THE CLERK: -- or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capitol Police, do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised to do so. Pretty basic safety concerns that we start this process with. I want to welcome everyone on an otherwise snowy and not easy morning to get out of the house and on the road.

I appreciate everyone’s willingness to come here and testify on the bills that we have before us. There are numerous committee meetings that are happening throughout the building. So, you will see throughout the day legislators come in and out. It is not a sign of disrespect of disinterest. In
fact, it is our committee’s responsibility to get your information to each individual legislator, even if they are not here. So your testimony that you have submitted to us will be made available to every single member of this committee, both here in the committee room and after the fact.

And for anyone who’s watching today, who is unable to make it up, who wished to testify, please understand that we appreciate the weather concerns that complicated your morning’s commute. You can continue to submit testimony at TRAtestimony@cga.ct.gov, and we will continue to accept your testimony.

So, with that, we shall get started. And I promise I had nothing to do with this, but No. 1 on the list this morning is from the City of New Haven, Mike Pinto.

MICHAEL PINTO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and before we -- go ahead.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Before we start, I just wanted to thank Mr. Chairman and rankings and everyone for getting here today on such a snowy day. And hopefully many dodged all the flying snow off the vehicles as best you could. For those that are out there, there is a law against that, so make sure you clean your vehicles. We hear about that all the time.

And on a side note, as we get moving, we have quite a few people signed up for public testimony. So, in the interest of time, please make your comments as brief as possible. We try to give everyone a good three minutes. If you’re going over, we’ll be considerate, but only up to a point.
So, please try and stay within the time limit and then if we need to ask any further in-depth questions, then we can get into a little bit more time as necessary. But we want to make comments brief so that everyone has a chance, especially those that are further down the list, it can be a long day.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, I hand it over back to you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. All right. Mike, the floor is yours.

MICHAEL PINTO: Here we go, sorry about that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Senator Leone, members of the committee. My name is Michael Pinto, I’m the Deputy Director of Transportation Traffic for the City of New Haven. I’d like to comment on S.B. 422 and proposed Bill 715.

We urge the Committee to, to support S.B. 422 providing for a task force for the implementation of red light cameras to improve traffic safety at intersection.

Of the large, 10 largest cities in New England, New Haven has the highest percentage of residents who walk and/or bicycle to work. Consequently, there is a constant issue of conflicts at turning intersections.

The city, since, going back more than a decade has made numerous efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, including, you know, going back as far as 2008, creating a Complete Streets legislation and Complete Streets Manual in 2012 to promote a safe context-sensitive transportation network to
serve all users, particularly a vulnerable user such as, such as pedestrians.

The strategy has led to our Streets, Street Smart outreach committee and program, ongoing enforcement campaigns and traffic calming solutions at non, at non-signalized intersections. We’ve added RRFBs, Rectangular Rapid Reflect Beacons. And --

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Mike, if you could hold on for just one second.

MICHAEL PINTO: Yes.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): We have a technical glitch --

MICHAEL PINTO: That’s fine.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): In which recording is not taking place at the moment. If you don’t mind, we’ll have you resume in just a moment as we get recording up. We apologize, you were right in the thick of things. I apologize. And Mike, while, you know, I may wish to count this time against you, we will not count this towards the three minutes.

MICHAEL PINTO: Fair enough.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Clerk, we appreciate your efforts in resolving the technical situation. Mr. Pinto, we apologize for interceding your time. Please continue.

MICHAEL PINTO: As I said, our Complete Streets approach has led to a strategy of creating Street Smarts outreach program, ongoing enforcement efforts and, and numerous traffic calming efforts, particularly in non-signalized intersections, including RRFBs, crossing, raised crossing tables to improve pedestrian safety.
In the task force to look at red light cameras would also allow us, it would be a big first step in moving toward pedestrian safety at signalized intersections and we hope that you can see, see to it to support that, support that effort.

As to proposed Bill 718, 715, I’m sorry, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PLAN TO MODERNIZE PARKING GARAGES AT TRAIN STATIONS IN THE STATE.

As you know from previous conversations, the re-imagining of Union Station Transportation Center in New Haven is of paramount importance to the city. The station serves over 4-million passengers per, every year. And Union Station is at the very center, the gateway to New Haven.

