



March 9, 2016

State of Connecticut  
General Assembly  
Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Albis and fellow members  
Committee On Environment

RE: Raised Bill No. 385

The New England Central Railroad (NECR) is a shortline railroad that owns and operates approximately 350 miles of mainline and auxiliary railroad track and associated infrastructure from near the Canadian border in Vermont to New London, CT. We operate over 56 mainline miles of track within the State of Connecticut. The NECR provides rail freight service to Connecticut businesses that depend on the safe and efficient delivery of their products. These commodities range from agricultural to manufacturing and recycling.

Bill No. 385 contains language that the NECR opposes about vegetation control along our right of way.

The Federal Railroad Administration has existing Federal regulations that require all railroads operating in the United States to control vegetation along their right of way. These regulations are in place to provide proper drainage, proper clearances for rolling stock, safety for railroad employees and the general public, and allow for sustaining the physical plant (railroad ties, grade crossings, etc.). The NECR fully complies with these regulations by both spraying and cutting vegetation. The NECR uses licensed vegetation control contractors that also fully comply with these and other regulations. The FRA enforces these regulations through field inspections.

Vegetation control along the NECR is restricted to within the railroad's right of way (track and immediate adjoining land for support and drainage). In general, this is about a 100-foot right of way along the mainline plus auxiliary tracks such as passing sidings and yard tracks. Very few changes, if any, occur from year to year for the areas that are covered by railroad vegetation control.

This legislation would place burdensome restrictions on the railroad's vegetation control efforts by requiring multiple advance contacts that would be cumbersome and could cause delays in the vegetation control process. The NECR operates through numerous municipalities, over 56 miles of mainline trackage. The application of weed spray has to be done on a seasonal basis to be effective. Actual application dates and areas can vary due to weather conditions (such as rain) and railroad operating schedules. The weed spraying is generally done by a hi-rail vehicle (a truck with special on track rail wheels that allows it to run on the railroad track as well as over the road).

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An NECR employee that is qualified on federal mandated safety and operating rules as well as the physical territory is with the contractor for oversight and safe operating methods.

It is also important to note that shortline railroads operate much like small businesses with limited resources. These proposed regulations will increase costs to the railroads that could impact funding available for other railroad physical plant work.

For the reasons and concerns outlined above, the NECR is opposed to this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. D. Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles D. Hunter  
Assistant Vice President, Government Affairs  
Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc.  
On behalf of New England Central Railroad