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CONNECTICUT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON TRANSPORTATION

TESTIMONY BY THE HONORABLE WILLIAM F. BRENNAN, FIRST SELECTMAN TOWN OF WILTON

FEBRUARY 24, 2009

Re: Proposed Bill No. 425 – An Act Concerning the Improvement of the Norwalk/Danbury Train Line

Senator Donald DeFronzo, Co-Chair
Representative Antonio Guerrero, Co-Chair
Senator Toni Boucher, Ranking Member
Representative David Scribner, Ranking Member
Room 2003, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senators DeFronzo, Boucher, Representatives Guerrero, Scribner and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on this important transportation bill. My name is Bill Brennan and I am First Selectman for the Town of Wilton. I am also a member of the South Western Regional Metropolitan Planning Region.

Wilton is situated on the Route 7 corridor with its future development and vibrancy reliant, in part, on the highway and transit access provided by US Route 7 and the Danbury Branch Rail Line. As noted in the testimony of the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO), the Route 7 corridor between Norwalk and Danbury is an important link in the state's transportation network. This corridor provides multimodal north/south connections via the Danbury Branch Rail Line and US Route 7, connecting housing and employment opportunities between the Housatonic Valley Region and the South Western Region and New York.

First, there is good news. The Route 7 widening project in Wilton will be fully completed in approximately one year.

This is offset by the not-so-good news that rail improvements to the Danbury Branch have not progressed beyond maintenance activities. Needed infrastructure and station upgrades are long overdue. As an example, the Wilton Station has been locked up tight for over three years. Improvements to the **Danbury Branch centralized traffic control (CTC)** system, have made little progress for more than a decade. This is an essential safety and operations project that will upgrade the manual block traffic control system to a safety-compliant and state of the art system. Delays in the project have increased the project cost ten-fold from original cost estimates to current estimates of \$130 million.

The full range of improvement alternatives studied in the 1999-2006 Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Danbury Branchline Electrification Study are now in the second study that includes an environmental assessment and the selection of the preferred alternative. This will be followed by design of the preferred alternative, then rights-of-way, and finally construction.

I urge the Transportation Committee and the Legislature to:

- Fund and implement the Danbury Branch CTC project, and
- Support the proposed legislation to implement improvements to the Danbury Branch which are identified in the CTDOT's Visual Inspection Reports of Danbury Branch Stations (January 2007).

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this vital regional matter.



William F. Brennan
First Selectman