The parking garage at Union Station opened in 1988 and is operated by the New Haven Parking Authority. The garage remains in excellent condition. The garage features state of the art equipment, including energy efficient LED lighting, a sheltered bike station and real time parking data, which is made available to customers via the internet and social platforms and is readily visible as you, as you pull in.

Still very significant work to be done and to accomplish to make the Union Station, in order to transform the customer experience. By way of background, New Haven’s economic position continues to improve. There are now over 80,000 jobs in the city and unemployment has fallen below 5 percent. Innovation sector businesses have attracted more than $1.2 billion dollars in capital and which further, which further demonstrates the quality of our, of our talent pool and the strong economic underpinnings of the region.
We’re located at the juncture of the Hill neighborhood and downtown. The Union Station is an essential component to the, to the city’s economic infrastructure and anchors one of the fastest growing areas of New Haven.

Following a major planning effort, there are now over 1500 residential units in the, in the planning pipeline. And the first of these projects will be set to come online later this year. Developments are taking over surface parking lots that were clear during the urban, extensive urban renewal clearance of the 1950s and ‘60s. And all of these developments are indicative of rapidly changing dynamic favoring transit oriented development and the value of place, which supports innovation and vibrant mixed-use communities.

As the committee works to refine this bill, the city encourages you to consider not only the parking asset at Union Station, but the entire customer experience. Visitor engagement, quality retail, historic preservation, last mile challenges, bike/ped access and the many other essential components of placemaking. This comprehensive approach will ensure that future investment leverages economic growth and generates jobs and tax impact far beyond the mere parking asset.

Finally, the city would like to take this opportunity to respond to the idea of creating a regional transportation planning organization. While the exact governing structure is still evolving, the committee is encouraged to recognize and establish a meaningful local role in this process.
In no uncertain terms, Connecticut cities can continue to drive growth, to properly resource and empower to effect change.

Thank you for your consideration to both of these bills. If you have any questions, obviously, we’re happy, you can certainly contact us or fire away.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mike. Thank you for coming up today. Are there questions for Mr. Pinto? Senator Leone, followed by Representative Carney.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You touched upon some really good concepts, many of which we’ll be talking more about. What I wanted to just ask a question on the cameras for within the city. You mentioned that as a potential study or task force. Are you looking for city wide or would you be looking at specific intersections and keeping it to a limited amount?

MICHAEL PINTO: At this juncture the city, the city would be amenable to anything the committee would be proposing and endorse, including some pilot, which would be on a limited scale.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Carney.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. I do have a question about, about the red light camera study. So, I know this bill would look into it, but one of my, one of my concerns, I guess, is a lot of cities it appears that have implemented red light cameras, I mean, I mean, I’m looking at, for example, Tampa, Chicago. It appears that in the mayoral races
there, there’s some folks saying, we’re gonna get rid of them because they’re such a problem. Do you know why these cities who have implemented them have now decided maybe it didn’t work and they’re going in the other direction; can you touch on that at all?

MICHAEL PINTO: I can’t, but we’re certainly willing to look at it and submit further testimony to investigate.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Mike, for your testimony today.

MICHAEL PINTO: Thank you members and Mr. Chairman. Thank you members of the committee and we look forward to seeing you again. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thanks a lot. Have a good trip back to New Haven.

MICHAEL PINTO: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Zupkus, followed by J. Case, Representative Case.

REP. ZUPKUS (89TH): Good morning. Thank you. Representative Lezly Zupkus, I represent the 89th District and thank you for letting me bring up a constituent of mine. We’re going under the three minutes and just to your comment, Senator Leone, I was driving in here this morning and a sheet of ice fell of a car and hit my windshield and scared the bejesus out of me.

So, yeah.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Are you okay? Was it -- nothing damaged we hope?

REP. ZUPKUS (89TH): Nothing cracked, but it did scare me to death. You know that shaky feeling you get. So, Chairman Lemar and Leone, ranking members Devlin and Martin, thank you for letting me come today before you to testify on House Bill 5762, which is a House Republican Caucus Bill. And that concerning the use of contractors by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

I’m not gonna read through my testimony, you have it. But what we believe is that there could be a great public partnership, private partnership with the DMV. You know, I hear, I’m sure you hear, every agency, not only the DMV. They have so much work and tons of work and need to hire more staff and need more staff to do everything. I believe the DMV just started that Real ID program.

So, we believe this is a win-win situation. There’s a lot of other states that do these things, these types of things, I can share that with you. But I believe it would help take some work off of their plate, but also I know that we’ve all heard how the public gets frustrated for sitting in the long lines of DMV, all that. So, we really believe that it could be a win-win situation.

