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Windsor faces transportation challenges and opportunities for additional development

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It is both a land of opportunities and a land of challenges. Located less than ten miles from downtown Hartford and seven miles from Bradley International Airport, there is an 8.4 sq. mi. area in Windsor and neighboring Bloomfield that is zoned for commercial and industrial use. This is an area nearly half the size of the city of Hartford. And it is only 50% developed.

Currently, more than 5% of the region's non-retail jobs are located here. And the trend is for continued growth as evidenced by the ING and Hartford Life projects which have added nearly 1 million s/f of office space in the last year to accommodate 3,000 additional employees. Before long, the total floor area of development in the Day Hill Rd. / Blue Hills Rd. area will be approaching that of downtown Hartford.

Obviously, this situation creates opportunities for additional development. There is significant interest by companies looking to provide goods and services to this growing area. As expansion occurs, however, it is clear that steps must be taken to insure that the area remains a convenient and attractive employment location.

Roadway Planning and Improvements. A corridor study of Rte. 305 from I-91 exit 37 west to Rte. 189 is in progress. This effort is aimed at investigating alternatives to reduce delays and improve safety in the corridor and at I-91 exit 37, to provide for future, orderly growth and development, and to evaluate the feasibility of extending Rte. 305 from its present terminus at Rte. 187 to Rte. 189 in Bloomfield. The study is expected to be completed in early 2009.

Already, improvements to Day Hill Rd. and the I-91 interchange area have been identified and efforts are underway to move these projects forward. Recently, the Connecticut Bond Commission approved funding for design of a much needed northbound fly-over connection at Exit 38.

Partnership for Alternative Transportation. Along with roadway improvements, investments must also be made in alternative transportation modes. Some employers have already identified a need for improved transit in order to attract and retain employees. Others have expressed interest in sustainable development and are seeking opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint.

The town, chamber of commerce, and local businesses have been working together to find ways to improve accessibility for employees and to reduce peak hour congestion. The chamber has established a transportation committee including these parties and has set up web based transportation newsletter to share information. Rideshare, Connecticut Transit, and the council of governments are actively participating.

In 2006, 2007 and again this year, this group sponsored transportation summits with area employers to inform them about planned development in the corridor, to promote transportation alternatives, and to enlist their support in our efforts.

Last year, this group set a goal to increase use of alternative transportation (transit or ridesharing)

by 10% by 2010. Since then, CT Transit and the Rideshare Company have provided some very encouraging information regarding the increased use of alternative transportation by employees in the Day Hill Rd. corporate area.

Daily bus riders getting on and off in the corridor have increased by almost 40% from 2006 to 2008.

This increase is attributable to more riders at the Addison Corporate Center on Addison and Pigeon Hill Rds. and at ING and Northfield Dr.

Van pooling has increased even more significantly. Since last year, the number of van routes has doubled and ridership has grown by 120%. Easy Street routes coming to the corridor now originate in North Haven, Southington, Torrington, Middlebury, and Wallingford.

Transit Study. To further address transit needs, CRCOG is undertaking a study that will identify needed improvements to the bus service to the Day Hill Road Corporate area. Results of a survey of employee commute patterns and analysis of existing bus service will be used to design transit system improvements.

While the study is still underway, it is of interest to note that future planning for alternative transportation in the Hartford region will have to respond to a paradigm shift. Based on responses from employers transit needs to provide more town-to-town connections rather than town-to-city-to-town. For example, one company that employs more than 1,200 has 64% from north and west of Windsor. Only nine employees of this company commute from the city.

James Burke is economic development director for the town of Windsor, Conn.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540