



## State of Connecticut

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### Testimony in Support of HB 5128 and HB 5301

**HB 5128: An Act Concerning the Use of Revenue from Bus and Rail Fare Increases  
for Service Upgrades, Operations, and Maintenance**

**HB 5301: An Act Concerning Use of Revenues from Bus and Rail Fare Increases**

### Transportation Committee

February 13, 2013

Good morning, Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner, and former fellow members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 5128 and HB 5301.

Last week, I testified in support of HB 5320, which would require all revenues collected from public transportation fares to be kept in the Special Transportation Fund and used only for transportation purposes. In that testimony, I stressed the urgency of our transportation infrastructure funding requirements and the need to prevent the use of dedicated transportation funds for other purposes, such as keeping the General Fund in balance.

I offer those same arguments in support of HB 5128 and HB 5301, and include them at the end of this testimony for easy reference.

Both HB 5128 and HB 5301, however, go one step further. They would require that all revenue collected from rail and bus fare increases be used for rail and bus operations, maintenance, and upgrades.

The genesis of these bills was the proposal offered last session, during the midterm budget adjustment process, to reduce the state's bus and rail subsidies by amounts equal to (bus) or larger than (rail) the estimated revenue impact of the fare increases scheduled for January 2012. Such subsidy reductions effectively divert the monies away from mass transit to other purposes, and leave passengers paying higher prices for no improvements.

HB 5128 and HB 5301 are timely, because the budget proposal released last week by Governor Malloy includes (page B-81) the suggestion to "reduce subsidy by increasing bus fares and revenue". A fare increase of \$0.25 would become effective on January 1, 2014, and the subsidy reduction would total \$4.059 million in 2014 and \$8.118 million in 2015. There is also a similar suggestion related to ADA paratransit fares, which would increase by 4% on the same date, with subsidy reductions of \$30,771 in 2014 and \$61,542 in 2015.

If we allow these proposed subsidy reductions to pass, we will once again be forcing users of mass transit to pay higher fares not because the costs of serving them are rising, but specifically so that the money can be used for purposes unrelated to mass transit. There is a clear issue of honesty and fairness here. Adopting such a policy is certainly not consistent with the goal of encouraging more people to use mass transit.

I respectfully ask the Transportation Committee to consider imposing a statutory prohibition on the practice of increasing mass transit fares to raise money for other purposes.

For Reference  
*Testimony in Support of HB 5320*  
*An Act Concerning the Revenue Raised from Public Transportation Fares*  
*February 4, 2013*

*It is no secret that our transportation infrastructure has many weaknesses. For example, DOT Commissioner Redeker has recently pointed out the number of bridges that need repair. The New Haven Line, the country's busiest railroad, providing more than 39 million passenger rides each year, is also the most antiquated. Not only is travel on this line uncomfortable, and in many ways inconvenient, but it is also prone to weather-related problems which can make it unsafe for passengers. We saw that in a recent incident when 100-degree weather caused a service interruption that left passengers locked in a non-ventilated rail car in Westport for more than an hour.*

*While Commissioner Redeker and the DOT are to be commended for the progress they have made and are making in these areas, they need adequate funding to continue. Estimates for our needs over the next few years range from \$3 billion to \$5 billion.*

*We know now that we cannot rely on federal funding, which is in dramatically short supply. Meanwhile, OFA is projecting growing annual deficits in the Special Transportation Fund (STF) from 2013, reaching a deficit of \$108 million in 2016. Despite our pressing need for not only improvement, but also repair and maintenance, of our transportation infrastructure, the state never seems to have the necessary funds. While we can debate whether raising more revenue is necessary, it remains true that the transportation-related revenues we do raise from mass transit fares and gasoline taxes have never been safe from plunder for other purposes. Just last year, \$70 million was taken from the STF to close the fiscal 2012 deficit.*

*This way of managing our transportation dollars is not a responsible way to manage our infrastructure. It is also particularly unfair to commuters and other mass transit users, who are paying for a specific service. They should not have to bear the burden of spending that the state can't afford. When they are forced to pay higher prices, the least they should expect in return is better, faster, or safer service. Instead, the state is diverting their money for other purposes. It's tantamount to charging them a tax for riding the trains and buses. It's saying one thing and doing another, and this is neither fair nor honest.*

*Our mass transit needs are urgent. If we don't address them with the urgency they deserve, we will discourage economic activity, endanger our citizens, and cause serious deterioration in our quality of life. We will also risk facing fixes that are even more costly. We need to stare reality in the face and responsibly invest transportation funds in transportation -- where they are needed most.*

*We should be able to show Connecticut that this General Assembly knows how to talk straight and behave responsibly toward the people it represents.*