Thank you.

GARY MCNAMERA: Thank you. I am Gary McNamera, the Executive Director of Public Safety and Governmental Affairs at Sacred Heart University. And I’m here to talk briefly about House Bill 6588, concerning the issuance of parking citations by private commercial property owners.
There was a slight change in the law last year that limited the ability of commercial, well, excuse me, of private property owners from issuing parking citations. Missing from that bill was the word, commercial. And it affected universities, specifically Sacred Heart University as well as others with their ability to issue parking citations and, and have a fee involved. As the former Fairfield Police Chief, I understand traffic safety is about three things, it’s engineering, education and enforcement. That’s no different than a university campus that is in essence a small city or municipality. We rely on engineering, meaning proper parking spaces, proper locations, education, telling people where to park, proper signage and enforcement.

The change in this law has limited our ability to enforce those laws. Once that occurs, people are parking where they want to park. Access to public safety vehicles has been hindered and basically it has created a very chaotic scene on college campuses because we lack that ability.

In addition to that, it should be noted what, what is different from a college, from a commercial property. We have an appeal process. If you get a, if you are a student or a visitor at campus and you get a parking ticket, you have due process. You can come appeal that ticket. So, we do have things in place that can at least give people the due process to do that.

So, we’re asking or we’re in support of changing that and adding the word, commercial property to that statute.

Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you both for your testimony today. Are there questions? Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here to testify. And I do have a question for or a comment for one of my questions for the other. So, we actually had the DMV, deputy commissioner here the other day, who was giving us an update on some of the work that they have underway. And part of that does include some outsourcing, some partnerships.

Is the proposal that you’re referencing more along the lines of expanding existing partnerships or does that also include looking for new partnerships?

REP. ZUPKUS (89TH): Thank you. Well, as you know, some of the services have been expanded to AAA, and they have worked extremely well. So, this would be, and I have an example, and I will give that to you. I’ll make sure that each of you get it of all the other states and what they do and examples of their services that they have that public partner, private, public private partnership.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right, excellent, great. They did express some stress in terms of work load versus the, you know, people working at the DMV, so we looking forward to seeing more of that, too.

REP. ZUPKUS (89TH): And also, I was with the Governor, my days are mixed up. But yesterday morning, and he talked a lot about that public private partnership as well.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Great. Thank you. I guess I can’t call you chief anymore, but, Mr. McNamera, that sounds a little odd.
GARY MCNAMERA: Yes.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): But thank you and thank you to Sacred Heart for bringing this issue before us. I think this was one of those unintended consequences in legislation last year that clearly has had an effect on your private universities. I know way back when as a student having a car at the University of Illinois and my own children trying to park at college campuses, I mean, if there were no restrictions, oh, my, it would be a bit of a free for all. But I do appreciate you bringing that issue before us and I think that’s something we’ll look at very closely.

GARY MCNAMERA: Thank you.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your testimony, varied topics are very necessary for the moment as we’re going forward. A quick one to Mr. McNamera, and as an SHU alum, it’s nice to see you.

I guess my only question is, how is the current parking situation, A, being handled? And is it, when you say you need more tools or you need a tool to be able to enforce it, is it that people are parking in the wrong spot or too long in a designated spot, what, what, how is it actually working so we have a sense?

GARY MCNAMERA: Sure. So, basically, people are parking wherever they want. We, the only real enforcement ability we had was issuing parking tickets and collecting a fine. And it would go
against their, you know, their graduation, wait for their grades, so they’d have to pay them.

Taking away the ability to issue fines really takes away any of our ability. We’ve all been relegated to issuing warnings, which warnings, once people realize that there’s no affect to that warning, they just park where they, where they want to because they’re running late for class, traffic or whatever, I just got to get to class, I’ll park outside the line.

So, basically, wherever there are parking spaces, people are occupying them. However, they’re adding additional parking spaces. They’re parking in spaces that are not designed to be parking spaces. So, taking away the ability to enforce that parking regulations with a fine, really restricts our ability to have any enforcement.

