

Wednesday, February 13th

Testimony In Favor of S.B. 775 [AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT LOOP TRAIL] to the Transportation Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly.

*Hello, my name is Jim Jinks. I'm the Executive Director of Bike Cheshire, a community-based non-profit focused on encouraging and improving biking (and walking) in Cheshire, Connecticut. Our organization operates a community bike share, holds public bike-safety sessions, organizes group rides and is advocating for the Cheshire Village Bike Route Network (a 40 mile network of bike-friendly streets in Cheshire, CT.)*

*I'm here today to speak in favor of S.B. 775, an act concerning the creation of the "Central Connecticut Loop Trail." Encouraging biking and providing greenway trails, protected bike-lanes and bike-friendly streets is a rare public investment "silver-bullet." Biking and building out bike/walk infrastructure is an investment that allows communities to move the needle in several important areas of local (and state) concern such as:*

➤ **Public Health**

*According to the National Safety Council, these are the top five reasons for American mortality: the odds of dying of heart disease are 1 in 6; of cancer, 1 in 7; of chronic lower respiratory disease, 1 in 27; of suicide, 1 in 88; of an accidental opioid overdose, 1 in 96.*

*In short, inactivity kills A LOT of Americans. Inactivity causes illness and impacts our mental health. ALL of the epidemics mentioned (and they are epidemics) can be greatly improved by increasing access to biking and walking facilities.*

➤ **Tourism & Small Business Success**

*Eco- and agri-tourism have emerged as big business in Connecticut and around the country. In 2015 agri-tourism generated nearly \$100 million in sales and over 800 jobs in Connecticut.\* Four years later these numbers are sure to be much higher.*

*Biking and bike-friendly streets are proven to increase business to nearby commercial tenants. Biking encourages "discovery"...allowing smaller, local businesses to compete with larger national chains.\*\**

\*<http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20171017/NEWHAVENBIZ/171019931/agritourism-plays-growing-role-in-regions-farm-economy>

\*\*<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/5/31/how-bike-lanes-benefit-businesses>

\*\*<https://www.fastcompany.com/3024974/bikes-lanes-arent-just-safer-for-cyclists-theyre-good-for-business-too>

➤ **Residential and Commercial Property Values**

*In 2016, to complete a Master's degree in public policy at Trinity College, I did my thesis on greenway trails and their impact on nearby residential property value. The specific focus of my research was of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail in Cheshire, CT, one of the oldest rail trails in our state. I studied twenty years of sales data. My findings were that within a half mile of the greenway trail in Cheshire, homes that on*

*average are smaller, older and have smaller lots have a higher value per square foot than homes located three to four miles from the trail (homes that in Cheshire are on average larger, newer and with larger lots.) These findings are consistent with similar academic studies and private-industry analysis of greenway trails going back to the 1990s. I have provided a copy of my thesis to the Committee to be entered into public record.*

<https://urbanland.uli.org/economy-markets-trends/bicycling-means-business/>

<https://atlanta.curbed.com/2013/8/8/10210634/bike-lanes-property-values-is-there-a-correlation>

<https://trec.pdx.edu/news/better-bikeways-associated-higher-home-values>

### ➤ **Traffic Safety**

*Referring back to the stats on American mortality from the National Safety Council: the odds of dying in a motor vehicle crash are 1 in 103 (#6 on the list of the top 10); the odds of dying from a “pedestrian incident” are 1 in 556 (#9 on the list of the top 10); and the odds of dying in a motorcycle crash are 1 in 858 (#10 on the list of the top 10.)*

*Better biking facilities, whether they are separated bike lanes, trails or bike-friendly streets will contribute to safer streets for everyone. The more people use bikes for leisure and/or transportation, the more drivers will become accustomed to other road users and the more drivers will be forced to drive more alertly and carefully.\**

*If you’re keeping track – encouraging biking is a public investment that helps to address 8 of the top 10 reasons Americans die every year. This is why I refer to it as the rare public investment “silver bullet.”*

\*<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/08/28/improving-biking-is-as-much-about-slowing-cars-as-building-better-bike-lanes/>

\*<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3483943/>

*For all these reasons I urge legislators to vote YES on S.B. 775. The “Central Connecticut Loop Trail” will encourage active lifestyles, increase tourism, facilitate small business success, increase property values and improve traffic safety in Middletown, Meriden, Cheshire and a dozen other communities that will be a part of the “Loop Trail.” Pound-for-pound there are few, if any, public investments that will have the impact of greenway trails and expanding bike/walk facilities for Connecticut’s citizens. Please vote YES on S.B. 775.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective and provide you with some context as you consider the value of expanding bike/walk trail access in our state.*

*Jim Jinks, Executive Director*

*Bike Cheshire, Inc., 244 Academy Rd., Cheshire, CT 06410*