



QUESTIONS FOR CONNECTICUT COMMUTER RAIL COUNCIL NOMINEE

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

The council is an advisory body that 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 needs 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 few years, Metro North has been in the news for the wrong reasons – fatal accidents, power failures, and stranded commuters. It was in the headlines again recently for the worst accident in its history, an accident that killed six people and injured more than a dozen in Valhalla, N.Y. Legislators want to make sure a similar crash doesn't occur on the New Haven Line.

- a. What can the council do to ensure that Metro North is operating as safely as it can?
 - b. What can the council do to restore trust in Metro North?
 - c. What role should DOT play in restoring that trust and ensuring that Metro North is operating as safely as possible?
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 or can you identify other ways to influence the operation of Metro North?
3. Do you favor setting benchmarks and deadlines for improving safety? How would the council measure safety and recognize when a safety goal has been reached?
4. 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. Is such an idea feasible? Why or why not? Short of seeking another operator, how can the state hold Metro North accountable?
5. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) have ordered or recommended a number of short-term fixes for Metro North, such as placing audio and video recorders on locomotive cabs and installing permanent speed restriction signs. How can the council ensure that Metro North complies with these and other recommendations?
6. The FRA has criticized Metro North for emphasizing on-time performance at the expense of safety. What steps should Metro North take to improve the railroad's safety culture? How could Metro North strike a balance between safety and efficiency?
7. Federal regulators last year found that a Metro North train engineer who had fallen asleep because of undiagnosed sleep apnea apparently caused a December 1, 2013 derailment that killed four people. Metro North subsequently began testing its engineers for sleep disorders as part of its effort to improve its safety culture. How can the council or legislature best ensure that Metro North follows through on such efforts? Should the legislature invite Metro North management to attend hearings or appear before it on a regular basis?

8. DOT has praised Metro North's recent efforts to reach out to riders and make it easier for them to voice their concerns and experiences. In addition to holding several forums around the state, Metro North has created an online feedback link where it can respond to riders' comments. Do you believe these efforts are sufficient? Do you think riders feel their concerns are being heard? What else can Metro North do to improve its customer service?
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 as the governor has suggested? How should the state pay for these improvements?
11. What steps should Metro North take to increase ridership?

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