

Senator Andrew Maynard, Representative Antonio Guerrera, and members of the Transportation Committee:

Re: Support of Governor's Bill 849

I am pleased to submit testimony in support of Governor's Bill 849 "An Act Concerning Local Bridge Program Reform and Establishing a Local Transportation Capital Program." I am John A. Elsesser, Town Manager of the Eastern Connecticut Town of Coventry. I have served in this capacity for almost twenty-five years. I serve on the Board of Directors of CCM and am Vice Chairman of COST.

It is refreshing that roads and bridges are once again receiving attention they deserve. We applaud the Governor for both the proposal to restore and revitalize the Local Bridge program and modify other initiatives. The proposed bill also reduces the permit process and will improve the pace of progress. The existing program takes an extraordinary amount of time and paperwork. The Towns of Coventry and Columbia are currently in the sixth year of a bridge project and we are just finally entering the final design stage. This legislation should cut years off this process and the increase in grants will encourage towns to move toward a safer roads network.

I have one suggestion for a modification which would allow the State's Local bridge program to cover the local match of the Federal Bridge program. The Federal program requires a twenty percent match. Using the State funds as the match would encourage towns to go through the Federal process instead of the State process, and the twenty percent would be less than the thirty percent maximum grant proposed under this bill. This was allowed in the first year of the Federal Bridge program and then discontinued. It should be a win-win for the towns and the State.

Towns appreciate that local bridges and roadways are once again a State priority.

John A. Elsesser
Town Manager