

Testimony of John Hartwell
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee

Good afternoon Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you, and thanks also to Senator Williams for re-nominating me to the CT Commuter Rail Council.

My name is John Hartwell, and I've been on the Council since 2009 and am now the Vice Chair. I live within walking distance of the Greens Farms Station in Westport, and I commuted daily into New York City for nine years on Metro North. In addition to my role on the Council I am also active in my community in several non-profit organizations, and most recently, as the Chair of the local Democratic Party.

Everyone knows that 2013 was a terrible year for commuters and for Metro North. Beginning with the derailment in Bridgeport last May, the tragic death five weeks later of a maintenance superintendent working on the tracks, the September shutdown due to electric failure, the December disaster in Spuyten Duyvil that killed four people, and a computer glitch that again shut the whole line down in the middle of an evening commute, 2013 was a year to forget.

I'm sure you are all familiar with the recent Federal Railroad Administration report that excoriated the lack of a safety culture at Metro North and demanded a series of actions to fundamentally change the way the railroad operates. As you know, Governor Malloy met recently with the new President of Metro North, Joseph Giulietti, and the railroad has launched a "100 day plan" in response to the Governor's concerns. We all wish him well. We want him to succeed.

I hope you're also familiar with the recent study by the Regional Plan Association entitled "Getting Back on Track: Unlocking the Full Potential of the New Haven Line". Published just this past January, the RPA calls for investing an additional \$3.6 billion in railroad infrastructure above the amount currently planned by the Department of Transportation. The simple truth is this: we have brand new cars operating on 150-year old right of way, with mechanical bridges and catenary that pre-date World War I, and a communications system that fails to deliver.

There's an old expression, "you can't put lipstick on a pig", but that's essentially what we've done. The M-8s are the lipstick, the infrastructure is the pig. No one wants to hear about spending more money, but more money is the key. It's next to impossible to operate a safe, reliable, cost-effective service on a rotting infrastructure, regardless of what changes Metro North is able to make.

Commuters in Fairfield County made the choice to live in our towns because they thought the railroad could get them to work and back every day. Now they're not so sure, and that makes them worried about their future and angry about the extra lost time with their families and their businesses. We need to assure them that help is on the way.

Thank you.