



February 23, 2009

The Honorable Donald DeFronzo, Co-Chair, Transportation Committee
The Honorable Antonio Guerrero, Co-Chair, Transportation Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
CJ Strand, Transportation Clerk
CJ.Strand@cga.ct.gov

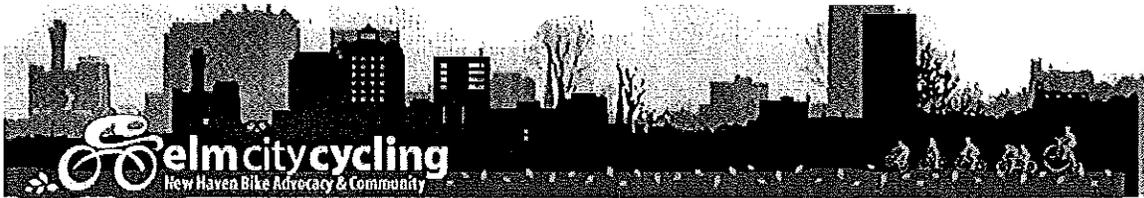
Dear Transportation Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Elm City Cycling (ECC) to express support for Proposed H.B. No. 6072, "An Act Permitting Passengers Boarding Trains to Take Bicycles onto Such Trains". The Bill is scheduled for public hearing on Tuesday, February 24, 2009. Given that most workers commute during rush hour, the present exclusion of bicycles from peak hours Metro North trains effectively prevents people from using their bicycle as part of inter-city rail commutes to work. The Bill's lifting of this restriction within the State of Connecticut will be a boon to bicycle commuters and a step toward making our state's economy more prosperous and sustainable.

Bicycle-rail integration is a key ingredient in creating a multi-modal transportation system for the State of Connecticut. When trains, buses, bicycles, and pedestrian facilities are stitched together seamlessly, their utility grows enormously. Taken together, they represent a powerful way to curb the gridlock, fossil fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and community erosion that are hallmarks of the private automobile. By themselves, none of them has the power to draw a large fraction of commuters out of their cars.

We are heartened by the steps CT Transit has taken to install bicycle racks on all of its buses in the state. Other bus transit agencies, such as Norwalk Transit District, have followed suit. The time has now come to make trains similarly welcoming to cyclists. Great strides have recently been made in this direction, with Gov. Rell ordering that the new M-8 Metro North railcar designs be modified to include bicycle hooks. And Metro North is now permitting folding bicycles onto peak hours trains. Officials at the local level have also been supportive. In New Haven, designs are now in the pipeline for new covered bicycle parking spots at bustling Union Station. A network of bike lanes is also being planned to make the rail station more accessible from all of the city's neighborhoods.

Over a million Connecticut residents reside within a few miles of Metro North stations along the coast. Many of them live and work along the New Haven Line. But scarce car parking at stations contributes to many of them deciding to commute all the way to work by car. There is a substantial opportunity for Metro North to attract new riders by allowing them to access train stations conveniently by bicycle. Bicycle trips of a few miles



are pleasant, healthy, and easily within the physical ability of most of adults.

We understand that concerns have been voiced by the Connecticut Rail Commuter Council about bicycles aggravating crowding on some of the busier peak hours trains. It has been suggested that bicycle-rail commuters use one bike to travel from home to origin rail station, and another to travel between destination station and workplace. Unfortunately, this approach is impractical for many cyclists, owing to the added expense and security concerns about bikes left at rail stations. We feel that it is short-sighted to exclude all bicycles from peak hours trains just because some of the peak hours trains are standing-room only; in the long-term, we are confident that the new M-8 cars and service improvements will alleviate peak hours crowding. In the short-term, we trust the discretion of cyclists and conductors to locate the least crowded car of a peak hour train, and that cyclists fully comprehend that conductors retain authority & discretion to direct cyclists to board without their bicycle in situations where doing so would, in the opinion of the conductor, create a safety hazard.

Elm City Cycling speaks for thousands of cyclists in the New Haven area in advocating for unrestricted bicycle access to trains. Our partner organizations in New York are seeking a similar policy change from NY State, pointing toward a day when bicycle commuters will be able to board at all hours with their bikes along the entire New Haven Line. Please stand with us in supporting a multi-modal transportation system that will make our state healthier, more prosperous, and more environmentally sound.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Abraham'.

Mark Abraham, representing Elm City Cycling
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mark.abraham@aya.yale.edu

CC:

The Honorable M. Jodi Rell, Governor of Connecticut
Joseph Marie, Connecticut DOT Commissioner
David Balzer, Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator, Connecticut DOT
The Honorable Christopher Dodd, US Senator
The Honorable Joseph Lieberman, US Senator
The Honorable Rosa De Lauro, 3rd District Congresswoman
The Honorable John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor of New Haven
Michael Piscitelli AICP, Director Dept. of Transportation, Traffic and Parking, City of New Haven
The Honorable William Finch, Mayor of Bridgeport
The Honorable Dannel Malloy, Mayor of Stamford
Robin Stein (Stein, Robert M. Jr.) City of Stamford Planning Director
Karyn Gilvarg, Director, New Haven City Plan
Debra Dauphinais, Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance