



## *The Jonah Center for Earth and Art*

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### **Testimony on Proposed S.B. No. 775**

#### **An Act Concerning the Creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail**

By Krishna Winston, President, The Jonah Center, on behalf of the Board

We, the Directors of the Jonah Center for Earth and Art, have taken positions on and helped to shepherd through a number of bicycle and pedestrian initiatives in Middletown and Portland, in close collaboration with those towns' Complete Streets Committees. The completed projects have provided welcome transportation and recreational options to residents and visitors alike. Today we are excited to be supporting and providing testimony for a bill that will add significantly to Connecticut's growing stock of greenways, rail trails, linear parks, and roadway features that provide safe pathways and lanes for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The provisions in Senate Proposed Bill No. 775 will allow the departments of Transportation (CTDOT) and Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to jointly coordinate and authorize funding for the planning, design, construction, and completion of approximately 16 miles of trail, short segments (10 miles on-road, 6 miles off-road) that will connect the Air Line Trail State Park from where it passes through Portland to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail in Cheshire. Filling these gaps between Portland and Cheshire will create an approximately 111-mile uninterrupted loop through Central CT and the Greater Hartford Region! With so much of the loop already in place, this bill represents a remarkable opportunity to provide a new resource for transportation and recreation that will benefit a large region.

Following are some of the critical reasons that convince us that Proposed S.B. No 775, the *Central Connecticut Loop Trail* project, is an affordable bill with outcomes that will far exceed the cost and be welcomed by residents from across the state and visitors to the state as well:

- Multimodal travel access, with the trail route intersecting with the railroad station in Meriden, constitutes a key transportation node for the area and is ripe for further development. A cyclist will be able to ride to the train station and leave the car at home. At Meriden the cyclist can take advantage of the CTRail Line between the New Haven station and Hartford, with limited runs to Springfield, MA. For Middletown, the Connect Middletown M-Link Express adds one more layer to a successful multimodal transportation system. Bikes can

already be transported on the bus, and regional trains will soon accommodate bikes on designated rail cars.

- For Middletown, increasing walking and bicycling by even 5% within a 3-mile radius of Main St. and the Wesleyan campus will substantially decrease greenhouse-gas emissions, road congestion, and the need for additional parking—objectives Middletown has been actively pursuing for some time. The experience of other cities and towns shows that bike-riders and pedestrians will take full advantage when improved infrastructure becomes available.
- Loop trails for bicyclists and pedestrians are known to drive increased tourism from within and outside the state. Trails offer an attractive three-season destination for those interested in outdoor recreation.
- Economic impact: the following state-sponsored studies show some of the economic benefits of greenways:
  - <https://nvcogct.org/content/naugatuck-river-greenway-economic-impact-study>
  - [https://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/greenways/Economic\\_Impact\\_of\\_Greenways\\_Literature\\_Review\\_10-8-15.pdf](https://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/greenways/Economic_Impact_of_Greenways_Literature_Review_10-8-15.pdf)
- Connecticut needs to invest in creating the kinds of “livable places”—connected urban areas—where workers in their twenties and thirties will want to live, shop, and travel car-free. Such places also attract retirees who seek to enjoy urban amenities while staying safe and healthy.
- Closing the Loop has the potential to stimulate further creation of local connecting trails in the adjacent communities, thereby facilitating safe walking and biking to schools, doctors’ offices, workplaces, shopping, restaurants, and outdoor life.

Given that S.B. No. 775 will complete a 111-mile unbroken loop-trail for the cost of only 16 miles, we urge you to support this bill, which promises to provide excellent transportation, recreation, and physical exercise for a wide range of citizens while reducing highway crowding, emissions, and energy consumption.

Signed:



Krishna Winston, President, The Jonah Center for Earth and Art 2/11/19