

Testimony Submitted By Suzanne Bates, Policy Director for the Yankee Institute for Public Policy to the Transportation Committee in support of HB 5949

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The Yankee Institute for Public Policy is a Connecticut think tank that develops and advances policy solutions to promote a smart, limited government; fairness for taxpayers; and an open road to opportunity for all the people of our state.

The Yankee Institute supports HB 5949, which would require the Department of Transportation commissioner to prioritize projects, and to put repair of existing infrastructure ahead of building new projects.

Clearly our state has infrastructure needs that must be addressed, and we support this committee's efforts to find ways to fund those infrastructure needs in a responsible way and in a way that does not increase the overall tax burden on Connecticut residents.

We are particularly concerned with the state's \$365 million project to develop new infrastructure along the New Haven to Springfield rail line. This project will connect new commuters to the Metro North rail line, which is already overburdened and under-maintained.

According to our Department of Transportation's own projections, at its maximum the Hartford rail line is expected to carry under 3,500 passengers per day. Under this scenario, the state will have spend millions every year in tax dollars just to maintain the rail line and other infrastructure, with receipts from fares projected to cover only 10 percent of the operating costs.

Meanwhile, the estimated 150,000 daily commuters who use the Metro North rail line are frustrated as they deal with significant delays and poorly maintained infrastructure.

We ask committee members to use existing transportation dollars wisely. We ask you to find better ways to prioritize the spending of transportation dollars, and to carefully consider how much more debt to add to the state's already-high debt burden.