So, basically, if you come to Sacred Heart University, you can park wherever you want, outside of a handicapped spot, which is enforceable by law and we call in the local police department to do that. Otherwise, it’s really up for grabs. We can tow, very difficult to do that. We have the ability to boot. But issuing a ticket with a fine sends that effective message that you have to park appropriately.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you both for coming today. Are there any other questions for either of our guests? Seeing none, thanks again. Oh, sorry, I apologize. Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Not a problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. McNamera for coming today. I, having recently visited your beautiful
campus, I can tell you I had trouble finding a parking spot. So, it’s interesting to learn more of this issue and the difficulties that you’re facing.

I want to make sure that in considering a change to the legislation we guard against any conception that Sacred, the Sacred Heart administration is looking to sort of raise money off of students or is doing this for revenue purposes.

Could you speak briefly about the public safety concerns that this has created and perhaps make a brief reference to the fact that this would, the ability to issue tickets would not actually bring in a tremendous amount of revenue for the school, I presume?

GARY MCNAMERA: Yeah, I mean that’s a good point because often times people think that is, that is the topic. And I’ve had no discussion with regards to the impact that that change made on the finances of the, of the university. It really comes down to a concept of safety. People pay for parking permits on campus, so they are finding difficulty utilizing that. And you have to just imagine that the university is set up with a designated amount of parking spots because zoning and other rules and regulations require that.

The inability to effectively make people park where it is appropriate adds that public safety. Fire engines are having difficulty -- you know, I never want to play on the fact that it’s a public safety issue. I mean, we manage it. But the difficulty with doing that is fire trucks can’t get through because people are parking inappropriately. People have difficulty turning around. Delivery trucks have difficulty getting to areas that they’re
designated because people are now parking and expanding outside of that capability.

We always look at enforcement in two ways. One, we certainly want to give people warnings and we also want to be accommodating to people that, to have an unusual reason why they park there, and we will always do that. But the ability to effect a fine on people has impact on students on where they park. Does it generate some revenue, it certainly does. But the bottom line is that unless you impose that, people will not, students will not follow that regulation without doing that and it certainly creates that chaotic scene. Pedestrians have blind spots now where they never did before, vehicles are parked where they can’t, it makes it a very difficult scene since that change went into effect.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Senator. Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you again both for coming up today. Representative Case, followed by Representative Bolinsky.

REP. CASE (63RD): Good morning. Good morning Co-chairs Leone, Lemar, ranking members Martin and Devlin. Representative Case here from the 63rd District.

I’m here in support today to talk about Senate Bill 66, known around this building as the stretcher van bill. Instead of reading my testimony, I just wanted to give you some of the background that I have done some research on. Especially, in 2011, when our previous governor did a study on this and the reason I want our report out, a stretcher van,
for those of you who aren’t aware, basically if somebody needs non-medical transportation, they call, they get non-medical transportation. An ambulance-type vehicle is dispatched with the ambulance and medical staff on there.

So, if somebody just has medical needs for transportation, has a broken leg and they’re in a wheel chair, they still get that ambulance-style ride at a cost of $300. The $300 or basically back in 2011 with the study done, it was $176 or $276 one way. A stretcher van is in the average range of $70 to $80 one way. Back in 2011, when OLR did this report, it was looked to be a savings of $6 to $7-million dollars in 2012 and up to $7-million dollars in 2013.

I think we’re well above in 2019 to be in the tens of millions of dollars of savings. I think it’s worth taking a look at for the committee to see where we can further along and ease some people. Because I look it as one of my constituents coming to me and saying, I’m going to my son’s graduation, why do I need a ride, an ambulance ride with medical staff when I would just like a van that has wheelchair accessibility to get me to that position.

So, I think it’s something we need to look at and I’m open to any questions.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony on this. I believe we’re gonna hear quite a bit of testimony both for and against on this specific topic.

And as you’re laying it out, I can understand the merits to it. But what I’ve also heard is that on
the other side, that there’s concern about, you know, someone either if they’re in a stretcher by, by definition, it’s possibly medically necessary. And the concern and the fear that I’m hearing is that if anything were to go awry in the transportation, A, you may not have enough people there to handle whatever the situation is; meaning, not just the driver. And B, more importantly that if there are complications then insurance, whether it’s Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance, may not then cover the seriousness of whatever may occur, which could be an issue.

So, do you have any comments on that and, and how that could be addressed in a proper way?

REP. CASE (63RD): Absolutely. These, these particular rides would have to be evaluated by the agency, whoever is putting the rides out. You actually have public transportation right now, buses in the cities and wherever that have handicap accessibilities. I mean, up in the northwest corner, where there’s really not a lot of transportation, but you have the candy stripers that, you know, they pick up people in wheelchairs. They don’t have medical staff on board. But there are people who need the transportation.

