# Transportation Policy Brief:

How Can We Best Support Residents' Transportation Needs Across the Lifespan in Connecticut?

## **Quick Facts:**

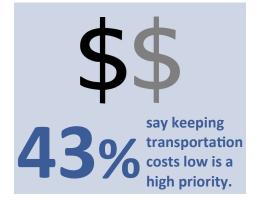


of Connecticut residents age 50 and older rely on their cars as their primary transit mode, a higher proportion than other age groups.

More 50-65-year-olds plan to use their bike at least monthly, compared to today's use (13% increase\*), than any



other age group, followed by adults age 66 and older (9% increase\*).



47%

of Connecticut residents live in a suburb where most people usually drive.

But in the future, only

want to live in a suburban, car-dependent environment.



fewer residents plan to use their

**Among Connecticut residents** age 66 and older,

cars as future primary transit.

plan to use the bus as their primary transit mode than today.

\*Please note that these statistics refer to percentage point changes, not percent changes.





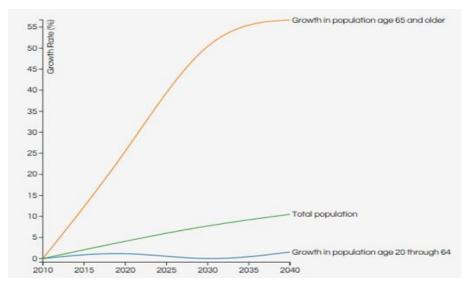
# Introduction

Transportation is the vital link that connects residents across the lifespan with their communities and the elements of a vibrant and engaged life. And the demand for a transportation system with abundant choices will increase as Connecticut's population ages and lives longer. Connecticut is the 7<sup>th</sup> oldest state in the nation with the 3<sup>rd</sup> longest-lived constituency, with average life expectancy at 80.8 years.<sup>1</sup>

Even in a challenging fiscal climate, Connecticut is responding with unprecedented attention to strengthening its transportation system to serve residents across the lifespan. Since 2013, the Connecticut Department of Transportation has led TransformCT, a highly interactive strategic planning process that engaged the public, stakeholders and partners to shape Connecticut's long-term transportation vision, which Governor Malloy unveiled in his 2015 State of the State address.<sup>2</sup>

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, together with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Capitol Region Council of Governments, commissioned a statewide survey, conducted online by Harris Poll in the first quarter of 2015 among 1,011 Connecticut adults (see page 13 for detailed methodology), leveraging an existing national tool, created by the American Planning Association.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the survey was to learn what residents have to say about how communities can best prepare to support residents across the lifespan. This transportation policy brief—the first in our topical series—analyzes survey responses and provides policy recommendations, in light of Connecticut's changing demographics.

**EXHIBIT 1 Projected Population Growth in Connecticut from 2010 to 2040** 



NOTE: This figure was created, in partnership with the Connecticut Data Collaborative, with information calculated by Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. Population projection data was provided by the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service (from 2010 U.S. Census Data).



# **Key Findings**

Connecticut's evolving transportation system is poised to offer unprecedented choices to all residents. Continued strategic investments, as well as critical policy expansions and transformations, are necessary to shape a transit system that values community as much as it values mobility. Realizing those values will require forging and deepening collaborations with a broad array of partners in wide-ranging fields. It also demands collaboration across all levels of government, to promote regional and statewide cooperation, where appropriate, and to recognize the wisdom of localities to tailor solutions that suit their unique community contexts. Finally, deeply embedded in this work ought to be a notion of shared fate that demands increased partnership on all levels across age and other characteristics—to shape a comprehensive transportation system that supports residents across the lifespan. Key study findings are as follows:

