.
- The TCDA will complement and can potentially help municipalities make use of Tax Increment Financing, a new tool enabled by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2015, which can help finance TOD and other town redevelopment initiatives.
- The TCDA can assist municipalities with the various components of TOD including master planning, land assembly, environmental remediation, and real estate development. Skills applied or gained through one development can be applied in multiple communities, removing the need to have all skills present in all communities. The TCDA can also bring corridor-level market knowledge to municipal projects.

TOD developments assisted by the TCDA will also bring broader benefits to the regions and state.

- Mixed use developments in station areas can help meet increased demands for housing, retail and commercial space in locations already possessing the infrastructure to support such development.
- Housing will likely be a part of many TOD developments. Housing near transit is good for the residents, the town and the state's economy. Reconnecting America reports typical households spend 32% of their income on housing and 19% on transportation. But if they live within ½ mile of regular, dependable transit, their average transportation expense falls to 9%. The extra 10 percentage points can be spent with local merchants, used to maintain homes or otherwise fuel the economy.
- Those who live within ½ mile of transit use it. Resulting higher ridership will save the legislature from having to subsidize transit fare box revenue, saving valuable state funds for other purposes.

Possible Concerns Addressed by SB-19

- Concern: There is no demand for the creation of the TCDA. This testimony demonstrates the strong demand for creation of such an authority in the Capitol Region. The Capitol Region hosts 18 rapid transit and rail station areas for development: 11 CT**fastrak** stations and 7 rail stations on the Hartford line. Three of the stations will have both rapid transit and rail stations: Union Station Hartford, Flatbush Hartford/West Hartford, and Newington Junction. Starting in the summer of 2016, additional communities such as East Hartford will begin to be served by CT**fastrak**-East.
- Concern: There is no rationale for having a quasi-public agency in this role. In fact, a quasi-public agency is well-suited to pull together state and municipal agencies that are all likely to be involved in creating TOD. The Capitol Region has observed how valuable and effective the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) has been in coordinating major development in its area of operation, to the benefit of the region, member communities, and the state.
- Concern: There is no way to pay the TCDA staff. The legislation is written so that as it gets up and running, TCDA will be assisted by the staff at the Capital Region Development Authority. There is \$250,000 in the proposed budget for new staff at TCDA through the Special Transportation Fund (STF). Ultimately, TCDA will be self-supported by the revenue it generates and will have its own dedicated staff.
- Concern: The TCDA will push developments through against local will. The TCDA will not act without a memorandum of agreement signed by the municipal CEO and approved by its legislative body. The agreement will spell out what the Authority will do, mutual rights and responsibilities, the area to be included for development, etc. Projects coordinated by the TCDA must abide by municipal zoning, subdivision, or wetland regulations, municipal plans of conservation and development, or any municipal ordinance for development on municipal or private property.

In closing, the Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority is needed and wanted by many communities in the Capitol Region who are seeing to catalyze transit-oriented development in bus rapid transit and rail station areas. We urge favorable consideration of SB-19.

Respectfully submitted,



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