



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
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Transportation Committee
Public Testimony
February 6, 2017

Testimony in SUPPORT of
HJ 54 - RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL TO
CONSTRUCT AN ALTERNATIVE AMTRAK ROUTE THROUGH SOUTHEAST CONNECTICUT
SB 253 - AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPAL APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO RAIL SERVICE
SB 263 - AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO RAIL SERVICE

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, and Senator Leone, Transportation Committee Vice Chairs, and esteemed members of the Committee. As the State Representative for the 23rd District (Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Westbrook) I stand in strong support of HJ 54, SB 253, and SB 263. All three of these proposals were developed due to a flawed plan by the Federal Railroad Administration and its recommendations for a high-speed rail bypass through Southeastern Connecticut.

Back in January of 2016, word quickly spread of a Federal Railroad Administration plan to upgrade the Northeast Corridor ("NEC Future") that included the potential for high speed rail. One of the proposed alternatives included a bypass from Old Saybrook, CT to Kenyon, RI that would have placed new tracks through several towns along the shoreline. Many affected residents learned of this plan after it was too late to attend the poorly-advertised FRA public hearings, but residents sent in over 1,000 pieces of testimony and over 3,000 signatures. Unfortunately, the FRA did not listen to the people of Southeastern Connecticut (despite opposition from Senators Blumenthal and Murphy, Congressman Courtney, and many state and local officials) and included the bypass within their preferred alternative.

If the bypass were to be built, it would devastate open space, cultural and historical landmarks, environmentally precious areas, farm land, homes, and businesses. The threat alone of this plan has caused unrest in many communities and has affected home sales and home values. I have previously referred to it as a 'black cloud' hovering over the community.

Many of my constituents, myself included, feel this proposal was 'railroaded' through and those affected most were not given due consideration; hence, why Senator Formica and I proposed SB 253 and SB 263. The goal of these proposals would require municipalities to hold referendums in order to approve of changes made to rail service in terms of laying down new tracks where no tracks currently exist. It is in our mind that no state funding should be approved unless every municipality agrees to a plan since state funds would be required in order to build this bypass should it be approved.

In addition, I believe the Connecticut General Assembly should send a message to the Federal Railroad Administration and oppose the Old Saybrook, CT to Kenyon, RI bypass by passing HJ 54. Many elected officials in Connecticut and Rhode Island have already expressed bipartisan opposition – as has Governor Malloy and Governor Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island. While improvements to rail are important and necessary for our future, we must be smart about it and not destroy communities in the process. This bypass proposal was poorly conceived and should be removed from the NEC Future proposal before the FRA makes a final recommendation. Time is ticking, so it is important to move quickly on this and pass HJ 54.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of these three proposals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devin Carney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Devin Carney
State Representative, 23rd District