

**Testimony of Allen Steiger, 5 Cherry Street, Niantic in support of for Proposed S.B. 264 AN
ACT CONCERNING A RAIL STATION AT NIAN TIC FOR SHORELINE EAST.
Transportation Public Meeting on February 11, 2015**

Overview

The proposed act is to construct a new rail station for Shoreline East at Niantic.

Background

Niantic had a train station for decades, but was closed in the 1970's when Amtrak discontinued their "Clamdigger" commuter service. Today, commuters have to drive to Old Saybrook or New London to catch a train.

In 2011 a committee was formed to bring a new rail station to Niantic to help reduce heavy traffic congestion along Route 95, to increase ridership on Shoreline East and to help grow local businesses. This committee evaluated potential sites and presented their findings to the DOT. Feedback from the DOT supported the project and recommended a feasibility study be conducted with Amtrak to evaluate environmental work and a rail capacity study, which is estimated to cost approximately \$350,000.

In 2014 a request for a grant was submitted to The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to fund the feasibility study as part of the Transit-Oriented Development Planning Grant Program .

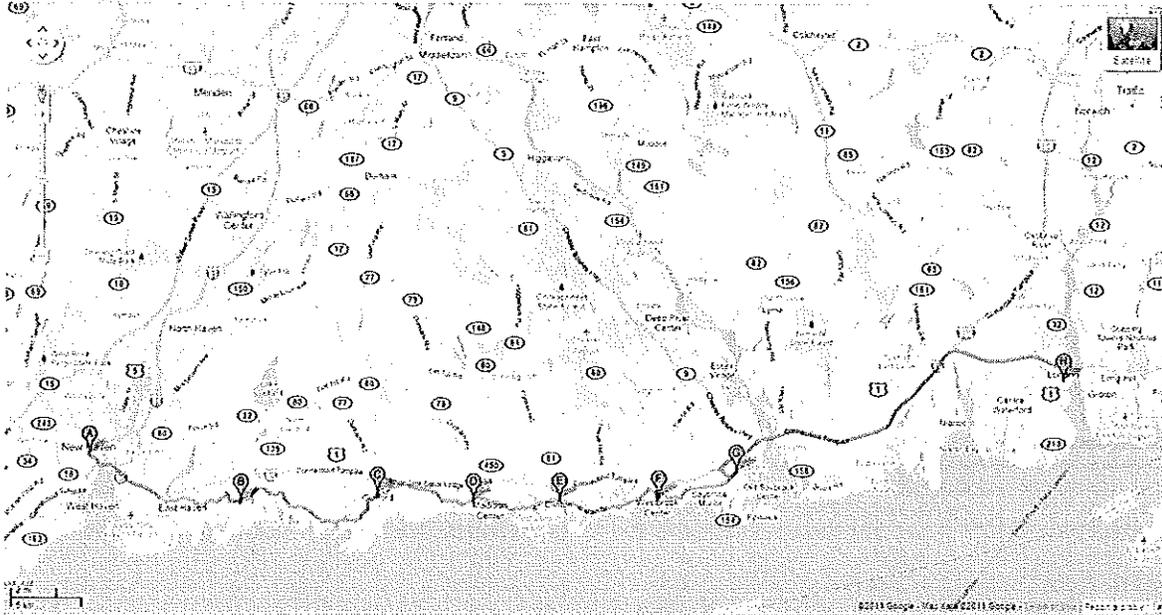
Four potential sites were evaluated. The committee's recommended site has numerous positive features, including an existing parking lot, with the potential to expand. It has an existing Amtrak underpass, which makes it cost effective by not having to construct a new overpass. It has an existing ticket structure with restrooms and is only steps from local businesses, restaurants and Niantic's boardwalk and beach.

Location

Shore Line East rail stations currently have a very large gap between Old Saybrook and New London. Commuters East of the Connecticut River are currently required to take Route 95 over the Connecticut River Bridge to get to the Old Saybrook railroad station, which adds additional traffic to an already congested section of Route 95. This bottleneck could be avoided and highway congestion reduced with a rail station in Niantic.

This proposal also ties in well with other transportation initiatives in the region.

Existing Shore Line East Train Stations



Benefits

- Reduce traffic and congestion on Route 95, especially during rush hour and busy summer periods
- Increase ridership on Shoreline East and Metro North
- Reduce commute time
- Reduce gasoline consumption and related pollution
- Improve highway safety
- Stimulate local business
- Increase property values

Cost Effective

- Niantic has an existing underpass, which would avoid the cost of building an overpass.
- The proposed site has an existing parking lot with the space to expand as needed.
- The proposed site already has an existing ticket structure with restrooms.

Proposed Site - Downtown Niantic at the Hole in the Wall Beach



Existing structure with ticket booth and restrooms



Broad Regional Support

- Senator Paul Formica
- Representative Ed Jutila
- CT DOT
- East Lyme Township