

Association of Commuter Rail Employees

Statement of Marcellus Edwards
Transportation Committee
House Joint Resolution 1
February 29, 2016

Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Marcellus Edwards. I am legislative chair of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE) and represent the organization today in support of House Joint Resolution 1, *Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Resources of the Special Transportation Fund*.

Our members are conductors, locomotive engineers, signalmen, yardmasters, assistant stationmasters, power supervisors and rail traffic controllers in the Metro-North Railroad system. I maintain that our members do their jobs well and they do it with a very high degree of professionalism.

The people who ride our trains are good people who depend on our membership to get them to and from their destinations each day. It might be the dad going to work from Stamford to Wall Street in Manhattan. Or, it might be a mom commuting from Milford to her job in New Haven. It could be students riding to and from their school or college. Maybe it is a family going together to a Yankees game or event in New York. Whatever the reason, tens of thousands of people use Metro-North's New Haven line every day. Above all, our job is to get our passengers to their destinations safely and on-time.

Our ridership is hitting historic and record levels. In 2015, there were 40.3 million individual trips on the Metro-North system, more than ever before. But much of our equipment and infrastructure is old, is failing and is in need of upgrade or replacement. We need additional new cars; we need new bridges; we need new tracks, we need to complete the new overhead lines, and we need more parking and station expansions. That's why we support Governor Malloy's 30-year plan for infrastructure modernization. It will help drive the state's economy forward.

The five-year ramp-up would dedicate \$1.74 billion to the infrastructure needs of our commuter rail system. This includes Metro-North, Shoreline East and the developing New Haven to Hartford to Springfield line.

There is skepticism out there that new monies raised for transportation will actually go for transportation. The solution is House Joint Resolution 1, a constitutional amendment to create a "lockbox". Let's put this to a vote of the people and let them decide. If it passes, the message is

delivered—our Constitution would require that every penny of revenues raised for transportation will go for transportation. The public deserves no less.

Our customers tell us they are willing to pay what is needed to have a first-rate commuter rail system in Connecticut. But, they also tell us they are wary that transportation dollars will actually go for this purpose and not be diverted elsewhere. Let's reassure the riding public that we'll keep our word. We can do that with the passage of House Joint Resolution 1.

ACRE appreciates the leadership that Governor Malloy and your committee have shown on this issue. Thank you for your time, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.