



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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February 4, 2015

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and Members of the Environment Committee,

I am Senator Paul Formica from the 20th district representing the towns of Old Saybrook, Bozrah, Salem, Montville, East Lyme, Old Lyme, Waterford and New London. I am here to support Senate Bill 345, ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE WATER TAXI AT THE HERITAGE PARK IN THE TOWNS OF GROTON AND NEW LONDON.***

The Thames River Heritage Park Steering Committee has been working very hard during the past year to get this idea up and running. If the water taxi can receive funding from the state the investment return will be a boon for the state and the region. With bipartisan help especially from Senator Andrew Maynard of Stonington - who helped pass legislation launching the Heritage Park concept - this water taxi service had a successful pilot run in the fall.

Its purpose is to tie together four historic attractions on both sides of the Thames River - Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold state parks, the Submarine Force Museum and Nautilus, and the proposed National Coast Guard Museum. In addition there are a dozen other sites scattered in the area that would link the entire Thames River Heritage Park together as a regional attraction.

People visiting the area appreciate the access to the tourist sites through the water taxi. It is an idea that has a lot of potential given the nature of the area and the location of all of the historic attractions. The New London area has the ability to thrive if tourists and business owners can connect. The water taxi does just that.

The funding this bill is asking for will enable public and private partnerships to launch a much needed mode of transportation along this vital waterway. With the right plan in place this transportation investment can be the first link to connect a broad network of destinations that until now have been isolated from one another.

Imagine the growth of visitors to the sites and to businesses in the area because they have the ability to get there.

The Thames River Heritage Park mission is simple: The Park will be a network of people, communities, institutions, sites and stories connected by and to the historic waterfront and natural landscape of the Thames River and Long Island Sound.

The park will engage residents and visitors in a rich program of events, culture and experiences that celebrate the diverse peoples and traditions that have shaped the life of the region.

The park will be designed, programmed and promoted to make that heritage and culture vivid and accessible to all. Thank you for your time.