- Connecticut's older adults are currently more likely than any other age group to rely on their cars as their primary form of transportation. Currently, 82% of all Connecticut adults use their cars as their primary form of transportation, versus 92% of adults age 50 and older.
- Connecticut residents want to become less car-dependent. Compared to today (82%), 10% fewer Connecticut adults (72%) plan to use their cars as their primary form of transportation in the future. Moreover, 47% of Connecticut adults reported currently living in a suburb where most people drive to most places, but only 8% of Connecticut adults want to live there in the future.
- Connecticut residents value quality of life; 28% of Connecticut adults said the quality of life, including community transportation features, was the single most important factor in choosing where to live, ranking higher than friends and family living there (17%) or job prospects (11%).
- Connecticut residents intend to use public transit more in the future, especially older adults. Among adults 66 years of age and older, more (12 percentage point increase) plan to use the bus as their primary form of transportation in the future (14%), compared to today (2%).
- More Connecticut residents plan to bike in the future, with the highest increases for the 50-65year-old age group (13 percentage point increase) and 66 years and older age group (9 percentage point increase).
- Creating a more walkable infrastructure is a top priority for Connecticut residents, second only to maintaining existing transportation systems (41%). Among new public investments, the strongest demand by Connecticut residents is for new sidewalks and pedestrians crossings (38%).
- As economic uncertainty continues, 43% of Connecticut adults identified keeping transportation costs low to be a high priority.
- Younger adults are embracing the sharing economy in Connecticut faster than other age cohorts, with 18-34-year-olds significantly more likely to use car share services (18%), carpools or ridesharing (27%) than other age groups.



# Recommendations

Connecticut continues to exhibit bold leadership in transportation policy. Building on its successes—and based on the data in this policy brief—state, regional and community leaders ought to consider implementing, sustaining or expanding the policy recommendations outlined below.

- Incentivize adoption of municipal and regional complete streets policies to accommodate all users, regardless of age or ability, by requiring that such a policy be in place in order to compete for certain transportation-related funding streams.
- Incentivize implementation plans for complete streets through creation of a competitive, state-run grant program for municipalities to apply for funds to conduct assessments and infrastructure improvements.
- Incentivize and enhance funding for municipalities to engage in transit-oriented development in conducive locations to ensure that compact, walkable, mixed-used, mixed-income communities are located within a reasonable distance of quality, dependable public transportation.
- Adopt and implement the National Association of City Transportation Officials' Urban Street Design Guidelines, to replace current guidelines developed by the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials.
- Improve data collection regarding and address key risk factors of pedestrian and cyclist road traffic injury, such as vehicle speed, alcohol use, pedestrian and cyclist visibility, and adequate safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. Emphasize nonmotorized safety in the state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- Identify funding streams to sustain, coordinate, grow and make more convenient both fixed route and demand-responsive transportation options (including providing door-to -door service), and provide technical assistance to support regionalization efforts.
- Develop or enhance mobility management programs to help community members learn how to access and navigate transportation options, especially for older adults and persons with disabilities, among whom demand for use of non-car transit options will be greatest.
- Provide funding to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to increase and maintain the number of officially designated Connecticut greenways that adhere to the American with Disabilities Act requirements for accessibility.
- Conduct research to inform policies on self-driving vehicles, including recommendations related to testing, licensing and other regulations.
- Collaborate across sectors to increase the use of mobile services to bring necessities and opportunities for engagement to transit-challenged homes and communities.
- Strive to equitably distribute, across all populations, the costs and benefits of mobility in all transportation program and policy decisions.
- Enhance collaboration with non-transportation partners, including those in housing, health care, public health, planning and zoning, social services, law enforcement, and the business community, among others.



# Background

Connecticut's changing demographics increasingly demand a transportation system that provides affordable, accessible and diverse transportation options to all residents. Those options need to be thoughtfully interconnected with the work of nonconventional partners to achieve a variety of goals, including, retrofitting car-dominated infrastructure for the safety of all users; creating environments that promote equity, environmental sustainability and support healthier lifestyles for everyone; rebuilding the street as a public space for social experience; sustaining, coordinating and growing both fixed route and demandresponsive transportation options; and supporting economic activity. We provide background on these broad goals below.

