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Lt. gov. backs commuter rail
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SPRINGFIELD - A local group pushing for commuter rail service between Springfield and New Haven, Conn., heard words of support Saturday from Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Murray.

Murray, speaking at an event held by the Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail, said the state needs to improve both commuter and freight rail, and noted that the position of deputy secretary of transportation for rail and intermodal programs has been created by the administration of Gov. Deval L. Patrick. The post is held by Tom Cahir.

Murray told a group of about 40 people who gathered in the Community Room at the Central Library that more commuter rail links would improve the environment and bring economic development. Patrick has had conversations with Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell about commuter rail linking Springfield and New Haven, Murray said, and Connecticut has been aggressive in expanding commuter rail.

"They have done studies," he said. "They are looking to make connections" into Massachusetts.

Last month Patrick signed a \$1.44 billion transportation bond bill which included an unspecified amount of money for commuter rail from Springfield into Connecticut.

The lieutenant governor, who earlier in the day appeared in East Longmeadow for a meeting of the town's Democratic Committee, also spoke about rail service in the context of New England's geography.

"We don't have capacity to build new highways in New England," he said.

Murray also said he believes there is a growing feeling around the country to expand commuter rail service.

"I just think there is a momentum that's gathering right now," he said. "This is the way that people are increasingly looking."

Murray, the former mayor of Worcester, talked about how that city's renovated Union Station, which includes bus service and commuter rail to Boston, is a transportation hub. Murray called the station "a centralized place for people to go and have a range of transportation options."

Murray said the renovated Union Station has also spurred development, including restaurants and housing.

(COLOR) In this file photo, Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Murray speaks before the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield, Inc. at Chez Josef, on February 1, 2008.

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