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Funding Was Included in Legislation That Passed the House This Morning

WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) announced today that the House of Representatives approved \$13.5 million in funding for several transportation priorities for the First Congressional District this morning as part of H.R. 2299, the Transportation Appropriations bill. The Senate must now act on the legislation and it must subsequently be signed by the President. The bill includes funding for Temple Street in Hartford, the Hartford/New Britain Busway, and Connecticut Job Access and Reverse Commute Grants.

Larson stated: "The Hartford/New Britain busway is essential to continued transportation improvements in Connecticut. It will provide for an easier commute to and from work, reduce traffic on our roadways, as well as enhance economic growth and the environment in the state. A rapid transit system within the corridor between the two cities will have a positive impact on congestion in the region and improve the quality of life of those who live and work in the Greater Hartford area.

"The job access program has been immensely successful in providing people on assistance with the ability to move from welfare to work," said Larson, "and deserves additional support to extend service locations and hours to increase the number of Connecticut residents who have access to this valuable service and are able to get to work. This program is a great example of the transportation assistance that can be provided to those who want to work, but are held back because they simply are unable to get to work, can't afford their own car, or current public transit doesn't service the location.

"Finally, the transformation of Temple Street will be a catalyst for new investment - both private and public - in Downtown Hartford," said Larson. "It also offers a new opportunity to further connect downtown to the Connecticut River area, as well as enhance the development of residential housing and businesses in the city," said Larson.

Manchester Mayor Steve Cassano, the chairman of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) said: "The news from Washington on the final House transportation bill regarding the Hartford/New Britain busway is exciting. We thank Congressman Larson for his terrific work and support on our behalf. The allocation of these funds will allow us to move forward on this innovative rapid transit project."

The following areas received funding:

Hartford/New Britain - \$9 Million - Hartford/New Britain Busway. The busway is part of a joint Bus Rapid Transit Initiative between the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Capitol Region Council of Governments. The Connecticut proposal was originally selected as one of ten nationwide demonstration programs. The Bus Rapid Transit Initiative is intended to improve the speed, reliability and convenience of bus service, to improve mobility, and to promote a healthy environment. The busway will be an exclusive roadway through five cities and towns: New Britain, Newington, Farmington, West Hartford and Hartford, and would include approximately ten stations or stops that will service commuters.

Statewide - \$3.5 Million - Job Access and Reverse Commute Grants. In 1998, Congress created a Job Access and Reverse Commute program to fund the transportation of welfare recipients to and from job-related activities. Many recipients of assistance who were seeking work were prevented from accepting or holding onto employment because they lacked personal transportation or existing public transportation did not operate at all shift times, or did not reach the area in which they were employed. In the New Britain/Hartford area, the Job Access program has enabled thousands of people to move from welfare to work. Currently, 2,800 people use the Job Access service on a daily basis. By using public transit providers such as Connecticut Transit and regional transit districts, it has also increased overall ridership in

the region's transit infrastructure.

Hartford - \$1 Million - Temple Street Reopening Project. Temple Street, located in Downtown Hartford, has been closed for through traffic since the 1970s. In 1979, a "Mixmaster," a 3-story structure with encircling stairwells, an elevator and escalators, was built linking Sage Allen, a downtown department store, to a mixed-retail building and second anchor store. This Mixmaster straddles Temple Street and blocks pedestrian and vehicular access to it and adjoining streets. Reopening this street would provide for opportunities to develop property in the heart of downtown. It would also allow access to Market Street and connect Main Street to Constitution Plaza and the Connecticut River. The re-opening of Temple Street will be a model for other Hartford streets and urban communities, stimulating new investment. This model urban street will be comprised of wide sidewalks, street tree plantings, incorporate pedestrian-friendly uses for Temple Street, and room for cars and bicycles.

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