

Below is my testimony for today's hearing:

**TESTIMONY OF JIM LOHR**  
**NEW ENGLAND CAPRENTERS LABOR-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**  
**BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**  
**REGARDING SB 389, HB 5046, HB 5391, HB 5393**  
**March 14, 2018**

Senator Leone, Senator Boucher and Representative Guerrero. My name is Jim Lohr, the Deputy Director of the New England Carpenters Labor-Management Program (NECLMP), a coalition of approximately 2,000 contractors and 22,000 union carpenters throughout the six states of New England.

NECLMP supports SB 389, HB 5046, HB 5391 and 5393 as efforts to potentially address the long-term infrastructure financing needs of the state.

We also strongly support the STF "lock-box" referendum in November to ensure that the monies intended for transportation needs are not siphoned off for other purposes. We realize that the legislature is reviewing a variety of long-term solutions to Connecticut's infrastructure crisis ranging from creating the infrastructure bank to creating a statewide development authority to erecting tolls or even a small increase in the state's gas tax. These proposals are worthy of the legislature's consideration as long-term solutions to Connecticut's infrastructure crisis.

While we support these proposals as potential long-term solutions, we are more focused on the immediate transportation funding crisis at hand. **Back in December, the rapidly declining condition of the Special Transportation Fund (STF) forced Governor Malloy and the Department of Transportation to indefinitely suspend \$4.3 billion in projects affecting almost every town across Connecticut.**

We believe a more immediate solution is to accelerate the transfer of the sales and use tax on motor vehicles into the Special Transfer Fund (STF) in order to stop the devastating cutbacks necessary to prevent the STF from becoming insolvent. Current law would phase-in the sales and use tax on motor vehicles into the STF beginning in Fiscal Year 2021. Unfortunately, this is not fast enough given the deteriorating condition of the (STF).

It is critical for Connecticut's construction industry--including the approximately 4,000 members of the Connecticut Carpenter's Union Local 326 and our contractors—that the Special Transportation Fund (STF) be fully-funded so that the state can issue revenue bonds again to finance the suspended projects.

The so-called Great Recession was devastating for Connecticut's construction industry. Connecticut went from 68,900 construction workers in March of 2008 to 49,000 in March of 2010. Over the last few years, total Connecticut construction employment has inched back up to

56,100 as of December 2017. While that is an improvement over the low-point of 49,000 in March of 2010, it is still only 80% of the industry's peak employment in March of 2008.

Connecticut's roads and bridges are aging and in desperate need of repair. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 57% of Connecticut's roads are "unacceptable"—the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of all 50 states—and 33.5% of Connecticut's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the Federal Government will significantly increase their financial support to address the nationwide transportation infrastructure crisis any time soon. That is why we are encouraged that this concept--to accelerate the transfer of the sales and use tax on motor vehicles into the Special Transfer Fund--received bipartisan support in the state legislature. And it is why we believe this concept is the fastest way to address the immediate shortfall in the STF and avoid devastating reductions in the capital and operating programs of the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

While we support consideration of potential long-term solutions to Connecticut's infrastructure crisis, like the bills under consideration by the Transportation Committee today, we believe that accelerating the transfer of the sales and use tax on motor vehicles into the special transportation fund (STF) is a viable, short-term solution to the immediate crisis of the STF that deserves your consideration.

Let's not wait until there is another Mianus River Bridge collapse to act. Let's act now!

Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jim Lohr  
NE Carpenters Labor-Management Program  
(203) 650-5451

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Jim Lohr <jlohr@neclmp.org>