



CONNECTICUT
BUSINESS & INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Transportation Committee
Hartford, CT
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Testifying in support of PSB 481 AAC The Development Of An Enhanced Accident Response Plan

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea, and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA supports PSB 481.

In a 2013 survey of Connecticut businesses, the number one transportation related concern was highway traffic congestion. Connecticut is home to some of the most heavily congested highways in the country - in particular the I-95, I-84 and I-91 corridors. Respondents noted that congestion plays a role in planning work schedules, limits their markets, prevents meetings with customers, holds up delivery times, and disrupts logistics. On any given day, one accident can mean the difference between getting to work on time or being hours late.

We can't completely prevent accidents from happening, but we can take the steps other states have to minimize their impact on traffic. PSB 481 asks the Commissioner of Transportation and the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (although I would suggest the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection is more appropriate) to look to see what other states and cities are doing to alleviate traffic congestion caused by accidents.

There are some excellent models that can be used for guidance - for example:

- The SafeClear program in Houston, Texas was enacted in 2005 and tows disabled or abandoned vehicles off the highway to the nearest exit at no cost to the driver. Although there was some cost, the city has calculated it has had a 10:1 benefit-cost ratio.
- The Incident Response Program in Washington state, during the first quarter of 2012 alone, cleared over 10,000 accidents and saved \$10.7 million in wasted time and fuel. Accidents were cleared from the highway in an average of 14 minutes, and showed a 9:1 benefit-cost ratio.

- The Rapid Incident Scene Clearance Program in Florida provides a clearance time incentives for responders to tractor trailer accidents. The heavy duty towers are given a \$2,500 bonus if the accident is cleared within 90 minutes of their arrival. If the accident hasn't been cleared within 3 hours, \$10 is deducted for each additional minute needed to clear the highway.

There may be other methods that can be utilized as well, including more cameras on highways, and police responding to accidents with total surveying equipment or photogrammetric technology. PSB 481 allows the Commissioner of Transportation the flexibility to develop a program that works best for Connecticut.

I have attached proposed language for future drafts of PSB 481, as well as articles on the virtues of rapid response programs in other states.

We encourage the committee to support PSB 481.