### **Active Transportation**

Active transportation is experiencing resurgence in all different kinds of communities—urban, suburban and rural alike. Nationally, the percentage of people who reported walking 10 minutes or more per week increased by 6%, from 56% (2005) to 62% (2010). Of all trips nationwide, more than 10% are by foot, and more than 3% are by bicycle and public transit. Active transportation produces direct health benefits, ranging from weight loss to decreased risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression and even some cancers.

## Safety and Equity

Funding streams disproportionately favor motorized transportation, even while pedestrians and cyclists comprise a disproportionate share of traffic fatalities. In 2013, pedestrians alone represented nearly 13 percent of all traffic fatalities in Connecticut. And nationally, pedestrian fatalities in the United Stated increased between 2010 and 2012, a period in which other motor vehiclerelated deaths decreased. Children, older adults, and racial ethnic minorities also suffer injury and death disproportionately in adverse traffic encounters.7

More generally, the costs and benefits of mobility in transportation program and policy decisions are not typically distributed equitably. Historically, freeway routing, sidewalk quality and numerous other aspects of mobility have disproportionately harmed disempowered populations.8

This policy brief presents data to inform the ongoing transformation of Connecticut's transportation system to broaden choices for Connecticut's residents across the lifespan.



### **Environmental Sustainability**

There is unprecedented attention from all levels of government, the business community, a concerned public and other partners to shape a transportation system that promotes energy efficiency, decreases the emission of harmful pollutants, and builds community livability. For example, riding a bus instead of driving alone for a 20-mile round-trip commute can reduce 4,800 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person per year. Moreover, commuters who drive to work instead of taking public transportation consume 99 extra gallons of gas per person per year while stuck in traffic.9

### **Complete Streets**

In October 2014, the Connecticut Department of Transportation issued a policy statement, articulating that, as a condition of funding, Complete Streets must be considered. 10 Complete Streets not only safely accommodate all users, regardless of age or ability, but they also promote streets as places for facilitating social experiences and communitybuilding. In Connecticut, according to the most recently published data, at least 9 out of 169 towns (just over 5%) report having a local Complete Streets policy in place. Continued adoption and development of Complete Streets policies is dynamic, and to date, many other towns are considering developing or have since adopted Complete Streets policies. 11 Funding and technical assistance are often necessary to ensure sustained implementation.

There is no singular Complete Streets design principle, with urban, suburban and rural communities encouraged to adopt different plans to suits their unique community contexts. But increasingly, states are endorsing the design principles recently released by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), which safely balance the needs of many travelers on community streets. 12

## **Shaping a transportation system for Connecticut residents** across the lifespan involves...

- Creating environments that promote equity, environmental sustainability and support healthier lifestyles for everyone
- Retrofitting car-dominated infrastructure for the safety of all users
- Rebuilding the street as a public space for social experience
- Sustaining, coordinating and growing both fixed route and demand-responsive transportation options
- Supporting economic activity





### **Fixed Route and Demand-Responsive Transportation**

Fixed route transportation operates along a prescribed route and on a fixed schedule. Fixed route transit can include buses, subways, and light rail. In 2014 in Connecticut, buses provided over 43 million passenger trips and rail provided over 39 million passenger trips. <sup>13</sup> Connecticut has made unprecedented investments in fixed route transportation projects, such as CTfastrak and pending expansions to commuter rail service, which will connect New Haven to Hartford and Hartford to Springfield. Further investments in public transportation would be like to dramatically increase ridership.14

Demand-responsive transportation provides routes and scheduling more individually tailored to the needs of the user. It can include paratransit, shared transit, dial-a-ride services, as well as vans, other shuttle bus systems, and taxis. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires transit agencies to provide paratransit service, subject to certain parameters, to people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route bus or rail services. Paratransit ridership in Connecticut in fiscal year 2014 under the ADA totaled over one million rides, and dial-a-ride ridership neared 100,000 rides.<sup>15</sup> Regional transportation coordination across towns and provider types is critical to ensuring that people get where they need to go conveniently and efficiently.