It would be very, it would be up to the agency that’s providing these rides to qualify the person that’s getting the ride. I totally understand if they have a vast medical history and they need somebody onboard to help them.

I grew up in a, in a household where I had an intellectual and developmental disability brother. He had seizures and what have you, but he didn’t need that extra step. So, he was able to get on a
Lark bus and travel a half hour to work. He didn’t need medical staff of an ambulance-type vehicle to do it.

So, we do this all the time in the special needs population. I just don’t understand we’re, we’re in a very tight budget area. We need to look at -- maybe there is, maybe it’s 50/50. Maybe 50 percent of the people do need the medical and do need the, the extra person onboard in case something happens. But we’re doing it in other areas of transportation. Connecticut Fastrak, they have wheelchair accessible buses. But these people aren’t eligible to get passes there, they’re eligible to call the number and get a ride.

So, we do it in some concerns, but we don’t allow it in others. And I think there’s a way that, you know, we can save some dollars in the State of Connecticut and we do need to look and make sure, you know, not every situation fits the same person, so they all need to be qualified and make sure that we’re getting them the right transportation.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. I would, I would ask that you listen to some of the testimony that’s going to be forthcoming on both sides and then participate in the discussion as we try and move forward on this because your point of view will be important.

REP. CASE (63RD): Thank you very much, Senator.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Osten followed by Representative Devlin.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Representative Case for coming forward and I believe that you’re also a
member of the Intellectual and Developmental Disability Caucus.

REP. CASE (63RD): Yes, I am. I’m a cofounder.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And so for me and I believe for you, if you wouldn’t mind talking a little bit about the dignity of someone who has a disability but does not need additional medical supports that this would, that this form of transportation would allow somebody to have some dignity to attend things like, as you said, a son or a daughter’s graduation or going to a wedding or going to a funeral without that additional medical staff there.

Could you speak a little bit about the dignity of the person that we’re trying to help here?

REP. CASE (63RD): Absolutely. Well, when you look at it in, as I said earlier, I grew up with disabilities all my life in my family. And I also have another family member who has polio. And we, there’s a family van and we take him around and, you know, he’s a little bit older now, so he’s a little bit tougher to get on the van, but us family members do it ourselves. And he’s all about the dignity and getting to where he needs to be on a, on his own cognizance and his own way of doing it with a little bit of help.

If I just talk about the intellectual disabilities, I mean, if we go back and we look at the transportation that these intellectually disabled people, I mean, I, I drove an intellectual development disabilities business for the City of New Britain when I was in high school. And it was just me on the bus. But I had people in wheelchairs, people who were incontinent, people who
had many other issues and it was me and it was a 3:1 at that time. But I never had any medical staff on there. But it was the dignity of me getting those people to a function to integrate them with the other populations and make sure that they had a good fulfilled day.

And I think what you’re getting at too is a lot of the things that I hear are the graduations, the fun things that these people want to go to. It’s almost embarrassing for them to show up in such a rig.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Right.

REP. CASE (63RD): That’s just not necessary.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And then if somebody had, if someone was a quadriplegic, they may not need any additional medical support. They could be in a, in need of a stretcher, but they may not need any other medical supports. They don’t have the medical issues other than the fact that they can’t get around unless they’re in a stretcher; would that not be a true statement?

REP. CASE (63RD): Absolutely. And, you know, I have no problem with the ambulance companies and the ambulance rides that are given out there. I’m just, I look at it, number one, in the dignity way that you do. Number two, the budgetary way that we’re looking at it here in Hartford. It could be those same agencies just using a different vehicle with different employees. I mean, when you go from a $300 ride to a $70 ride and granted the stretcher van is taxable, which we might like that, it’s a whole different philosophy and if that person for some reason says they don’t feel comfortable, they’d rather have somebody medical onboard, we need to
take that into effect, and we need to report that and change the way they get their ride.

But I think it’s worth giving a shot, putting a pilot out there, if anything, so that we see what we can do with the State of Connecticut and give the people their dignity back.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And in addition to that, the cost of the modal of transportation would be far less than someone using an ambulance. And if an ambulance is diverted because they have a medical emergency someplace, that person could lose out on that transportation, would that not be also true?

