



## **The Connecticut Commuter Rail Council Supports H.J. No. 1 resolution, proposing a state constitutional amendment to protect the resources of the Special Transportation Fund.**

Esteemed Transportation Committee members:

As the chairperson of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, I am submitting testimony in **support of H.J. No. 1 resolution, proposing a state constitutional amendment to protect the resources of the Special Transportation Fund** on behalf the Council. The Rail Council voted unanimously to support the bill at our February 17 meeting in Hartford.

There are three pillars on which we're placing our support.

**First, and most obviously, this state cannot afford to underfund transportation.**

We all agree that we have a long list of immediate transportation infrastructure issues that need to be addressed. We have aging, well, EVERYTHING – road, bridges, rail lines, trains.

Without protected funds for large-scale transportation projects, we could find ourselves facing serious, dangerous transportation problems in the future. And, as a part of a group that represents the over one hundred thousand Connecticut main line, branch line, Shore Line East and soon the Hartford line riders, I can tell you that we hear first-hand of the impact poor rail transportation has on the state. People are threatening to move because of overcrowded or late trains, with driving along the I-95 corridor an unpalatable option.

Here's a short list of top priority rail projects:

- Rehab and / or replace all fixed bridges on the New Haven line
- Upgrade selected stations on New Haven line and branch lines
- Purchase additional M8 cars
- Communication and signal upgrades
- Replace diesel locomotives and coaches for Hartford line, Waterbury and Danbury branches

**Second, funds earmarked for transportation have been diverted in the past. This can no longer be tolerated.**

We need to demonstrate that we're serious about taking care of transportation issues, and a constitutional lockbox sends a strong message to citizens, businesses and other states that we're committed to working through our 5 year and 30 year plans. In the past, it was too easy to divert money from the fund, which is why the Governor has stated that he won't support additional revenue for transportation until a constitutional lockbox is in place. We desperately need that additional revenue.

**Third, we believe new language in the bill satisfies our concerns that money might be diverted before entering the fund.**

The proposed bill is clear in its intent that all income statutorily designed for this fund cannot be diverted from the time of implementation and forward.

Additionally, the legislature can enact no legislation that would divert the funds because protections are in place in the State Constitution to ensure money that goes into the fund cannot be taken out.

In closing, we realize the General Assembly makes difficult decisions every day regarding fund allocations. It's not easy to choose between competing priorities. But we must find a way forward for transportation or risk losing the foundation on which we stand: Children to school. People to work. Products to businesses.

The Rail Council appreciates your hearing our testimony today. Thank you.

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The CT Commuter Rail Council is an independent state board that acts as an advocate for commuters throughout the state. Established in 2012 by the CT General Assembly, members monitor and investigate performance and recommend changes to improve commuter rail service. Visit [www.ctcommuterrailcouncil.org](http://www.ctcommuterrailcouncil.org) for more information.