

**Testimony of Edward Crowley, President of Dichello Distributors,
In Support Of Proposed Bill No. 6215 and Proposed Bill No. 6217
Before the Transportation Committee of the General Assembly**

6215

This testimony is submitted in support of Proposed Bill No. 6215 entitled "An Act Concerning the Construction of the Orange Train Station" and Proposed Bill No. 6217 entitled "An Act Encouraging Private Investment in the Infrastructure of the State." Proposed Bill No. 6215 would authorize the Connecticut Department of Transportation to enter into a public-private partnership on behalf of the State for the construction of a passenger train station in Orange and would assist the State in providing funding sources for the construction of the station. Proposed Bill No. 6217 would authorize the solicitation of proposals from the private sector for "transportation facility" projects in order to encourage private investment in the State's infrastructure. We strongly urge and hope that you consider the benefits of cooperation between the public and private sectors at this time and move forward with the proposed legislation.

For the past eleven years, Dichello Distributors has developed land in Orange imperative to the construction of a new rail station. The establishment of a public-private partnership is the best way to ensure this site is utilized in the most cost-efficient and time-efficient manner so the Orange train station project may reach its maximum potential.

There are numerous transit oriented benefits that a new commuter station will provide to the State. Current rail stations in Connecticut have experienced overcrowding as the commuting population continues to grow and residents become more dependent on railways. A new station will help solve congestion problems at existing stations, thus making rail transit more desirable. Providing a desirable and

efficient rail service is critical because it removes cars from the road, which alleviates traffic and emissions. Failure to develop the Orange train station will only worsen the traffic and commuting problems or, worse yet, restrict economic development in the region.

As studies conducted by the Connecticut Department of Transportation have established, there is no question that a rail station in Orange will be utilized and that the need is immediate. The proposed station will enhance accessibility, making Orange and the surrounding areas more attractive to businesses and residents similar to that which has been experienced along Metro North lines across the State. Yale University's West Campus will provide ridership due to the daily commute of students, faculty and staff commuting from the New Haven campus as well as other areas of Connecticut and New York. Moreover, there currently exists a built-in flow of commuters due to the presence of the United Illuminating Company and Southern Connecticut Gas, two large corporations serving much of Connecticut, which are headquartered within 300 yards of the conceived station.

A few years ago, Dichello Distributors approached the State with the idea of a public-private partnership to construct a train station in Orange and the idea has been met with enthusiastic support. Orange area entities and employers including the Town of Orange, Yale University and United Illuminating Company remain in support of this project and this public-private partnership. In a letter addressed to then Governor Rell on May 3, 2010, numerous local businesses of the Town of Orange voiced their support for the construction of this rail station, many of which have implemented expansion plans in anticipation of the construction of the station.

Public-private partnerships reflect the fact that cooperation is more likely to result in timely, meaningful solutions to transportation problems than a go-it-alone approach. These projects provide major public benefits such as reduced highway congestion, cleaner air, improved safety, and enhanced mobility. Additionally, public-private partnerships work in the rail industry. For example, in Rhode Island, the North Kingstown Planning Commission approved the development a rail station known as Wickford Junction Station. Wickford Junction is a joint venture between the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and Cioe Companies, a private developer. When complete, the project will expand rail services of the MBTA and Amtrak in Rhode Island and is considered part of a master plan which includes an expanded garage, as well as development of adjacent and dependent retail and executive office space. The station will provide benefits to the existing residential and retail tenants located around Wickford Junction and will alleviate traffic congestion.

The current economic climate and the limited availability of State resources makes entering into a public-private partnership an ideal option for the State because it allows for financial support and investment from the private sector in the State's infrastructure development. A public-private partnership would enable financing and construction of the Orange train station with less State bond funds because of the private sector investment.

Dichello Distributors has already laid much of the groundwork to construct a station in the Orange which will benefit Yale University, local businesses and residents while mitigating congestion from the highways and train stations, reducing emissions and creating jobs at a time when such jobs are vital. Recently, the Town of Orange Planning & Zoning Commission has proposed the creation of a Transit Oriented

Development District in conjunction with the project and for the development of property near the station.

We strongly urge you to approve Proposed Bill No. 6215 and Proposed Bill No. 6217 and allow the State to move forward with the construction of the Orange train station through the use of a public-private partnership and in the most beneficial and cost-effective manner.