

## HOUSE APPROVES SPENDING BILL THAT INCLUDES HARTFORD/NEW BRITAIN BUSWAY

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HOUSE APPROVES SPENDING BILL THAT INCLUDES HARTFORD/NEW BRITAIN BUSWAY WASHINGTON—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today announced that the House of Representatives approved the Conference Report on the Transportation Appropriations Act, H.R. 4475, which includes \$750,000 for a proposed busway between Hartford and New Britain. The conference report provides a total of \$58 Billion in spending, which is \$2.7 Billion (five percent) more than the House bill, six percent more than the Senate version, 14 percent more than in FY 2000, and six percent more than the Administration requested. It includes a 10 percent increase in funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), with additional funds for its tire safety investigation.

"I am pleased that the House voted in favor of the conference report," said Larson. "I am particularly proud that the legislation contains funding for the Hartford/New Britain busway, which offers a fantastic opportunity for Hartford to cut down on the congestion in the corridor between the two cities. I think this will improve the lives of the people who live and work in Hartford. The need for the busway also says a great deal about where central Connecticut is going economically. Along with alternative fuels, mass transit is going to play an important role in the future of urban areas and the surrounding communities."

The busway is part of a joint Bus Rapid Transit Initiative between the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. The Connecticut proposal was selected as one of ten nation-wide demonstration programs. Larson submitted a letter requesting this funding to the Appropriations Committee in March and secured funding for the project in the House version of the bill passed in May.

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 funding is to begin preliminary engineering for the New Britain-Hartford busway, proposed to 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.

Larson complimented Rick Porth of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), as well as Manchester Mayor Steve Cassano, who chairs the council, for their hard work. Larson also recognized Senators Dodd and Lieberman for their support on the issue.

"This funding represents a significant commitment towards heading off a regional transportation crisis," Lieberman said. "Traffic congestion has been affecting our quality of life for some time now and has recently begun to affect our local economy. The busway between New Britain and Hartford will help alleviate congestion along the I-84 corridor and will further our goal of improving mobility through the region."

In addition, the measure would cut highway funds for states that fail to adopt, by 2004, a 0.08 blood alcohol content standard for determining whether a driver is drunk, allow the NHTSA to establish a roll-over rating system for Sport Utility Vehicles, and prohibit the finalization of proposed revisions to trucking "hours-of-service" rules in FY 2001.

The Senate is expected to pass the bill in the next several days and the President is expected to sign the measure.

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