



NEW BRITAIN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Testimony from William F. Millerick, president,
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Regarding state Senate Bill 800
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For the past decade the city of New Britain has taken a leadership position advocating firmly in favor of the New Britain-Hartford Busway project.

The business community through both the hundreds of members of the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown District, as well as elected officials, including most of the state delegation, education officials including Central Connecticut State University and so many others have been enthusiastic in their support.

They have also been forward thinking in their vision for not only the immediate benefits of this project, but the long range potential on economic development and transportation in central Connecticut.

We have supported the project, which is in the final stages of planning, for two primary reasons.

First, the busway would open up a larger employment base for present and future downtown New Britain employers. At the same time, the busway would help to make downtown living more convenient and accessible, thereby encouraging expansion of residential development.

Second, the busway project has always carried with it enormous potential for economic development. Whether it is a major transit

station on Main Street or stops along the route, including one serving Central Connecticut State University, there is significant opportunity for economic and residential development.

The incentives that are expected to be available to developers will make the project attractive to local and regional entrepreneurs.

Associated with the economic development aspects are the hundreds and hundreds of jobs associated with the busway project. These construction jobs will last for several years, providing an employment boost in an area where the construction trades and local construction-related businesses have been hard hit.

The notion of scrapping the New Britain-Hartford Busway after a decade of planning - and just as it is poised to become a reality - is shortsighted, manipulative and deceitful.

At first opponents claimed that a vague concept of a far-off rail line was a better use of time and money.

Now, as we are within months of finalizing the project, desperate critics are manipulating figures in their own selfish interest to falsely claim the project is too expensive.

Rather than constantly complaining about the cost, they should be concentrating on the value of the project – looking forward to its potential to benefit New Britain, Hartford, CCSU and the towns along the route.

This leaping from one criticism to the next, looking for solid ground to land upon is unseemly by the critics - especially those who should be representing the city's interests first - and a direct insult to New Britain and a major state university.

It is a transparently desperate strategy that we will not allow.

Here is the truth, as we have always known it and as the critics also know it.

The New Britain-Hartford Busway is a well-thought out, forward-thinking mass transit project that will immediately relieve congestion on I-84.

The financing is in place and it is a nationally recognized model project for the future of mass transit.

It has passed all of the tests for viability, need and financing. To claim otherwise is disingenuous, at best.

The rail line concept may well be a good and worthy project, clear into the future, when studies have been completed, support organized and financing discussed. Unfortunately, even the most optimistic proponent must admit that it would be years away.

That is why the busway versus rail project is not an "either/or" proposition.

The New Britain-Hartford Busway should not fall victim to hidden agendas, half-truths and heavy-handed public manipulation.

We only want - and have always wanted - what is in the best interest of the city and the state.

The same cannot be said for the critics.