



State of Connecticut
HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONN. 06106

Testimony in Support of HB 5423
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
March 12, 1012

Chairs Daily and Widlitz, Ranking Members Roraback and Williams, and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of **Raised Bill 5423, *An Act Concerning Oversight of Large Capital Projects***

Overall, the intent of HB 5423 is twofold: first, we want give legislators the information and analysis we need to make good decisions when it comes to voting on large-scale capital projects. Second, we believe that these kinds of projects should be subject to greater scrutiny throughout the legislative process.

Too often, we as legislators are expected to vote on projects that will cost taxpayers tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars with very little detail about a particular project. At times, the authorization to begin the project is minimized to a one or two-sentence description in a large bill among many other projects and provisions. I think we've all been in a situation when we want to vote against a certain project, but it's included in a large bill with dozens of other things that we support.

The New Britain to Hartford busway is an example of a project that was projected to cost almost \$600 million in state and federal tax dollars. The authorization for this project in 2006 read as follows: "The Commissioner of Transportation shall implement the following strategic transportation projects and initiatives: ... Implementing the New Britain-Hartford busway, subject to the availability of federal funds;". This single-sentence implementing authorization was part of a 45-page bill, but this was the only portion of the bill that had anything to do with the busway. At the time this authorization was made, there was no plan in place that included any type of analysis of the project.

Furthermore, to this day, there has been no legislative bond authorization specifically and exclusively for the busway. Under our current process, funds for the project can come from more generic bond authorizations.

Approval of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail line followed the same basic model.

To be clear, we are not making a statement about the merit of these projects. It's the process we're concerned about. That is why we proposed HB 5423. The intent of the proposal is to accomplish the following:

- Define a "large public works project" – a project with a dollar-amount value greater than \$50 million for example.
- Establish a detailed plan for the project, which includes required capital outlays as well as future annual operating expenses.
- Require an independent analysis of the plan by a non-governmental entity.
- Where appropriate and possible, the analysis should show comparable alternative investments.
- Require at least one public hearing, with all research and analysis available to General Assembly members and the public.
- Require that the plan and associated public funding be voted on as a single, separate bill.
- Require that approval of the project allocation by the State Bond Commission be a separate item on the agenda.

What we are basically saying is that large-scale, costly capital projects should be subject to greater scrutiny than other projects.

We welcome any input and feedback to modify the legislation in a way that makes it better.

Thank you for your consideration.