



Start with Planning Policy Paper:
Planning for Mobility

March, 2018

Abstract

Connecticut is at a crossroads in mobility planning. We are desperately trying to maintain investments in infrastructure made over the past fifty years that are now in need of repair, replacement, or completely new solutions. Coupled with this need to maintain and repair is a need to invest in modes beyond the traditional roadway infrastructure.

Transit, both rail and bus, is the key to Connecticut's future. Bicycle and pedestrian amenities are likewise essential for a high quality of life that promotes the type of development sought by millennials and needed by seniors. Additionally, the health and environmental benefits of a national-class multimodal system will result in Connecticut being a more desirable state for business. We must, therefore, develop an integrated, comprehensive transportation system that knits together towns and cities, urban and rural areas, supports economic vitality, and is respectful of ecosystems, cultures, and communities. This future will require thoughtful and strategic planning, heavily reliant on embracing new technologies while maximizing existing infrastructure investments.

Some key insights moving forward include:

- There is an expectation, particularly among millennials, for a seamless system of connected mobility options. Addressing the increased desire for non-reliance on cars in urban areas is an immediate challenge as Connecticut catches up to emerging technologies and the sharing economy.
- Public bus and rail timetables are based on traditional commuting patterns, and current headways in excess of thirty minutes⁶ are a challenge for workers with more flexible and varied working schedules. The disconnect in schedules and fares from current needs, coupled with low-density development, is a financial and operational burden for transit users, operators, and private employers.
- Potential changes in service, such as the NEC Future plan, Amtrak high-speed rail, Metro-North access to Penn Station, and commuter rail to Rhode Island and Massachusetts are potentially game-changing system improvements worthy of intense focus and early planning.



CTfastrak demonstrates transit provides a return on investment.

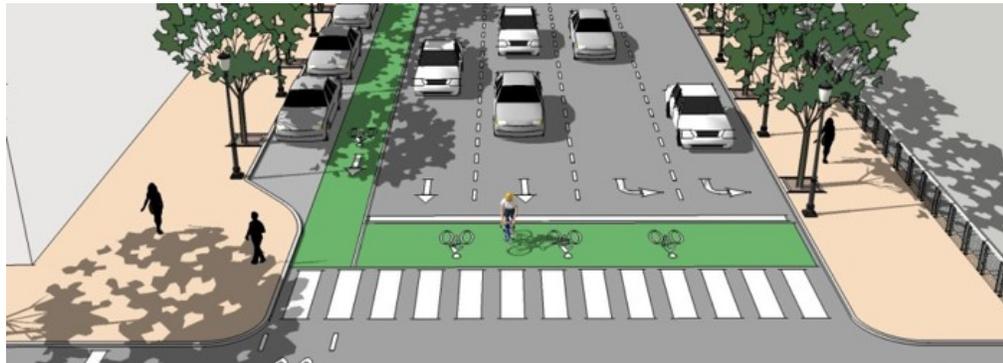
Planners also must be at the forefront of change to encourage livability through intermodal system planning, exponential expansion of bicycle infrastructure, and overall travel safety. In doing so, we can ensure that our transportation system will be accessible to all users in a less carbon-dependent and more user-responsive manner.

Mobility Improvement Opportunities

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) faces an uncertain future due to both funding constraints and overall changing characteristics of transportation demand, technological advances, and shifting demographics. In 2015, CTDOT published Let's Go CT¹ an ambitious 30-year plan to fund transportation improvements across all modes in Connecticut. The plan states, *"The key to prosperity, security, and the highest possible quality of life for Connecticut and all those who visit us and do business with us every day is a best-in-class transportation infrastructure that is efficient, multimodal, resilient, and long-lasting—a transportation system that will deliver a solid return on investment"*.

This big-picture view of transportation is particularly important at this critical juncture in the history of the state's modern transportation system. Fifty to sixty years after much of it was first constructed, and after periods of underinvestment, Connecticut's transportation infrastructure needs significant improvements, and in some cases, reconstruction or replacement, to bring the system to a state of good repair, mitigate congestion, and take advantage of the latest technologies for design, traffic management and infrastructure

management. This is true for all aspects of the state’s transportation infrastructure: highway systems, rail and freight, bicycle/pedestrian, air, maritime, and public bus systems.¹



Planning for all modes.

Linking it all Together

Coordinated efforts across all state agencies, regional planning organizations, municipalities, non-profits, and the private sector will be necessary to reap the benefits of implementing transportation projects. Without a concerted effort to maximize the return on the investment, Connecticut will be left behind other states that have been leveraging investment opportunities. This leveraging can take the form of incentivizing development that connects to transportation improvements and utilizes existing transportation infrastructure. Examples may include furthering the implementation of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) zones/districts with further support encouraged by state agencies to develop near transit investments. The recent significant investment in Transit Oriented Development (TOD) grants to municipalities should be continued to help plan and implement development around the state’s transit investments such as New Haven-Hartford- Springfield Commuter Rail, CTfastrak, and Metro-North / Shoreline East Improvements. Additionally, state grants and incentives to businesses should focus both on job creation and encouraging the smart location of the created jobs.

