

SENATOR PAUL FORMICA
TWENTIETH SENATE DISTRICT

Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue, Suite 3400
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591
Capitol: (800) 842-1421
E-Mail: Paul.Formica@cga.ct.gov
Website: www.SenatorFormica.com



State of Connecticut
SENATE

ASSISTANT SENATE REPUBLICAN
MAJORITY LEADER

CO-CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

MEMBER
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

Transportation Committee Public Hearing
February 6, 2017

Testimony Regarding:

House Joint Resolution No. 54 Resolution Concerning the Federal Railroad Administration's Proposal to Construct an Alternative Amtrak Route Through Southeast Connecticut
Senate Bill No. 253 An Act Requiring Municipal Approval of Changes to Rail Service
Senate Bill No. 263 An Act Concerning Municipal Approval of Changes to Rail Service.
Senate Bill No. 577 An Act Concerning Deriving Under the Influence with a Child as a Passenger
Submitted by Senator Paul Formica

Senator Boucher, Senator Leone, Representative Guerrero, Representative Carney and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of multiple proposals before this committee today.

I want to begin with sharing my strong support for **House Joint Resolution No. 54 - Resolution Concerning the Federal Railroad Administration's Proposal to Construct an Alternative Amtrak Route Through Southeast Connecticut.** I am proud to introduce this Resolution with Representative Carney, which asks that the Connecticut General Assembly stand up together to object to the proposal by the Federal Railroad Administration to construct a bypass on the Northeast Corridor rail line. The proposal would create a massive disturbance between Old Saybrook, Connecticut to Kenyon, Rhode Island through the scenic and historic towns of southeastern Connecticut. While we can all appreciate the desire to enhance transportation throughout our state, this proposal is deeply flawed and would cause significant damage to the local economy, communities and natural beauty of southeastern Connecticut. This project would involve digging a tunnel under the Connecticut River and sections of Old Saybrook and Old Lyme. It could involve construction of elevated structures and tunnels throughout our region. The viability of the project is extremely questionable when you consider the costs and extensiveness of the construction. A project of this magnitude would cause disastrous disruption of our communities and leave a completely transformed landscape, threatening the natural beauty and tranquility of our shoreline communities. This proposal has been vehemently opposed by our Congressional delegation and local lawmakers. I want to commend the work of Gov. Malloy, Sens. Blumenthal and Murphy, Congressman Courtney, our entire southeastern legislative delegation, our locally elected leaders, and local organizations such as SECoast – all of whom have been working hard to inform the public about this project. By supporting this Resolution before the General Assembly, we can send a clear message to the federal government that we do not want this project. We do not want

this unfeasible and expensive proposal to damage our communities. We stand together in opposition and urge the FRA to pursue alternative projects.

I also urge the Committee to support *Senate Bill No. 253 An Act Requiring Municipal Approval of Changes to Rail Service* and *Senate Bill No. 263 An Act Concerning Municipal Approval of Changes to Rail Service*. Also introduced by Rep. Carney and myself, S.B. No. 253 bill would require that any changes made by the Department of Transportation to rail service in a municipality first go through a referendum held by the municipality affected by such proposed changes. S.B. 263 would prohibit state funding to be used for changes to commuter rail services unless the municipality impacted holds that referendum to approve the changes. Our intention in proposing these bills is to give municipalities a voice in the decision making process before significant rail service changes are made. Therefore, if something like the FRA's bypass project moved forward, all local cities and towns would have to hold a referendum before any rail changes were made and before any state funding could go towards the project. This would give people a voice and a vote in whether or not to allow such changes. I would like to clarify that this proposal may need to be narrowed so that a referendum is only required for rail service changes beyond a specified size and scope. As currently written this proposal may be too broad and I would ask that the committee take that into consideration and make any changes deemed appropriate in light of this realization.

Finally, I strongly urge the committee to consider support for *Senate Bill No. 577 An Act Concerning Driving Under the Influence with a Child as a Passenger*. According to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, approximately 1 in 5 child passenger deaths in the United States involves an alcohol-impaired driver, most commonly the child's own driver. It is devastating when any accident occurs involving a child. When alcohol is involved it is infuriating. This proposal seeks to strengthen penalties for individuals convicted of driving under the influence with a child as a passenger in the vehicle. To get behind the wheel of a car when you are intoxicated and responsible for the life of child is beyond perplexing. Yet it happens far too often. And the risk for serious injury is chilling. In the United States during 2001–2010, 2344 children under 15 years old were killed in crashes involving at least 1 alcohol-impaired driver. Of these children, 65 percent (1,515) were riding with an impaired driver¹. We need to do everything possible to deter people from engaging in this inexcusable behavior. This bill suggests strengthening penalties for anyone who is convicted of driving drunk with a child in their vehicle and I would look towards experts in the law enforcement community to be a part of the dialogue to help determine the most appropriate strengthening measures. Endangering the life of a child in this manner completely lacks of any sound judgement and is utterly inexcusable. In the words of Mothers Against Drunk Driving – "Every child deserves a sober driver."

Thank you to all the committee members for your time, attention, and consideration of these proposals.

¹ <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/133/6/966>