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SPENDING THE STIMULUS

How Connecticut Can Put Thousands Back to Work
by Jump-starting a 21st Century Transportation System



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As families all over America struggle to make ends meet, officials are under pressure to make the best use of the federal stimulus money soon to pour into state capitals. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) is a critical opportunity for state and local officials to help those families by building a stronger economy now and jump-starting the completion of a 21st century transportation system. The full copy of the report may be found [here](#).

ARRA offers a menu of economically beneficial transportation projects

Connecticut will receive \$440 million for surface transportation through ARRA. The citizens of Connecticut want to use this money to stimulate the economy and to advance long-term goals. This summary provides a 10-item menu for how Connecticut can use ARRA stimulus dollars to make the transportation investments that aggressively address the state's pressing needs. It offers previously unavailable information for citizens and reporters to use in asking whether state officials are choosing the best available ways to invest Connecticut's transportation stimulus money.

Specifically, the summary is a guide to 10 types of projects that states and cities can fund right now to:

- Create jobs that advance a quick and lasting economic recovery, and
- Reduce household transportation costs, traffic congestion, oil dependency, greenhouse emissions, and vulnerability to gas prices.

This summary highlights the tremendous opportunity Connecticut has to fund projects that repair crumbling roadways and bridges, provide low cost transportation choices, retrofit streets for safe walking and biking, advance energy independence, and generally put thousands of Americans to work during today's crisis and get started on creating a 21st century transportation system.

ARRA transportation funding can be spent on just about any surface transportation project—not just highways

Contrary to widespread misconceptions, no ARRA funding is specifically designated for new highway construction.

Funding under the largest ARRA transportation spending category, the "Surface Transportation Program" (STP), often misnamed the "highway" program, can be used in the many ways as indicated in this report. By sending the bulk of transportation stimulus spending through STP, the ARRA gives

Connecticut many job-creating investment options other than building new highways. STP funding can also be used for making long-overdue repairs to roads and unsafe bridges, upgrading and expanding public transit, improving intercity rail, making streets safer, and more.

Smart Growth America, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign and ConnPIRG issued this summary in part because:

- Taxpayers and city and state leaders need to know what the stimulus money is actually eligible to be spent on.
- While early transportation spending lists from state DOTs around the country show plans for heavy spending on new highways, there are many options available to states that create more jobs, faster, than these choices.
- At a time when driving is falling, transit ridership is surging, and repair backlogs are large, heavy investment in new highways is unlikely to be the best investment in most places.

The street system is not complete everywhere, and new highways may be good investments in places. But a state decision-making process that excludes everything but highways by misunderstanding or mischaracterizing the law, and/or that leans on new highways before fixing the highways it is already responsible for, almost certainly guarantees that money will be wasted and community needs unmet.

The public agrees: According to [a poll](#) released in January by the National Association of Realtors, an overwhelming 80 percent of Americans believe it is more important that the stimulus funding include efforts to *repair* existing highways and public transit rather than to *build new* highways. The poll clearly shows that the vast majority of Americans believe restoring existing roads and bridges and expanding transportation options should take precedence over building new roads.

ARRA can help Connecticut create jobs faster through repair

For decades, state officials have neglected the backlog of highway and bridge repairs. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 33% of the bridges in Connecticut are “structurally deficient” and over 75% of the state’s roadway miles are in “less than good condition”. Under these circumstances, there’s no excuse for not giving top stimulus-spending priority to dramatically reducing this dangerous repair backlog. It’s simply not possible to build a 21st century transportation system on the foundation of a crumbling mid-20th century infrastructure.

A fix-it-first approach is also the best job-creation policy. A 2009 University of Massachusetts economic study demonstrates that road and bridge repairs creates 16% more jobs per dollar than new highways projects. And in general, most kinds of repair projects are exempt from or otherwise no not need to go through the same reviews process that new construction projects do. Repair projects are, generally, shovel-ready.

ARRA can help Connecticut create more jobs by responding to demand for public transit

At the same time, Connecticut also needs to respond more aggressively to record-breaking transit ridership on Metro-North and Shoreline East. ARRA funds present a special opportunity for jumpstarting public transportation because such projects are often held back by state and federal

rules that require ambitious levels of state matching funds. ARRA funds require no state or local match. The same 2009 University of Massachusetts economic study demonstrates that transit projects create 31% more jobs per dollar than new highway projects.

Five of the ten projects in this summary illustrate ARRA-eligible ways to upgrade and expand the state's public transit systems. As many as one out of every five of our transit vehicles are now out of service. Expanded and upgraded transit systems and bicycle and pedestrian routes would allow hundreds of thousands more people to get to work in the morning—and would also bring them home safely in time for dinner. The University of Massachusetts study showed that public transit expansion also creates more jobs than new highway construction.

