



# CCM 2015 Testimony

900 CHAPEL STREET, 9th FLOOR, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-2807 PHONE (203) 498-3000 FAX (203) 582-0314

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## ***TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE***

February 11, 2015

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 156 towns and cities and over 95% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

- SB 479,        **“An Act Authorizing Special Tax Obligation Bonds of the State for Upgrades to Rail Infrastructure”**  
SB 511,        **“An Act Concerning a Study to Increase Mass Transit and Rail Usage in Fairfield County”**  
HB 5949,      **“An Act Requiring a Priority System for Transportation Infrastructure Projects”**

CCM supports these proposals which would study, fund, and improve Connecticut's rail transportation infrastructure – and has long advocated for state investments in infrastructure as a top legislative priority.

### Background:

According to a 2013 CNBC poll, Connecticut ranked 49th out 50th in transportation and infrastructure quality – meanwhile, the Metro-North Commuter Railroad became the busiest commuter railroad, with regard to monthly ridership, in the United States in 2014 – with the New Haven Line alone providing more than 135,000 daily rides. Unfortunately, reliability and safety remain a concern, as there have been a rise in delays and accidents, some fatal, which have claimed four lives and injured more than 120 people.

The development of statewide strategic plan to improve and invest in this vital rail system will enhance safety and reliability, and promote economic development. Given the fact that more than 80% of commuters drive to work while less than 5% use public transportation - it is imperative that such investments are part of a comprehensive 'Connecticut Rail Plan' that will maintain and improve rail operations throughout the State – both commuter and freight.

Improvements to our rail infrastructure is a cost effective means to reduce traffic congestion, ease the wear-and-tear of roadways, and promote growth. While progress has been made to increase the amount of new railcars on the tracks – Connecticut needs a bolder rail enhancement plan that meets the needs of all four corners of the State with a focus on such critical areas as the Danbury and Waterbury lines.

The expansion of freight rail service would also augment the development and competitiveness of Connecticut's deep water ports. The opportunities derived from an efficient and cost effective freight rail service, to and from

our ports, would be endless. Such rail improvements would not only mean a reduction in the amount of trucks on the highways, but equally as important, would be a catalyst for Connecticut to serve as the shipping gateway to New England, rather than a rest stop, for many businesses.

The 2015 State Legislature should make long-term investments in the operation and infrastructure of Connecticut's railway transportation network, for both commuter and freight, a top transportation priority.

CCM urges the Committee to **favorably report these proposals.**

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If you have any questions, please contact Randy Collins, Senior Legislative Associate, at [rcollins@ccm-ct.org](mailto:rcollins@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 498-3000.