### **Economic Activity**

Transit improves connectivity between residents and economic opportunity. For example, according to a recent Connecticut analysis, lack of access to high-quality transportation can present significant barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. 16 The availability and use of public transit can also reduce household transportation costs, freeing up income for other purposes. Specifically, riding public transportation instead of driving a car can save residents over \$9,800 annually, on average. Moreover, for every \$1 invested in public transportation, \$4 is generated in economic return. For every \$1 billion invested in public transportation capital and operations, approximately 36,000 jobs are created and supported. 17

## **Moving Forward**

In this context, this policy brief presents data to inform the ongoing transformation of Connecticut's transportation system to broaden choices for Connecticut's residents. These efforts are important for all residents but are especially critical for the third of the population that does not drive, including older adults, persons with disabilities, children, and those who for various reasons cannot operate or do not own a vehicle. 18













# **Detailed Findings**

In strong terms, Connecticut adults underscored the importance of continued investment in a transportation system with abundant choices for users.

Currently, 82% of all Connecticut adults use their cars as their primary form of transportation, though that's true for an even larger percentage of adults age 50 and older (92%). In other words, Connecticut's older adults are more likely than other age groups to rely on their cars as their primary form of transportation.

However, Connecticut residents want to become less car-dependent. Compared to today (82%), fewer Connecticut adults (10 percentage point decrease) plan to use their cars as their primary form of transportation in the future (72%). Car use was the only transportation mode projected by Connecticut adults to decline. The decline was present in the 35-49-year-old (16 percentage point decline), 50-65-year-old (19 percentage point decline), and 66 years and older age groups (17 percentage point decline), but not the 18-20-year-old or 21-34-year-old age groups. In other words, people want more non-car transportation options as they age. 5% of Connecticut adults report not owning a car.

**EXHIBIT 3 Survey Question:** What is your primary way of getting around, now and in the future?

Age Groups	Car as Primary Transit Now	Car as Future Primary Transit	Percentage Point Change
All ages	82%	72%	-10%
18-20	49%	73%	+24%
21-34	73%	73%	0%
35-49	85%	69%	-16%
50-65	92%	73%	-19%
66+	92%	75%	-17%

The presence and quality of a multi-modal transportation system also has implications for placemaking. For example, **39%** of all Connecticut adults and **56%** of Connecticut adults living in urban settings said affordable and convenient transportation alternatives to the car were very or extremely important when deciding where to live and work; 80% of all Connecticut adults said affordable and convenient transportation alternatives to the car were at least somewhat important.

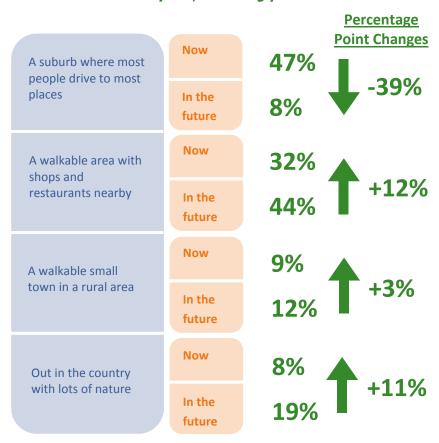


Moreover, 47% of Connecticut adults reported currently living in a suburb where most people drive to most places. But only 8% want to someday live in that suburban, cardependent environment. Relatedly, 44% report wanting to someday live in a walkable area with shops and restaurants nearby, compared with 32% that report currently living in such an area. Currently, 46% of all Connecticut adults and 60% of those living in urban settings get around at least once a month by walking. In general, those living in urban environments are more likely to walk, take the bus, car pool or ride share than their counterparts who live in non-urban environments.

**EXHIBIT 4** 

#### **Survey Question:**

Which best describes where you live now and where you would like to someday live, assuming you could afford it?



Similarly, 28% of Connecticut adults said that the one overriding factor in choosing where to live is quality of life, with features such as transportation, affordability, parks and entertainment. Quality of life was the highest-rated factor, followed by friends and family living there (17%), job prospects (11%), or overall economic health of the area (9%). More adults age 66 years and older (37%) than any other age group identified quality of life, including transportation features, as the one overriding factor in choosing where to live.