From the perspective of urban revitalization, it is important to remember that housing and job locations are the main drivers of travel demand. The rejuvenation of urban housing stock and co-location of housing, transit, and jobs often leads to a reduction in travel demand. Reinvestment in aging housing infrastructure in urban areas will, therefore, ease the cost burden that comes with the expansion of the transportation system to areas outside the urban core.

Moving to a Sustainable Funding Model

Beyond the challenge of identifying infrastructure projects and developing incentives and plans, Connecticut is now facing the harsh reality that there is not enough money to pay

for projects that establish a state of good repair for existing infrastructure and meet future demands and trends. The state’s Special Transportation Fund is projected be in deficit beginning in the fiscal year 2019, with a \$38.1 million shortfall. It is expected to grow to \$216.1 million by the fiscal year 2022, for a cumulative total of \$388.1 million over the next five years. This shortfall prevents projects from moving forward and limits the ability of the Special Transportation Fund to bond money to implement priority projects.

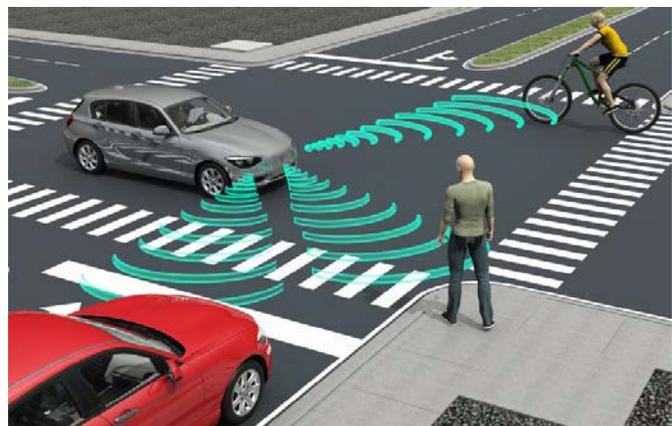
CCAPA identifies transportation funding as a primary challenge to moving our state forward. Without new, innovative funding streams, Connecticut will fall back relative to other states that have been making significant investments in transportation. Even in the Northeast, other states have made critical decisions and established sustainable funding mechanisms such as:

- Tolls,
- “Lock-boxes” for transportation funds,
- Congestion pricing,
- Vehicle miles traveled fees,
- Public-private partnerships (P3s),
- Design/build projects, and
- Innovative uses of existing state right of ways, such as solar and air-rights development.

The Connecticut DOT has readied this menu of options for final decisions and even initiated important pilot projects in the P3 and design/build space. If a final decision is not made in the very near term, Connecticut will not only fall behind in its state-of-good-repair program, but will also miss the window for emerging and transformational trends in mobility.

Beyond the Known

Looking beyond our current financial situation and the funding of identified transportation projects across all modes, the next challenge is the unknown of transportation’s future. Connecticut must begin to address both the here and now, and the future. This future will include autonomous vehicles, a significant reduction in



vehicular fuel use and overall vehicular usage, increased freight demand on our interstate system, and a new generation of trains and mass transit such as hyperloop and other high-



speed connections. The conversations and planning to address this future have started, but at a low level relative to the global pace of change. In “the land of steady habits”, this future will be here before we know it. Autonomous vehicles are soon to arrive and are already being embraced by other states for the individual, mass transit, and freight movement. Connecticut should be looking to embrace these changes, through streamlining regulatory hurdles for autonomous vehicles including freight and transit, and supporting technology development for this future.

Summary

Connecticut’s transportation present and future are at a crossroads. Funding is limited, and there are enormous challenges to maintaining current infrastructure and planning for the future of mobility. We need to address the funding dilemma while realizing the nature of these issues goes far beyond funding. Development policies must support our transportation investment. State, regional, and municipal leaders must work together to embrace a new world of technologies and support the collaboration and interconnectedness of mobility options. Our neighboring states are ahead of us in embracing the future, and we will continue to be left behind if we do not make advances now. CCAPA members have assisted in the development of sound planning for mobility improvements across all modes. With the urgent need at hand, planners are ready to lead the discussion and facilitate efforts on program funding, regulatory alignment, and the administrative capacity necessary to carry out specific projects, particularly for public infrastructure.

ABOUT CCAPA AND THE “START WITH PLANNING” INITIATIVE

CCAPA members are deeply passionate about Connecticut, and we play a key role in the development, transportation environmental protection of our common home. At this critical moment in the State’s history, CCAPA launched the Start with Planning initiative because we understand the dimensions of Connecticut’s challenges and we embrace a way forward built on core values, a pace of work and the “Team Connecticut” approach. With special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions, social equity and the long-range consequences of our current actions, CCAPA members are well-positioned to facilitate these important local and statewide conversations. For more information on this topic, email us at info@ccapa.org

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