



QUESTIONS FOR CONNECTICUT COMMUTER RAIL COUNCIL NOMINEES

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CONNECTICUT COMMUTER RAIL COUNCIL (CGS §§ 13b-212b, 13b-212c)

- The council studies and investigates all aspects of the daily operation of commuter lines in the state, monitors their performance, and recommends changes to improve their efficiency and quality of service. The council may request, and receive from any department, agency, or political subdivision of the state, any assistance and data it requests to properly carry out its duties.
- It must work with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to advocate for commuter line customers and recommend ways to improve the lines. The council must annually report its findings and recommendations to the governor, legislature, DOT commissioner, Connecticut Public Transportation Commission, New York Metro North Rail Commuter Council, and Management Advisory Board and Office of the Inspector General of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in New York.

NOMINEE QUESTIONS

1. In the past year, Metro North has been in the news for the wrong reasons – fatal accidents, power failures, and stranded commuters. What can the council do to restore trust in Metro North? What role should DOT play?
2. Metro North is a subsidiary of the MTA, a New York authority. Connecticut does not have a representative on the MTA board. Should it have one? Are there other ways to influence the operation of Metro North? If so, what are they?

3. Connecticut's contractual arrangement with Metro North apparently leaves the state with few options for redress. Several legislators have said the state should consider seeking another entity to operate the rail service. Do you support such an idea? Why or why not? Short of seeking another operator, what steps could the state take to ensure Metro North is held accountable?
4. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) are reviewing Metro North's operations and record. They have meanwhile ordered or recommended various short-term fixes, such as placing audio and video recorders on locomotive cabs and installing permanent speed restriction signs. What role, if any, should the council play in ensuring that Metro North complies with these and other recommendations? Are you satisfied with the federal response to the accidents?
5. Are you familiar with the 100-Day Action Plan Metro North issued on March 3? If so, are you satisfied with the plan? Why or why not?
6. The FRA recently released its report on Metro North, finding that it emphasized on-time performance at the expense of safety. What steps should Metro North take to improve the railroad's safety culture? How would you strike a balance between safety and efficiency?
7. Do you favor a deadline by which Metro North must prove it is committed to improve service and win back customer confidence? How much time should it have to do so?
8. Besides the complaints about the recent series of Metro North accidents, commuters at a recent forum complained that the new M-8 cars have had mechanical troubles, and that trains are dirty, overcrowded, and running behind schedule. How can the council ensure that Metro North addresses these concerns?
9. What types of transit-oriented development near existing and new rail stations do you think would have the greatest benefit for people riding the trains and for attracting new riders? What can the council do to encourage these developments?
10. What issues may be hampering the development of better service on branch lines, in particular the Danbury and Waterbury branches? Should the Danbury line be extended to New Milford?

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