

Testimony on Proposed S.B. No. 775

An Act Concerning the Creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail

Middletown Common Council Member Robert Blanchard

The Central Connecticut Loop Trail will be a mostly off-road bicycle route stretching over 100 miles throughout the greater Hartford area. This route will pass through the towns of Cheshire, Southington, Plainville, Farmington, Avon, Simsbury, Bloomfield, Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, Bolton, Andover, Columbia, Willimantic, Lebanon, Amston, Colchester, East Hampton, Portland, Middletown, and Meriden.

A sprawling loop trail of this length that criss-crosses throughout a variety of scenic environments will undoubtedly be a strong attraction both for tourism and environmentally for cyclists from in-state and out-of-state. Additionally, the loop trail would pass by the commuter rail stations in Meriden and Hartford, thus facilitating transportation by bicycle and train from all of the above listed communities to New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield.

Significant portions of this trail already exist, while other sections are planned as part of the East Coast Greenway in Plainville and Bloomfield. Only about 16 miles (10 miles on-road; 6 miles off-road) must be constructed in the 23.5 mile section from the western terminus of the Air Line Trail in Portland to the Farmington Canal Trail in Cheshire.

The Jonah Center and the Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments has worked to bring together local leaders of Portland, Middletown, Meriden, and Cheshire to discuss and plan the remaining 16 miles of route through these municipalities--all of these communities are in agreement as to the desirability of this route.

Because this project basically requires 16 miles of construction in 4 municipalities, within the jurisdiction of 3 Councils of Government, and because the 111-mile loop offers benefits to the entire state, I am joining with the Jonah Center in asking for support from the Connecticut General Assembly in designating the Central Connecticut Loop Trail and directing coordination between CT DOT and DEEP prioritize its design and construction.

Thank you greatly for your consideration on this legislation.