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Testimony in Support of HB 5181

An Act Extending the Danbury Branch of the Metro-North Railroad to New Milford

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 5181.

In my testimony last week supporting HB 5180 and HB 5253, which would provide funding for the electrification of the Danbury Branch, I stressed the importance of this rail line for the economy of southwestern Connecticut. I also emphasized the potential for this investment to yield immediate returns in the form of increased ridership and rail fare revenue, due to already existing demand. And I explained that the branch's service area extends well beyond the towns that are located on the line itself.

Electrifying the Danbury Branch to reduce travel times and increase the number of through trains is the next logical stage in the line's development. But HB 5181, which provides for the extension of the line past Danbury to New Milford – another option included in Phase II of the Danbury Branch Line Study – acknowledges the potential of the Danbury Line to extend its economic development and transit benefits even farther. As in the case for electrification, once again, demand is well documented, making the potential for a return on the investment much