



MetroHartford Alliance Statement in Support of Governor's House Joint Resolution No. 1

Connecticut General Assembly
Transportation Committee
February 29, 2016

The MetroHartford Alliance serves as the region's economic development leader and the City of Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, and arts and higher education institutions as well as the municipalities of North Central Connecticut. Our mission is to ensure that the region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, capital, and talent so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, play, work, start and grow a business, and raise a family.

The Alliance is also part of a coalition of Connecticut's eight metro chambers of commerce and CBIA that has submitted a letter to the Governor and the Legislature urging sustained interaction between private sector and public sector leaders, greater focus on economic growth, and significantly strengthened spending discipline. Two of our specific recommendations are the adoption of two Constitutional amendments this session for inclusion on the November 8th ballot: one to reestablish an effective spending cap and one to ensure that transportation based revenue is used exclusively for transportation infrastructure; we have submitted a letter to Governor Malloy and the legislature on these recommendations.

In submitting this testimony in support of House Joint Resolution No. 1 and its goals and principles, we first salute the Governor's advocacy for investment in a best in class transportation system as set forth in his Let's Go CT plan and this Committee's continued support of the critical underpinning of such a system to sustained employment growth in a highly competitive global economy. We also appreciate the Governor's advocacy for the increased and secured funding for such investment and for forming the Transportation Finance Panel (the "Panel") to make recommendations on the sources and amounts of such funding over a 30 year period. Those recommendations include increasing the gasoline tax, the implementation of electronic tolls, and several others that are controversial and will be more so in the context of Connecticut's current economy and fiscal challenges.

The adoption of a Constitutional amendment is a serious undertaking and requires a clear articulation of the amendment's principles which are intended to govern the State for generations. We applaud the Governor and the Legislature for investing the intellect and time to assure the voters that their ratification on November 8th of a Constitutional amendment will legally secure sufficient and sustainable sources of the funding needed for a best in class transportation system.

We have had numerous conversations with members of the bar to understand the difference in approaches to Constitutional amendments taken by HJR No.1 and the one that is embodied in the 1991 Constitutional spending cap. Understanding that difference is critical given the less than stellar history of the cap in governing the growth in spending and the use of surpluses and the fact that the 2015 opinion of the Attorney General has rendered it unenforceable.

We deeply respect the legislative process that leads to the passage of a Constitutional amendment and urge you to adopt HJR No. 1 and its core principles and goals this session. We look forward to working with the Governor, you, and our investors to champion the adoption of a Constitutional amendment on November 8th that will secure transportation based revenues for investment in transportation infrastructure and then to begin the work next January to review and implement a number of the Panel's funding recommendations. By doing both, we will dramatically accelerate the requisite investment in our transportation infrastructure, one of our most important assets for sustained economic and employment growth.

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