

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
*A 21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM: REDUCING GRIDLOCK, TACKLING CLIMATE
CHANGE, AND GROWING CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMY*
NEW HAVEN
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2009

Good morning. I am thrilled to be in New Haven to talk with so many Connecticut transportation leaders about how we can improve Americans' productivity and quality of life by reforming the way the Federal government approaches transportation policy and bringing new federal transportation resources to the state. And I want to thank Mayor DeStefano for hosting today's hearing.

It's no coincidence that we are holding a transit hearing in New Haven – we are at the heart of Connecticut's transportation system. New Haven is Connecticut's "hub city" It is here where two major interstate highways—I-95 and I-91—converge. Where Metro-North and Shore Line East commuter rails [which I rode here today] start and end and Amtrak trains can take you to Vermont or throughout the Northeast Corridor. And all of this comes in addition to the state's busiest seaport—the Port of New Haven—Tweed-New Haven Airport, Greater New Haven Transit and future plans for a streetcar.

I should also add that this is also the home to the world's finest pizza – something our Secretary of Housing and Urban Development learned for himself when he toured our state with me earlier this week.

The people of New Haven, as in cities and communities across the nation, understand the problems we are facing today: infrastructure is aging, congestion is worsening, and the threat of climate change is growing.

When the Interstate Highway System was created in 1956, its construction over the next half century quite literally paved the way for decades of growth and prosperity – helping to cement our nation's place as a global economic powerhouse and transforming our economy.

However, today, rather than being a catalyst for economic growth, global competitiveness and a better quality of life, our transportation system has become part of the problem.

With a deep recession and another 20,000 layoffs each and every day, the people of this state and those across the country are banking on real change.

Fortunately, we have an opportunity this year – to lay the groundwork for an integrated, 21st century transportation system that meets these challenges, as this Committee helps write the next surface transportation bill.

As chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal transit and housing programs, I intend for this committee to lead the discussion about how we can create a transportation system that doesn't add to our problems – but helps us solve them.

If anyone can testify to the tolls traffic congestion takes on productivity and quality of life, it is the people of this state. Connecticut residents spend too many hours sitting in traffic.

Those hours aren't spent home with family – they aren't spent at work. They're completely wasted.

Every year, the current federal transportation bill—known as SAFETEA-LU—delivers more than \$600 million in federal funding to Connecticut. As critical as that funding is, the people of Connecticut and the country have a right to expect better results from their hard-earned tax dollars.

If we want to get our economy moving, we need to make the kind of investments that get us moving – and no investment will be more important than those in public transportation.

Already, transit ridership nationally is at record levels. Last year, Americans took 10.7 billion trips on our nation’s buses and rail lines. Here at home, the New Haven Line had the largest number of customers in Metro-North operation history in 2008 – 38 million riders, making it one of the busiest rail lines in the country.

Public transit saves over 4 billion gallons of gasoline annually and reduces carbon emissions by some 37 million metric tons a year – that’s equivalent to the electricity used by

almost 5 million households. It reduces congestion on our roads, which costs us five times as much wasted fuel and time as it did 25 years ago.

Despite the obvious benefits, too often over the past half century, transit has taken a back seat to funding for our roads and highways. For too long, our nation's investments in highway capacity were not paired with similar investments in mass transit. That needs to change.

Public transit is the glue that holds our transportation system together. As Connecticut is showing, it can be the building block of economic growth for our region.

As members of the Committee know, I've been pushing for the development of a new commuter service along 62 miles of existing rail between New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield, Massachusetts. As proposed, service along the "Tri-City Corridor" would have stops in eight smaller cities and towns, creating "transit villages" and revitalizing local economies, integrating local transit systems with the commuter rail line and

Amtrak's intercity service. From the seaport of New Haven to the airport in Windsor Locks, we could become a truly transit-oriented state.

I have spoken to both Commissioner Marie and Transportation Secretary LaHood about the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield line. My staff has been working closely with ConnDOT, Amtrak, and U.S. DOT to make sure each of these key players is on the same page and working closely to create commuter rail service and enhanced intercity service to New York and Boston along this corridor. I know that this is also a priority for Commissioner Marie and I look forward to working closely with him on this issue and others.

For many communities, a critical part of the transportation puzzle is how to creatively put historic structures to use, redevelop land and spur economic development. We are seeing these types of sustainable developments pop up throughout Connecticut.

In Hartford, plans to redevelop the historic Colt factory for residential and commercial use are moving forward. The Harbor Point project in Stamford's South End is a model for transit-oriented development.

Another is in the town of Redding, where the innovative Georgetown Redevelopment Project is currently in the pipeline to create a transit-oriented neighborhood development. The key is an intermodal transit facility connected to the Danbury Branch of the New Haven Line within walking distance of 400 residential units and 330,000 square feet of commercial space for restaurants, banks and the retail businesses that are staples of any vibrant community. In all, the project is expected to employ 800 construction workers and create 1,500 permanent jobs.

Thankfully, we have a strong partner in the Obama Administration. Secretary LaHood is talking about livable communities, and he, HUD Secretary Donovan and myself are all closely in sync on these issues. We are closely coordinating with HUD and U.S. DOT on national policy, and I never hesitate to remind them of our needs here in Connecticut. I am confident

that our close working relationship on these issues will pay off for the nation, and especially for the people of Connecticut.

By reforming transportation policy to create national goals and measure performance...by insisting on more transparency and accountability...by better coordinating transportation, housing, land use, energy, and environmental policies...and by investing in public transportation, I believe we can transform our economy. Instead of being one part of the problem, our transportation system can and must be a central part of the solution.

The moment has arrived to bring transportation policy into the 21st century, getting our economy moving again and addressing the challenges we will face in the decades to come.

Seizing that moment starts today. It starts here in New Haven, Connecticut. I welcome all of you, and thank you for being here to share your vision with the Committee.