

## Our Businesses

# Analyzing the data from our transportation survey



**Michael Nicastro**  
Chamber  
Chatter

During the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce's Home and Business Expo held last week, we took the opportunity with the volume of attendees to do a Transportation Survey. The goal of the survey was to better understand the commuting needs of not only Bristol residents but of residents from around the region.

The volume of responses was very good

and people readily offered to participate. Before getting into the numbers, I want to first thank our college intern for the spring semester, Sarah Parker. Sarah assembled the questions, defined the format and then worked with her professor to validate the structure and nature of the questions so that the data collected would have a higher level of validity. She did a great job.

So here are some of the interesting things that we found out. First and foremost some of our basic assumptions were validated. Sixty percent of respondents living in Bristol, Plainville and Plymouth/Terryville work out of town. Of that group, 52 percent work in the cities and towns that are located along the Waterbury/Hartford rail corridor.

The commuters to the towns on the Waterbury/Hartford line expend between \$50 and

\$75 weekly for fuel. We did not estimate or calculate cost of vehicle maintenance. This is an interesting statistic.

Now extrapolating from the Shoreline East fare listings the average cost of a monthly fare for commuter services on the Waterbury/Hartford line would be somewhere around \$70 per month. Certainly a significant savings compared to the current fuel estimate, which will more than likely increase dramatically at some point in the not too distant future. To reiterate the fare quoted is not an actual fare and is a best guesstimate based on actual fare programs.

A couple of more interesting stats. Of those that would use a Waterbury/Hartford rail line only 8% had a concern about utilizing a commuter parking lot. Additionally, 26 percent of all working respondents would consider employment opportuni-

ties in the southwest part of the state or New York if the Waterbury line were accessible. Another 85% would utilize the Waterbury/Hartford line for leisure purposes in both directions.

These are just some initial findings and we will continue to slice and dice the data in the coming weeks. We also will be doing additional survey work to increase the sampling population although the sample from the Home Show was quite sizable.

While it would be inappropriate to draw too many conclusions from this data, it is clear that many common sense thoughts regarding the use of a commuter rail line to alleviate automobile operating costs as well as expanding employment opportunities by simplifying the extension of a person commuting range are apparent in the numbers.

### Point

### of clarification:

For the sake of complete disclosure, it should be made clear that the approval by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency's Board of the administrative action allowing ConnDOT to flex \$116 million of Federal Highway Funds into fiscal 2012 and 2013 for the busway was not a final approval of the busway plan and it was not an affirmation the project will go forward. It was just as it was described an administrative action. In fact, the administrative action could have just simply been signed off with no further discussion.

That said we should compliment CCRPA Executive Director Carl Stephani for recognizing that this is a significant sum of money and with the best mode for a mass transit solution for the region still being debated it needed to be discussed further and not simply signed off.

It does however point out a significant flaw in the process that the General Assembly should consider. The fact this administrative action to move \$116 million in federal highway funds could have just simply been signed off behind the scenes is concerning.

While this may be the standard practice it just doesn't feel right in a time when capital is scarce, our infrastructure is challenged and we need to get more value for our dollars spent. Remember the busway project started out at \$80 million and has ballooned to \$573 million and all along we were told that it was an 80/20 split of federal and state funding.

The numbers simply are not adding up.

*Michael Nicastro is president and CEO of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce. He can be reached at m.nicastro@bristol-chamber.org*

# Raises or rebuilding: A business owner's dilemma

By **JOYCE M. ROSENBERG**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK \_ Business is starting to creep upward at some small companies. And employees who have gone without raises or had their salaries cut over the past two years are hoping that more money coming in will lead to a raise in the near future.

But owners who need to rebuild their businesses may not be able to give those raises. They may need to put the revenue toward equipment purchases they've had to put off. Or they may need to travel to more trade shows to prospect for new customers.

It's not an easy decision, especially in a company whose employees have sacrificed for the good of the company.

"It's a really tough call. You have to have a motivated work force," said Jill McBride, who owns a six-person public relations firm, JZMcBride & Associates, in Cincinnati.

She's trying to decide whether to give raises or add staff as business improves.

Human resources consultants advised owners during the recession to be open with employees about business and the challenges that their companies face. It's no different now, when employees are hoping for raises that may not be forthcoming.

### THE EMPLOYERS' DILEMMA

McBride said she needs to decide whether to give raises or put new income into efforts to build the business.

"We're still trying to figure it out," she said.

McBride said she gave bonuses rather than raises last year but didn't cut anyone's pay or the 401(k) match. And, "we didn't let anyone go."

Now, she's asking, if the company is better off adding a new person who can bring in new business rather than giving out rais-

es.

Amos Winbush III, CEO of New York-based CyberSynchs, said of not giving raises, "it's not a decision I take lightly." Not only are the company's 15 employees not getting pay increases, but two went without a salary during the company's first year in 2008, and CyberSynchs, which allows users to copy and store data from devices like cell phones, isn't ready to repay them. Now that the recession is over and money is coming in, the company needs to expand.

### KEEP TALKING

HR professionals say owners need to be sensitive to the fact that employees who have gone without raises are likely to feel some resentment if they see money going toward equipment or a new hire. So

before an owner invests thousands of dollars in, say, a new server, he or she needs to let the staff know that raises won't be forthcoming. And, an owner needs to explain to employees that they stand to ultimately benefit from the purchase.

"If they can tie getting the server to increased productivity or ability to serve customers that will result in a higher level of revenue," employees are likely to accept the boss' decision, said Rick Gibbs, a senior human resources specialist with Administaff, a Houston-based company that provides HR outsourcing.

Likewise, a new employee who can bring in more business will help generate income that can fund those raises.

Gibbs also suggested telling staffers, "we need to get additional business

before we loosen up the budget on salaries." In that way, the boss is letting workers know that raises are still a priority, and that as business continues to pick up, they'll be rewarded.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**CALL US FIRST!**  
**LOWEST RATES GUARANTEED!**  
**Rick LaMothe**  
**PLUMBING**  
 Leaky Faucet • Running Toilet • Leaky Pipes • Garbage Disposal • Water Heater Repair & Replacement  
**ANY OF YOUR REPAIR & SERVICE NEEDS**  
**OVER 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**  
 SENIORS SAVE 10% Call Rick **582-3351**  
 Fully Insured & Licensed #204369

Place Your  
 Classified Ad  
 Online  
  
[www.stepsaver.com](http://www.stepsaver.com)

Upcoming The Observer Southington Bristol Plainville  
 Special Sections.....  
 For Advertising Call: **860.628.9645** to speak with a Sales Representative

**Spring Home & Garden**  
 A special section designed to help you "Spruce Up" your world!  
 The Observer  
 213 Spring Street - Southington  
**Spring Home & Garden Section**  
**To Be Published April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**St. Patrick's Day Dining & Gift Banner Pages**  
 Restaurants • Pubs • Cafes  
 Gift Shops • Jewelers  
 & Anything Irish!!  
 Promote your St. Patrick's Day Restaurants, Gifts & Festivities!  
**St. Patrick's Day Section**  
**To Be Published March 12<sup>th</sup>**