REP. CASE (63RD): That would be true, but I think they would go to another ambulance company, bring somebody onboard that can get there because obviously we know the ambulances are readily available at all times. The stretcher vans, which I would rather call them wheelchair vans, you know, they need to be scheduled and need to be put out there.

But when you look at it also as a former board of directors member of an ambulance company from my small town, you know, when we go out and buy an ambulance rig, it’s $325,000. If we go out and buy a wheelchair van, it’s $50, $60,000.

So, it’s two different types of vehicles. Not only is it two different types of vehicles, it’s also a different population. So, I just ask that we look at it. We look at this OLR study that was done in 2011, where it explains it very significantly and let’s see what we can do for, to keep everybody happy.
SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And my last question would be, other states are using this form of transportation successfully without any injury to the client, is that not true?

REP. CASE (63RD): Absolutely, that is true. And I do have a list of the states. I don’t have that with me right now, but there are multiple states that are doing this and finding, it’s, and I think you know me pretty well being on Appropriations with you. It’s not about the total saving dollars, it’s about doing the right thing for the person.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Correct.

REP. CASE (63RD): And people can look at this bill as just a dollar saving thing, but as the good senators’ pointed out, it’s also about the dignity of the person that we’re giving the ride to. So, you know, we talk about the intellectual disabilities people out in the workforce. We talk about all these other things that we want to do, housing, what have you, transportation is just one part of it that gives a little bit of giveback to their life.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So, in short, it’s good for the dignity of the client. It saves the state money and it provides another small business with an opportunity to be successful?

REP. CASE (63RD): Absolutely. And I have, I have no problem, you know, it helps another small business, but I have no problem with the businesses that are supplying it to be the same suppliers, just different vehicles and different way of doing business. We all have change in the State of Connecticut.
Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

REP. CASE (63RD): That’s pretty short for you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): I know.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Well, we’re good, Senator Osten, thank you. Representative Devlin, are there any other questions after Representative Devlin?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Representative Case for your, or Case, sorry, Case, for your testimony today.

Could, help me understand this because you clearly have some personal involvement with this issue, and this is not something that I really fully understand. So, if you could explain for me a couple of things. One, kind of what is this population that we’re talking about? Is it somebody who’s living in a private home? Is it somebody who’s in a state facility? Like what’s, what’s the population and would this affect, let’s say, my kid’s, oh, grandparents, they want to go to graduation? They don’t have a medical concern, but maybe they’re physically, have some physical issues that would prevent them from being able to be easily transported, wheelchair, whatever?

So, under the current regulation, they need to be transported in ambulance to go to a graduation versus maybe some other kind of transport? Can you help me understand this in a real life example so that --

REP. CASE (63RD): Basically, these clients are under, under state aid.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay.

REP. CASE (63RD): So, when you look at this, the state is paying the bill. So, it’s not necessarily, how should I put this, somebody who just had an accident and is in a wheelchair and you need to find a wheelchair van. Those, those are readily available that you can private pay and private do.

But as far as the law in the State of Connecticut, if somebody calls the non-medical transportation for a ride, the ride is dispatched as an ambulance. It says they’re in a stretcher. A stretcher is considered a wheelchair or non-ambulatory. It’s not necessarily a stretcher that they’re laying down and they need medical attention. It’s just the terminology that’s used in this industry.

So, if somebody, Mrs. Jones, just needs a ride for her everyday things that she does and she’s just in a wheelchair because she has paralysis or whatever in her legs and she can’t walk, she’s not given a wheelchair van, she’s given a vehicle that has full blown medical staff. Whether it’s a, I don’t know if it’s a total ambulance rig, a $300,000 rig or as it says in the OLR report, some, a vehicle that has not only a driver, but a one-on-one staff person with the client.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. So, to the previous conversation, it’s not just the actual ambulance and potentially some dignity around that about showing up in a medical vehicle, when you don’t have any such condition that would warrant, warrant in a normal sense of the word. But it then, it also, it’s not just the driver, but it’s added personnel included that are there because it’s a medical vehicle?
REP. CASE (63RD): Correct. And that is the law in the State of Connecticut and that is, the reason why it’s in front of transportation is because you guys regulate ambulances. It also has a component with the Department of Public Health. But I’m just trying to look at the notes here. But, yes, a medical technician must be within the vehicle. So, it’s two staff people. That’s where you get the $300 ride going down to $70 a ride. And when you’re doing upwards of 10,000 rides a month, you can see where that can add up.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Right. Thank you. Sometimes these concepts are a tad abstract, but you’ve helped characterize it.

