

## **Commentary: Bob Duff on Improving Area Transportation**

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**By BOB DUFF**

From ancient times, the major cities of the world were established along well-traveled trade routes. Even in the short history of Connecticut, cities like Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Norwalk were established on major waterways.

As these cities grew they were connected by post roads, then railroads and finally highways. Each means of travel advanced communication and commerce, allowing Connecticut cities and their suburbs to flourish.

Today, transportation, and in particular, an integrated transportation system, is more important than ever before. It's a critical factor businesses use in determining where to set up shop. In fact, the CEOs I speak with across this state tell me that access to transportation is their No. 2 concern, right after skilled labor.

They want assurances employees will arrive at work on time, unfazed by their daily commute. They want

assurances executives can get into New York City and the major airports without a hitch. And they want assurances product will get delivered on time. That's a lot to ask of a transportation infrastructure that's been neglected for decades, even though we've invested more in the last six years than the previous 30.

### **New Focus in Hartford**

I've been in the thick of the battle for an integrated transportation system for Fairfield County since becoming your state senator. And we've had a Department of Transportation that's done their job of planning for our future transportation needs. What we've lacked is that "get it done" attitude at the top.

Only in recent years have we had an administration that sees a need to get it done now — one that understands the big picture, in that transportation is an economic issue, an environmental issue and a quality-of-life issue. Address all three and you attract and keep good jobs in Connecticut.

### **Good Starts — and What More Needs To Be Done**

We finally have new railcars, 405 of them. That's a good start. Now we're working on improvements to the rail bed and signaling and replacing bridges that are well past their prime. With each step commuters will get trains that go faster and run more frequently, all while we continue to ramp up safety and comfort levels.

We have new entrance and exit lanes for I-95 at the Exit 14 and Exit 15 interchanges. That's a good start. Now we're working on widening I-95 from New Haven down to the state line, plus additional improvements to the Merritt Parkway and many local state roads.

Speaking of the Merritt, I recently announced that funding will be approved to design the much needed Merritt Parkway/Route 7 Interchange. Another good start. I've been a long-time advocate for an enhanced Route 7 going all the way up to Danbury. Just another battle I will continue to fight.

### **It Takes Time**

If there's one truth about politics and government it's that just about everything happens slowly. It's the nature of the beast. And while I've made great strides in things like fiscal accountability in government, getting people to move more quickly will always be a challenge. I've come to accept that, as long as in the end, my constituents come out on top.

That's exactly the case with this bold vision. It's estimated that for every dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements, you get back \$5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, reduced emissions and improved safety. That's the kind of deal I'll always vote for.

Finally, as I've clearly stated many times, I oppose a mileage tax and I oppose a commuter fare hike. It's

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time the state gives its citizens value for the money they've already invested through current taxation.

— [State Rep. Bob Duff's official Web page](#)

— *Bob Duff's* [campaign website](#)

— *Greg Ehlers'* [campaign website](#)

*State Rep. Bob Duff, a Democrat representing part of Darien and all of Norwalk in the 25th state Senate District, is majority leader in the state Senate (the No. 2 position, after state Senate President Pro Tempore). He is running for re-election this November and is opposed by Republican nominee Greg Ehlers of Darien.*