Connecticut adults were also more likely to want public investments in transportation that leverage existing infrastructure. Specifically, 17% of Connecticut adults favor more public investment for increased housing and transit choices in areas developed like downtowns, versus only 11% who favor public investment for increased housing and transit choices on undeveloped land.

Consistent with reports of decreased car use are projected increases in the use of other transit modes, especially among older adults. Overall, the percentage of Connecticut adults who use the bus as their primary form of transit today, compared to the future, is the same. However, among adults 66 years of age and older, more (12 percentage point increase) plan to use the bus as their primary form of transportation in the future (14%), compared to today (2%).

Furthermore, more Connecticut adults (11 percentage point increase) plan in the future (25%) to use the bus at least monthly, compared to today (14%). However, the increase is highest for the 50-65-year-old age group (20 percentage point increase of 7% today versus 27% in the future) and the 66 years and older age group (21 percentage point increase of 16% today versus 37% in the future). Currently, 13% of Connecticut adults take the bus at least once a month to get around, though the 18-34 year-old cohort (16%) is much more likely to do so than the 50-65-year-old cohort (7%). Accordingly, targeted mobility counseling may be necessary for the latter cohort.

**EXHIBIT 5 Survey Question:** What ways do you get around at least monthly, now and in the future?

Age Groups	Bus at Least Monthly Now	Bus at Least Monthly in Future	Percentage Point Change
All ages	14%	25%	+11%
18-20	20%	28%	+8%
21-34	15%	17%	+2%
35-49	12%	21%	+9%
50-65	7%	27%	+20%
66+	16%	37%	+21%

The same trend is true for biking. Among Connecticut adults, more (4 percentage point increase) plan in the future (18%) to use their bike at least monthly, compared to today (14%). But the increase is highest for the 50-65-year-old age group (13 percentage point increase of 11% today versus 24% in the future), followed by the 66 years and older age group (9 percentage point increase, 9% today versus 18% in the future).

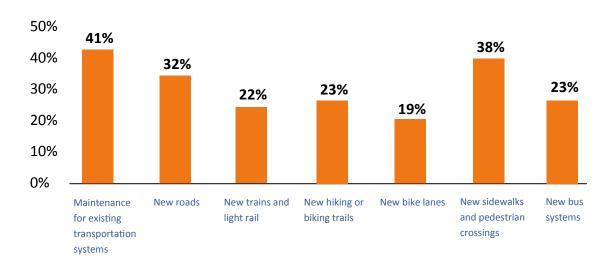


Younger adults are embracing the sharing economy in Connecticut faster than other age cohorts, with 18-34-year-olds (18%) significantly more likely to use car share services at least once a month than other age groups: 35-49 year-olds (7%); 50-65-year-olds (4%); adults 66 years and older (8%). Similarly, 18-34-year-olds (27%) are significantly more likely to use carpools or ride sharing at least once a month than other age groups: 35-49 year-olds (11%); 50-65-year-olds (7%); or adults 66 years and older (12%).

As economic uncertainty continues, 43% of Connecticut adults identified keeping transportation costs low to be a high priority. Connecticut adults who reported household incomes of less than \$35,000 (62%) are significantly less likely than those earning \$35,000 per year or more (88%) to use their car (if they even have one) as their primary form of transportation and are significantly more likely to walk, bike or use the bus. Accordingly, we assert that providing non-car transportation options is critically important for transporting Connecticut's low-income workforce. These workers include those professions needed to help older adults and persons with disabilities remain in their homes and communities.

Connecticut residents favor public investment in transportation in a variety of areas: maintenance for existing transportation systems (41%); new sidewalks and pedestrian crossings (38%); new roads (32%); new bus systems (23%); new hiking or biking trails (23%); new trains and light rail (22%); and new bike lanes (19%). That is, among new public investments, the strongest demand is for new sidewalks and pedestrian crossings (38%), with demand similar across all age groups, except for 18-20-year-olds, from whom the demand is significantly higher (54%). Connecticut adults said that the need for new sidewalks and pedestrian crossings is second only to maintaining the existing transportation system.

