

Memo

To: Governor M. Jodi Rell's Commission on the Reorganization of the Department of Transportation
From: CSEA/SEIU Local 2001
Date: 8/9/2007
Re: Five-Point Plan for Reforming the Culture at the Connecticut DOT

"Safety, Security, and Savings"

1. Reform the Policy of Contracting-Out Public Transportation Projects

Passage of AN ACT CONCERNING CLEAN CONTACTING STANDARDS, legislation that is supported by the Governor, non-profit service providers, a majority of lawmakers from both parties, and public sector union members, in a special session this summer would:

- a. Require the State to perform a cost-benefit analysis before contracting-out public projects to private consultants;
- b. Improve accountability, transparency and assure results-based outcomes by creating a process to review contracted work; and
- c. Create common-sense standards to ensure that accountable public service workers perform core public service functions, such as bridge and road inspections.

2. Fill Staffing Shortfalls and Vacancies in the DOT Employee Workforce

Recent news reports have revealed the agency has lost 1,000 workers over the past twelve years, and critical workforce shortages exist among many positions that impact public safety within the agency. Our report, Highway Robbery, found the DOT consistently retains an outsourced consultant workforce, including an average of nearly 400 full time equivalent design and inspection engineers, during the period of the report's study.

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3. Improve Recruiting of New Engineers to the DOT Employee Workforce

Several concrete steps would go a long way to enable the department to be more competitive in attracting the next generation of engineers to meet our 21st century transportation and infrastructure needs, such as:

- a. Establish a hiring rate of Step 5 for the Transportation Engineer 1 classification to assist recruitment;
- b. Create a path for promotion to the Transportation Engineer 2 level for our nearly 175 Engineer 1's in the agency to allow for progression to the working professional level; and
- c. Eliminate restrictions for both the Transportation Engineer 3 and Supervising Transportation Engineer positions to improve retention of a highly skilled workforce.

4. Create Greater Flexibility in DOT Employee Work Schedules

The department has one of the most restrictive, paternalistic, and draconian "alternate work schedule" (AWS) programs among State agencies, restricting its professional workforce to a thirty-five hour work, despite the fact our managers are on a forty-hour schedule. A voluntary forty-hour workweek will provide an long-term workers in our department an incentive to continue their careers with the agency, while also attracting a greater diversity among new engineers and professional employees.

5. Establish a More Consistent Policy on the Overtime Cap

As our member who testified during the first day of hearings into the I-84 "Little Dig" oversight fiasco last month illustrated, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) must grant the department the authority to allow its engineers, inspectors, and safety planners to work overtime. This will empower agency employees to put public safety ahead of bureaucratic policy.