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CONNECTICUT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON TRANSPORTATION

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

MARCH 4, 2009

**Re: Proposed Bill No. 434 – An Act Concerning The Disposition By The
Department Of Transportation Of Land Originally Acquired For The
“Super 7” Highway**

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.

Wilton is situated on the Route 7 corridor and has endured heavy construction for over two years to widen a three mile section of this important traffic artery. In approximately one year, this construction project will be completed. Construction will then begin on the next section from Wilton to the Norwalk Route 7 connector. Route 7 north of Ridgefield has been widened and the last segment is under construction.

This new roadway will greatly relieve north/south traffic congestion and combined with service upgrades to the Norwalk Danbury Branch Line, this corridor's transportation resources will have been greatly improved for the foreseeable future.

The concept of another highway in this same narrow corridor is no longer feasible or necessary. The widening of Route 7 was a major transportation decision that was coupled with

improvements to the Norwalk Danbury Branch Line to expand mass transit usage. Both projects are proceeding with strong local support.

To consider building another major highway (Super 7) is no longer realistic. The cost would be phenomenal due to the necessity to purchase over 40% of the land to enable its construction. The federal government and the State of Connecticut will be under financial stress for the next decade. And even if money was available, a required new environmental impact statement under today's stricter regulations would be almost impossible to obtain.

Therefore, it makes sense to take some positive action to more effectively employ right-of-way land resources that were acquired many years ago. Towns in the Route 7 corridor are in need of land for community recreational purposes – playing fields, hiking and bike trails, gardens and nature preserves – in brief, “green ways” that will expand recreational and quality of life activity.

I urge the Transportation Committee and the Legislature to:

- Allow the Commissioner of Transportation the option to sell or transfer title of the existing right-of-way acquired for the potential use as a Route 7 highway to local communities for recreational and passive conservational purposes:

In summary, valuable state acquired land resources have been idle and unemployed for years. Let's put these resources to better use and in a time of financial need, reinvest land sale proceeds into current critical mass transit projects and other transportation priorities.

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



William F. Brennan
First Selectman