

John C. Peterson

March 2, 2012

Transportation Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
State Capitol,
Hartford Connecticut

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to ask that you do not approve Revised House Bill No. 289 which would establish tolls for the state's share of costs for the expansion of Route 11 and to state my complete opposition to the completion of Route 11 based on information currently available.

Bill 289 is proposed without the benefit and guidance of any formal study of costs or explanation of the mechanism to recover any state investment. The bill itself is vague, ambiguous and raises many questions while setting a precarious precedent for the state.

I am opposed to the proposed legislation for the following reasons:

Expansion of Route 11 is still under study by a variety of state and federal agencies which have yet to determine whether expansion is feasible or justified.

While the expansion of Route 11 has been endorsed by a variety of elected officials the full impact of the project as it relates to safety, environment and economic expansion is unknown. Without updated information, local support would appear to be based on emotion rather than fact and is hardly the basis for proceeding on a project purported to solve the region's problems with a price tag well in excess of \$1 billion.

That there would be an economic benefit for southeastern Connecticut because of an expanded Route 11 is pure speculation.

While many would suggest a Route 11 expansion could improve traffic safety in the region, no specific information is evident to support that premise. In fact information available from the state Department of Transportation would indicate the clear majority of accidents on Route 85 actually occur between the I-395 and I-95 intersections, a relatively small portion of Route 85. The RT 82/85/11 Final Environmental Impact Statement also notes that most accidents were rear-end collisions which were the result of driver behavior and might have been relieved by turning lanes.

Two separate studies were presented, one from 1994-1996 which compared similar locations in 2003 to 2005. That study indicated that accidents west of I-395 to the intersection of Route 82 have been reduced by almost 50% over the two study periods while the accidents between Cross Road and I-95 have more than doubled during the same period. The source of the study was ConnDOT. I am awaiting more detailed information about precise locations that I have requested through Rep. Jutila's office.

While the 2007 study claims the impact of the proposed expanded corridor is limited to a handful of homes that would be directly affected by construction, there would actually be an overwhelming adverse impact on hundreds of homes and businesses along the so-called preferred favored Route 11 corridor. That impact would involve severe environmental disruption and create immense congestion and safety issues for Route 161 plus unmeasured noise, air and visual pollution for the hundreds of homes in its path.

Bill 289 is vague, ambiguous and raises a very large question for me. That it provides that any tolls be located only on the newly constructed portion of the road makes little sense. Will the toll be a dollar or five dollars? How many drivers will pay a premium to travel eight miles?

Such a move would only encourage drivers to further congest local roads as they seek to avoid the toll. If the completion of Route 11 is to embrace the benefits of the existing stretch of road, how can it be suggested that some who travel the road be exempt from its cost?

In our troubled state and national economy we need to exercise courage and care in making decisions involving public funds. Surely the state has far more pressing projects such as the widening of I-95 which would facilitate access to the region and enhance safety for far more people than any Route 11 venture.

Approving this legislation is presumptuous and betrays the confidence citizens have invested in their elected officials to act on facts rather than emotions. It clearly puts the horse before the cart and in doing so demonstrates a predisposition to favor the highway expansion without the proper information for an intelligent and objective decision. It also establishes a dangerous precedent suggesting legislative action could usurp due diligence and the decision making ability of state agencies in road projects throughout the state.

As elected officials you have a fiduciary responsibility to wait for the facts and make the right decision for all citizens and the greater good of Connecticut. To vote for tolls on Route 11 before that project is defined or justified would violate that responsibility. I urge you to exercise logic and reason to vote against Raised Bill No. 289.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If your schedule permits I would appreciate a brief response if you have a compelling reason to support the project. I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Respectfully and Sincerely,


John C. Peterson