

Date: February 2, 2013

From: Susan Papa and David Schatz
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To: Representative Antonio Guerrero, Co-chair of the Transportation Committee
Senator Andrew Maynard, Co-chair of the Transportation Committee

We write this testimony in strong support of **HB5279 - An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for Drainage Improvements to Forest Rd. (aka CT Rte. 122) in New Haven**. We thank Representative Patricia Dillon for convening a cross-constituency meeting about the flooding problem and proposing this bill.

Background: Forest Rd./CT Rte 122 in New Haven is a scenic narrow road bordered by an intact 1800s stone wall and towering trees; it is also a heavily traveled north-south street. Once a country road through farmland, it now winds through a neighborhood of historic homes, a private school, and woods. It also bisects a steep hill. The problem area is a pronounced low point between Edgewood Ave. and Chapel St.: "the dip." Our property is at that spot; our driveway opens onto Rte. 122 directly below the dip and across from Hopkins School's driveway.

Problem: The dip floods quickly and severely even in only moderate rainstorms, creating foot-deep ponds across the entire roadway and washing waves of water and street debris downhill. To add vehicular insult to water injury, this state highway carries a constant flow of tractor-trailer, commercial, and auto traffic, most moving too fast for the limited sight lines even under good weather conditions. (Rte. 122's speed limit is 30 mph.) In a storm, when careless drivers smack into the flood zone at their customary 40 or 50 mph, they also propel water down our hill with pounding, destructive force. When we stand in our driveway during a bad storm, we have to brace one another to be sure we aren't knocked down by the flow racing past our legs, which can be—no lie—shin-deep and chunky.

We can count on at least 6 such garbage-filled "tidal waves" on our property each year. The aftermath presents significant cleanup and ever-worsening erosion of our paved driveway and abutting landscape.

Effects: Repeated flooding results in **severe and costly damage to taxpayer properties** downhill. Our driveway buckled and collapsed in August 2012, stranding and requiring us to completely replace and redesign the pavement, parts of our yard, and garage. (Photos attached.) Homeowner's insurance does not cover this flood damage; our expenses approach \$20,000, and we aren't finished yet. Downhill neighbors have suffered basement flooding and exterior damage, as well as comparable personal expense to mitigate and repair.

The flooding is also a **public safety hazard**: Each event triggers auto accidents, stall-outs, and wrong-way driving to avoid the deepest spots—all genuine dangers on such a busy road.

Causes: The hill plays a role, as does development on it. The underlying culprit, though, is woefully inadequate street drainage. The pipes are roughly 12" in diameter but **should be 3 to 8 times as big**. ConnDOT (to whom we have complained for years) acknowledges that the drainage system dates to the early 1900s, but faults Hopkins School and others for building on the hill in the intervening century. If the state were a parent, then, would it expect its growing child to wear the same pair of shoes, in the same size, from preschool through college?

Please know: This is a decades-old, ongoing problem—NOT the result of freak storms.

We need and request your help. Please support this effort to update Connecticut Route 122's antiquated storm-drain pipes, to preserve property and public safety, and to protect individual taxpayers and property owners from personally bearing the brunt of an inadequate drainage system. **Thank you.**



Property of Susan Papa and David Schatz, 999 Forest Rd. (CT Rte 122), New Haven, CT

August 2012 photos, looking uphill toward Forest Rd./CT 122 from our collapsed/cratered driveway.

LEFT: After rain stopped, but with residual flood water still flowing downhill. Cars at street (traveling L to R beyond fence) are closer to driveway than normal because they are driving irregularly to avoid the flood pond in the road.

BELOW: Same view; aftermath.

NOTE: Bottom of driveway and entire lower yard (not shown) were covered in several inches of street debris, broken pavement, and construction debris from Hopkins School property. Our garage (at base of driveway, not shown) was filled with water and mud. The August storm was severe and the straw that broken the camel's back, but post-street-flooding driveway erosion and cleanup of large areas of our property have been common occurrences for us since purchasing the property in 1999. Neighbors tell us the problem dates back much further.

