



Bridging Business & Community

Re: Testimony of Susan R. Bailey and Al Valente, Co-Chairs, Groton Business Association on S.B. No. 345 (Raised)
AN ACT CONCERNING THE WATER TAXI AT THE HERITAGE PARK IN THE TOWNS OF GROTON AND NEW LONDON
before the Environment Committee, February 4, 2015

To: Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr, Representative James Albis, and Members of the Environment Committee

Gentlemen:

The Groton Business Association (GBA) is pleased to have this opportunity to testify in support of this legislation to provide funding for water taxi service between Groton and New London. The GBA's mission is to enrich the overall economic vitality of Groton, and we believe the Thames River Heritage Park will serve to aggregate existing and planned major attractions, and integrate the various cultural and heritage locations along the Thames River to form a more compelling center for tourism. We further believe it will position the area as a destination and growing tourism base in Connecticut.

By virtue of connecting the historical assets in the area, the Thames River Water Taxi between Groton and New London is a linchpin component for the Park. The water taxi has enormous potential both as a service to tourists and as an economic stimulus in Groton and the entire region. The 2014 Water Taxi pilot program, run over two September weekends, served more than 4,000 riders during its four day trial and resulted in striking increases in visitor numbers at historic sites and businesses located near its three stops.

With landing docks already in place at the Thames River Landing in Groton, and at New London's Fort Trumbull and downtown locations, we can foresee a multitude of visitors arriving by boat, taking the short walk to explore nearby sites, and patronizing shops, restaurants and museums. Increased visitors to the area will, in turn, spur additional retail development which will attract more visitors and create a virtuous cycle of economic growth.

In conclusion, we feel the Thames River Heritage Park will be a catalyst for cultural and educational initiatives, will attract incremental visitors to the area, and will spark additional retail development. We urge approval of funding for the Thames River Water Taxi. We believe it will serve to move development of the Heritage Park forward and in turn begin a process that will help spur a renaissance of economic recovery in the communities along the Thames River in Southeastern Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Bailey

Al Valente