**EXHIBIT 6 Survey Question:** Where you live now, do you currently favor more public investment in transportation in the following?





#### **Connecticut in a National Context**

Connecticut fielded this particular survey instrument to leverage a unique opportunity: to compare to national data (of those 21-65 years of age with two years of college education or more), collected less than one year earlier from use of the identical survey instrument. Subject to the limitations outlined in the "Methodology" section of this policy brief (see page 13), here is where Connecticut sits in a national context.

#### **EXHIBIT 7**

**Comparison of Connecticut Responses to National Survey Results** 



Connecticut data



United States data

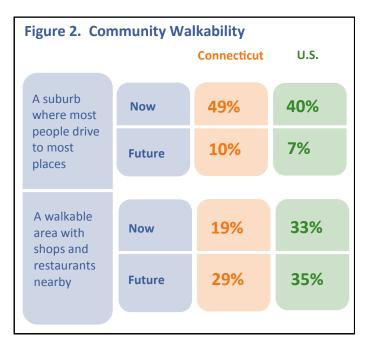
**Figure 1. 29%** of **Connecticut residents** said that quality of life, including community transportation features, was the one overriding factor in choosing where to live, compared to 22% of U.S. residents.

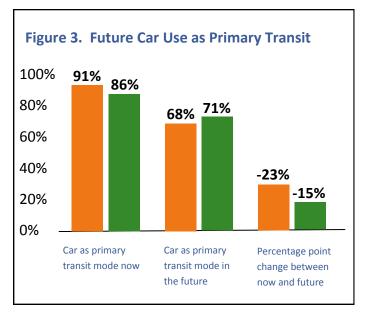
Figure 2. Connecticut residents are more likely to want to live in walkable communities and less likely to want to live in car-dependent places in the future than the U.S. population as a whole.

Figure 3. There is a larger decrease among Connecticut residents (23 percentage point reduction) than among the U.S. population (15 percentage point reduction) of those who plan to use their cars as future primary transit.

Figure 1. Importance of Quality of Life









# Methodology

This poll was conducted online from February 2-March 3, 2015 and consists of 1,011 adults (defined here as at least 18 years old) who reside in Connecticut. To ensure objectivity, Harris Poll conducted the survey on behalf of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Capitol Region Council of Governments. The survey aimed primarily to compare and contrast the views of five different age groups: ages 18-20 (n=100), ages 21-34 (n=302), ages 35-49 (n=205), ages 50-65 (n=304), and ages 66 and older (n=100). The respondent groups are broadly representative of Connecticut in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, income and geography.

The survey questions were designed by the American Planning Association and were originally used for a survey conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll from March 11-21, 2014, on behalf of the American Planning Association. That national survey differs from this survey in three key respects, outlined in the table below.

**EXHIBIT 8** Comparison of Connecticut Methodology to Methodology of National Survey Conducted on Behalf of the American Planning Association

Categories	National survey	Connecticut survey
Sample	National pool	Connecticut residents only
Education	Only adults who had completed two years or college or more were surveyed	No education screen; adults surveyed regardless of amount of college completed
Age groups	Groups surveyed were ages 21-34, ages 35-49 and ages 50-65	Groups surveyed were ages 18-20 and ages 66 and older, in addition to ages 21-34, ages 35-49 and ages 50-65

Identical questions were asked in both surveys. Accordingly, throughout this policy brief series, including on page 12 of this policy brief, we make comparisons between the national data collected last year with the data collected this year in Connecticut. However, because of the way the national sample was selected, our comparisons are limited to those who have completed two years of college or more and those who are in the 21-34, 35-49, and 50-65 age groups (n=509 for Connecticut respondents, with the age and education filer applied for purposes of the comparison).



# **Endnotes**

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State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106 (860) 240-5200