REP. CASE (63RD): Thank you, Representative.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Representative.

REP. CASE (63RD): Good morning, Representative.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you for your testimony and I find this very compelling. I’m just curious, I’m looking at the statute to see if I can find the answer to my question and it’s, it’s, I’m reading it very quickly, it doesn’t seem precise to me.

What, how exactly does the, is there any case law or is there anything that gives us some clarity on how the field of people who fall into this category is limited, what the, what the actual description, characteristics, what is elderly, what is disabled, how do you qualify to be not eligible for, what
makes you not eligible for transportation by a stretcher van?

REP. CASE (63RD): The calculation is done by DSS, when you apply for services through the state, whether you’re going after, you know, state insurance Title 19, what have you, there’s a variety of things that you have to fill out and they define what transportation best fits you. So, it’s up to a state agency to decide and to filter through the information of what is best. But right now there is no choice when you’re non-ambulatory.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Right. But in terms of, so, to begin with, you’re not defined unless you are receiving assistance --

REP. CASE (63RD): Correct.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): -- right? And then if you’re receiving assistance, I guess you could call one of these companies, but it wouldn’t be reimbursed by the state, right?

REP. CASE (63RD): Correct. You can private pay any of these companies to come and give you a ride.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So, the, I assume that the concern has been something to do with liability of the state?

REP. CASE (63RD): Yes.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Yeah, it, it, it seems, it seems excessive.

REP. CASE (63RD): Well, I mean, and I just bring it up because and I think I didn’t have the real words in my mouth here, but Senator Osten put it perfectly, it’s the dignity of the person. And
trust me, there’s nothing to go against what the companies are doing now as far as offering the ambulatory service, but it depends on what type of medical care the person needs.

I mean, if, if, if they just need a trip and they have a broken ankle and they’re in a wheelchair, do we need medical staff onboard? I just think we need to take a look at it, if we can, $10-million dollars, I know that for Appropriations, as you’re the Co-Chair is really not a big nut in Appropriations, but every little bit helps.

And this has been going on, as you see, the governor’s bill, it was back in 2011, when OLR did this report. So, and he actually had it in his budget in 2011.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Well, I agree with you. I think we do need to take a look at it. I hope we will. I think it’s a, I mean, not only is it a good thing to do, but I mean for all sorts of reasons it will, it will give people a better quality of life, so, thank you very much for talking to us about it.

REP. CASE (63RD): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you, Representative. I have a few questions, if you don’t mind, just to clarify some of the comments you made earlier and sort of dive into the specifics a little bit more. We’ll likely do this with Senator Osten as well, as I know this came from her bill, but since you’re the first up to bat, I want to clarify some, a few things.

In section 2 of the proposed bill, it outlines that in addition to the driver, an attendant must be present. So, there would be a second person
required in that van, someone who has experience with lifting and moving wheelchairs or stretchers, someone who’s got that capacity and demonstrated experience. So, you are aware that there would be two people in, the requirement would still be the same, there would need to be at least two people present for that individual?

REP. CASE (63RD): I’m not because I also submitted my own bill, so I was going off of my bill. And my bill does not have that second person in it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Osten’s bill, as we’re hearing today, so that would be something you would be willing to, to look at, that’s something that you don’t feel related to the idea of two people, one person who has got, who has represent, represented experience in, that moving and transportation of individuals who are bound by stretcher or incapable of traditional movement?

REP. CASE (63RD): I think it would be worthy of conversation. But I think it’s the type of vehicle that we’re using because the insurance, to have a $300,000 vehicle on the road, where it can be wheelchair van, would be the biggest savings. I’d have to see what the savings is when we do the research, whether it’s one person or two people. But there’s really no medical need, I’m not sure why that second person is there.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Which brings up a second point. Right now the permit, it’s a traditional livery permit, that an individual would need to have in order to transport people via this stretcher van, that process that we have in place at DOT, one, has never looked at these vehicles; two, has never evaluated the individual’s capacity to do these
things or, you know, and there is no requirement on a permit holder to, you know, to ascertain the medical training or background of anyone that they may employ. So, it would be a new DOT process that we may have to develop to incorporate some of these standards in place. And three, like, stretcher vans, stretcher vans are defined differently in almost every state that has a permit. Like, there’s a different definition of what a stretcher van is and what it should entail. Some states almost want them to be exactly like a traditional ambulance. Some are much more loose in their regulations and have very basic considerations that they must entail.

