



February 13, 2019

Senator Carlo Leone, Co-Chair
Representative Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Proposed S.B. No. 775

Dear Co-Chairs Leone and Lemar:

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and the South Central Regional Council of Governments strongly support proposed **Senate Bill 775 An Act Concerning the Creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail**. The proposal would make the connection of the state's two longest trails, the Air Line Trail with the Farmington Canal Trail, through the center of the state a priority for the Connecticut Department of Transportation and Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. When this trail connection is completed a 111 mile long loop in Central Connecticut will be created. The Central Connecticut Loop Trail will be a trail of statewide and national significance, attracting cyclists from within and outside of the state, particularly as a useful bypass for the East Coast Greenway.

The communities of Portland, Middletown, Meriden, and Cheshire have made this connection a priority, and are, with COG support, actively pursuing trail design and construction. Of the approximately 24 mile trail corridor, a third is already built, with the rest planned as a combination of off-road trails and on-road accommodations. While this east-west connection is important on a state-level, it is also important to the individual municipalities by providing opportunities for safe, non-motorized transportation within and between towns. Trails improve the quality of life in our communities and provide measurable economic benefits, as seen in a study conducted by the Naugatuck Valley COG (<https://nvcogct.org/content/naugatuck-river-greenway-economic-impact-study>). The trail connection will also connect to CTTrail commuter service at the Meriden Train Station, providing more opportunities for people to access transit for their daily commutes.

As the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is approaching completion, the creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail with a greenway trail connection between Cheshire and Portland should be next. The project is supported by the three COGs covering the corridor and is recommended by each of our new Metropolitan Transportation Plans. This important bicycle and pedestrian connection needs and merits state support. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Samuel S. Gold, RiverCOG Executive Director

Carl Amento, SCRCOG Executive Director