

I am an avid bike rider of the Airline Trail both the south and northern sections. The idea of expanding the trail from East Hampton into Portland is both an historical and environmental goal that is worthy and greatly needed. Creating a buffer is also an important objective but difficult in areas where development has encroached on the historic railroad Right of Way (ROW). The benefits of this undertaking will be historical preservation, environmental enhancement and an economic improvement. As such, the CT DEEP, CT DOT and other public and private agencies should support this plan with funding and personnel to pursue the completion of the Airline Trail (AT), both the Southern and Northern segments.

However, I am confused by the need for new legislation like HB 5416. I understand that the authorities proposed in this bill already exist as general authorities and duties of the Commissioner of the CT DEEP. The requested authority **HB 5416** Section (b) of the bill can already be found in section 22a-5, 22a-25, 22a-320. My only suggestion is that a buffer zone of 200 feet is excess and that 100 feet will provide the protection needed to maintain the AT's historical and recreational value. The CT DEEP also already has eminent domain authority as found in Sections 22a-25, 22a-320, 23-9 and 23-9a, 23-31 and 23-67.

The requested authority in **HB 5415** Section (b) and (c) of the bill can also be found in Section 23-67 as well as other sections related to State Park and Forest acquisition. It appears that the authority as related to the Appalachian Trail found in Section 23-67 to 23-72 can be expanded to develop any trail or greenway in our State.

I take issue with the use of the word **footpath** as found in **HB 5415** Section (d) of the bill without a specific definition of what is meant by the use of this term. Consider using multi-use trail so that walkers, bikers and equestrian users will be included. Also review the definition for funding that CT DOT can make highway funding available for trail development.

HB 5415 Section (e) is also an authority that has been given to the Commissioner of CT DEEP in numerous places in the Statutes including 23-67 to 23-72, 22a-22 and 22a-21a.

HB 5415 Section (g) is too limiting in that the CT DEEP and CT DOT have funding to be used for recreational trail projects.

It is my opinion that the aims and goals of HB 5415 are significant and useful but amending or using existing State Statutes like Section 23-66 to 23-72 amending it to include the Airline Trail State Park will do the job without much effort.

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