



For Immediate Release

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New report illustrates potential of transit-oriented development to cut driving and reduce emissions in capital region while meeting housing needs

(Hartford CT) - The prominent urban planning group Regional Plan Association (RPA) released a report today calling for changes to greater Hartford's land use regulations to achieve a new focus on transit-accessible development. Community development coordinated with transit will be especially important as the region prepares to invest in the New Britain-Hartford Busway and New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail. The report "Growing Economy, Shrinking Emissions: A Transit-oriented Future for Connecticut's Capital Region" illustrates how expanded transit services, coupled with new development around transit stations, can increase local mobility options while reducing the transportation-related carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. Based on a review of existing land use policies and alternative scenarios, RPA estimates that transportation emissions in Greater Hartford could increase 22% under current zoning, but that transit-oriented development can reduce this growth by 11%.

RPA studied the zoning regulations of the 29 towns that belong to the Capitol Region Council of Governments and found that current laws direct 80% of new homes to be built as single-family houses in areas without bus or rail service. The report proposes instead to focus development around existing and proposed transit such as the New Britain-Hartford Busway and New Haven-Hartford-Springfield commuter rail to reinforce existing transit and to support planned expansions of rail and bus services. This sprawling single-family housing development enabled by current zoning will also not meet the needs of our

graying region. In the coming decades, many aging baby boomers will seek housing close to services and demand transit options. RPA estimates that the region will absorb approximately 30,000 additional 55-and-over households, while losing approximately 11,000 younger family households. As the Capital Region ages, housing needs will change. The growth in older households presents a market opportunity for developers to produce smaller, in-town homes close to transit, shops, and services. According to Amanda Kennedy, Associate Planner in RPA's Connecticut office, "what's interesting is that half the region's growth will be in non-family households, which are usually singles or roommates living together. This will increase demand for apartments, condos, and smaller homes." Current zoning does not allow enough new multifamily housing units to be built in the capital region to meet rising demand. An undersupply of compact housing will present an affordability barrier for young professionals and older households while additional single-family houses will result in an oversupply, lowering the value of existing homes.

According to Tisha Ferguson, Outreach Director at Connecticut Fund for the Environment, "this report details the extraordinary convergence of transit infrastructure renewal projects in the greater Hartford area that can result in real and positive change. It confirms what environmentalists have long pointed out, that a lack of integrated regional land use planning that allows opportunistic development results in unhealthier, less livable communities. However, in this time of fiscal crisis, re-evaluating priorities can result in a smart growth approach to planning, creating multiple co-benefits for municipalities. This is a blueprint for making the right choices to reconnect the urban and outlying communities, creating a vibrant urban hub and realizing Hartford's potential for regional economic leadership."

RPA estimates that transit-oriented development can reduce miles driven by the average Hartford-area household by 2,400 miles per year, reducing the need for a second or third car and saving the average household \$360 per year. Participants at the May 2009 planning workshop - run by RPA and sponsored by the Cambridge, MA-based Lincoln Institute of Land Policy - developed alternative land use around three potential transit corridors in greater Hartford. These scenarios were then modeled by RPA for their effects on driving and carbon emissions. The transit-oriented scenarios coordinated transit improvements with housing development and commercial activity. One group proposed a light rail connecting Hartford and West Hartford via Farmington Avenue, with additional housing and retail on vacant and under-developed sites. In Windsor, the vision called for rapid bus or rail service along the defunct Griffin Line to transport

passengers to the airport and linked to the Windsor Locks stop on the New Haven/Springfield commuter rail with shuttle routes lined with mixed-use nodes of office and housing in areas zoned for industrial growth. Infill development that links pedestrians within the Buckland Hills retail district in Manchester, along with village development in Rockville and Manchester Center were envisioned around a Capitol-East transitway.

In the three corridors studied, future carbon emissions would decrease an average of 11% from what is projected under current policies. Residents living near the New Britain busway would have the lightest transportation “carbon footprint,” at under 5 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, but the biggest decrease would come in the I-84 corridor east of Hartford where alternate patterns of land development could reduce average household carbon emissions from 7.5 tons to 5.9 tons per year. Connecticut has targeted a 10% reduction in carbon emissions below 1990 levels by 2020, and has proposed a 3% reduction in vehicle miles projected for 2020 to help meet that target. The 3 scenarios outlined in the report would reduce future vehicle miles traveled by 11% in the regions studied. Given the challenges faced in shifting to renewable energy, more efficient cars, and more efficient buildings, transit-oriented development represents a strategy to harness private investment to achieve the state’s carbon emissions reduction goals.

Lyle Wray, Executive Director of the Capital Region Council of Governments, remarks that “the findings presented in *Growing Economy, Shrinking Emissions, A Transit Oriented Future for Connecticut’s Capital Region* allow the region to access cutting edge analyses which help realize the need for investing in a transit oriented approach to development. As CRCOG builds its new Sustainable Communities Initiative, this work accomplished in partnership with the Regional Plan Association and in combination with other recent CRCOG projects on sustainable development should help position the Capitol Region well to benefit from new federal investments in livable communities.”

Regional Plan Association was founded in 1929 and performs research and policy work to advance the tri-state region’s economy, environment, and social equity. Its Connecticut office is based in Stamford.