

State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 4200
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423
EMAIL: Gail.Lavielle@housegop.ct.gov

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 16, 2012

H.B. No. 5014 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Miner, and Fellow Members of the Appropriations Committee, I am writing to ask respectfully that you consider eliminating the reduction of rail and bus subsidies detailed on page B-89 of the FY 2013 Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustments document.

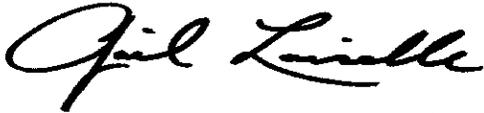
Last September, the DOT announced that all rail and bus fares would increase by 4% annually for three years, starting on January 1, 2012. At a time when most people in Connecticut have seen their taxes rise significantly and many are struggling financially, this increase has hit mass transit users hard. New Haven Line commuters are bearing an even heavier burden, because these new 4% increases come on top of already scheduled statutory increases of 1.25% on January 1, 2012, and 1% in each subsequent year through 2018, designed to help pay for new M-8 rail cars. The cumulative impact of these changes on commuters' wallets is substantial.

While the fare increases linked to the M-8 rail cars were passed into law as part of the 2012-2013 budget, the 4% increases were not. A proposal for the newest fare increases was first introduced last summer, not as a necessity for operating mass transit, but as a way to help balance the state budget. They were part of the executive branch's "Plan B", designed to balance the budget if the state employee unions had voted a second time to turn down the package offered to them. The "Plan B" proposal included an immediate 16.4% rail fare increase, followed by a 1% increase each year through 2018, as well as certain service cuts. The unions accepted the package, and we were told that the budget was balanced, yet the fare increases, unlike many other "Plan B" proposals, stayed on the table. Ultimately, although slightly reduced from those in the initial proposal, they were maintained.

subsidies by amounts equal to (bus) or larger than (rail) the estimated revenue impact of the fare increases effectively diverts the monies away from mass transit to other purposes, and leaves passengers paying higher prices for no improvements.

Charging people for a service and then using the money for something else is not honest and it's not good public policy. I hope you'll consider eliminating the subsidy reductions, replacing them with real spending cuts elsewhere in the budget, and letting the DOT spend the revenues from the fare increases on improving mass transit.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail Lavielle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gail Lavielle
State Representative
43rd District