Conclusion

This summary shows how Connecticut can take advantage of the special opportunity offered by ARRA funding not only to upgrade existing roads and bridges to 21st century status, but also to invest in public transit expansion, reduce congestion, and link transportation and community planning. With these projects in mind, Connecticut can seize this opportunity to spend tax dollars on the projects that will address real-time problems of greatest concern to the taxpayers.

A January 2009 national opinion survey by the National Association of Realtors found that “80 percent believe it's more important that a stimulus plan include efforts to repair existing highways and build public transit rather than build new highways.”

(www.realtor.org/press_room/news_releases/2009/01/smarter_transportation)

The ARRA funding can go a long way toward enabling Connecticut to move beyond its outdated, mid-20th century transportation system, but only if wise spending decisions are made by state and local officials in the coming weeks and months. It's now up to them to make the transportation investments needed to complete a 21st century system. They can jump-start that process by spending the ARRA transportation funding on the twenty types of projects documented in *Spending the Stimulus*.

Connecticut Project Examples:

The following 10 projects exemplify how Connecticut can spend and invest ARRA money wisely, in fix-it-first, transit and bike and pedestrian projects

Transit Projects:

1. Statewide—System wide bus replacement: \$40,000,000
 - Replacing or purchasing buses for CT Transit would be a good way to bolster the transit system in Connecticut
2. West Haven—West Haven Railroad Station: \$113,900,000
 - Dedicating funds to the West Haven Railroad Station construction would create jobs, promote rail use, ease road congestion and lift the burden off of neighboring stations already facing parking problems.
3. Hartford—Union Station improvements: \$1,200,000
 - These improvements include elevator and hydraulic system replacement to promote American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, replacing the bus berthing area, parking lot improvements for the Spruce Street surface parking lot, replacement of the parking revenue management system at the Spruce Street parking lot and lighting improvements around Union Station.
4. Bridgeport—Weather protection upgrades on main terminal platform and bus shelter construction: \$5,300,000
 - Construction of additional weather protection upgrades Bridgeport's main terminal platform and the construction of 50 new bus shelters and replacement of 50 existing shelters will help make transit ridership more attractive.
5. Meriden—Downtown Center—Flood Control and Transit Oriented Development: \$15,000,000
 - These improvements will prepare Meriden to take advantage of the proposed New Haven-Springfield commuter rail line.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects:

1. Hartford—Citywide Sidewalk Replacement: \$5,000,000
 - Maintaining the existing network will promote investment in Hartford and encourage people to walk as a form of transportation
2. Windsor—Safe Routes to School projects, bike paths and sidewalk replacement: \$4,439,000
 - Investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure are good for the environment, economy and quality of life.

'Fix-it-First' Maintenance and Repair Projects:

1. Statewide—Line striping and pavement markings: \$2,800,000
 - Clearly delineating and repairing existing roadways will make for smoother and safer trips
2. Statewide—Overlay preventative maintenance: \$11,000,000
 - Connecticut's roads are in dire need of repair and maintenance
3. Wolcott—Town-wide paving: \$2,840,000
 - Connecticut's roads are in need of maintenance and repair

Summary of Links and Resources

Fix It First

- Outlining fix it first needs in your state: www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/fixitfirst/map.asp
- Condition of roads and bridges: www.tripnet.org
- American Public Works Association: www.apwa.net
- Tri-State Transportation Campaign: www.tstc.org/press/2007/CTspending_2007.pdf

Supporting Human-Powered Options

- Completing the Streets: www.completestreets.org
- National Center for Safe Routes to School: www.saferoutesinfo.org
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking: www.bikewalk.org/
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: www.railtrails.org
- Bikes Belong: www.activetransportation.org
- Thunderhead Alliance: www.ThunderheadAlliance.org
- America Bikes: www.AmericaBikes.org
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Clearinghouse: www.bicyclinginfo.org/
- Transportation Enhancements Funding information: <http://www.enhancements.org/>.

Upgrading and Expanding Public Transit

- Local transit coalitions: www.cfte.org/directory/locallinks.asp
- Association for Commuter Transportation: www.actweb.org
- National Association of Rail Passengers (NARP): www.narprail.org
- A Better Way to Go:
www.connpirg.org/uploads/yD/F9/yDF97TYhnhHNHBp9gaMAQ/A-Better-Way-to-Go-vUSPIRG.pdf

Making Commuting a Freight Movement Easier; Safer; More Efficient

- Intelligent Transportation Systems of America: www.itsa.org
- The Institute for Traffic Engineers: www.ite.org
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Associations (AMPO) at www.ampo.org
- Availability of federal congestion management funding:
www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/tolling_pricing/value_pricing
- Intelligent Transportation Association of America: www.itsa.org

Strengthening Communities and Enhancing Quality of Life:

- Reconnecting America: www.reconnectingamerica.org
- National Association of Clean Air Agencies at www.4cleanair.org