Do you have a sense for what a Connecticut version of a stretcher van should look like and what their representative regulatory agencies should consider when approving these?

REP. CASE (63RD): I do. And the first part of your question, I believe, since I have the endorsement F, endorsement F allows me to do that for non-medical reasons. It allows me to carry disabled people. It’s taxi, livery service plus motor coach. I actually have that endorsement on mind because I do work and travel with people with disabilities and wheelchairs. So, we have that endorsement already available because I have to go for my medical. There’s a lot of things in F that you need to do.

And if you could repeat, what was your second part of the question?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I wanted to clarify that. Again, I know this wasn’t your bill in your language. I just wanted to, in the language that was submitted to the committee for consideration
today, that second person was required to have training, equivalent training as provided to emergency medical service personnel as defined by another subsection. So, that’s where, like that standard is not quite the same as what was envisioned. So, there might be some disagreement and discussion about what you think that should look like instead.

REP. CASE (63RD): What I think it should look like is, if, if, like I said earlier, if my grandmother called and wanted to go to my graduation and she needed medical transportation, non-medical transportation, does she really need a second person in that vehicle, when she’s just coming up because she’s wheelchair bound and she’s under state aid? No, I don’t think that that’s the proper use of the state’s dollars.

I think that we can move forward with and help out the people that do need the medical and do need the comfort of having the second person in the vehicle because that’s also a quality of life and and giving the person the feeling that they have somebody there. Because when you do just have a driver and you have some medical conditions that might need some extra help, that second person is a big help because it, it calms the person and it gets them to where they go without any issues.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And as to the definition of and requirements for stretcher vans, those vary across multiple states for a variety of reasons. We call think of different things. Would you envision, it’s more of a leading question. Would you envision DPH being the agency that would perhaps review and establish the criteria and then
DOT would just issue the permit to the livery individual who, to the permit holder?

REP. CASE (63RD): Correct. I would think DPH would oversee how it’s, how it’s put together. But DOT, because as it is, DOT right now for all of our nonprofits that are in the special needs area, let’s give an example, in ARC, they have to have all their vans inspected once a year by DOT so that they show that they’re in perfect running condition because they do have wheelchair lifts on them and other things. DPH doesn’t have that ability to do that. So, and that’s actually another bill I have in front of you. So, maybe we’ll be talking again.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Case. As you, as you can probably tell, you are one of many people with views on this issue. There will be quite a few people after you today who have different takes on this. But I do appreciate your willingness and to take questions and be first in line today.

Thank you.

REP. CASE (63RD): No problem. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Bolinsky, followed by Mike Pollard.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Good morning. My name is Mitch Bolinsky and I’m here to speak before the Transportation Committee on House Bill 6163. I want to thank the Honorable Chairs, Lamar, Leone, Vice Chairs, Bergstein and Simms and my ranking members, Devlin and Martin for raising this bill and allowing it to have a public hearing.
I have testimony on file, gentlemen and ladies, but I’m not gonna read it to you today. Instead, I’m gonna preface my comments by saying, this is the easiest ask of the day. Okay. Very, very simple, permissive update to Connecticut’s graduated licensing laws, which will allow 16 to 17-year-old drivers, operating with graduated driver’s licenses to use a backup camera for safe backing without the fear of being cited for distracted driving.

So, Connecticut’s graduated drivers license laws have been a tremendous success since they came into effect in 2004. Back in 2004, there was no such thing as a back up camera in cars. Right now, it’s mandated by the federal government and has been proven to be an incredible piece of safety equipment.

So, at present, the Connecticut driver’s manual and the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles discourages the use, actually forbids the use of, of the back up camera as a supplement to safe backing. Instead, what we’ve always promoted has been looking over one’s right shoulder out the back window of a car, which doesn’t provide a, an encapsulating view as it once did because as automotive design has changed and aerodynamics have lifted the back of the car and dropped the front of the car, when you look out the back window you generally don’t see much.

And frankly, the reason that the federal government has mandated this piece of safety equipment is there’s a couple of dozen instances or there were a couple dozen instances every single year of parents or teens backing over either person or property or injuring younger siblings in driveways innocently because of the higher profile of the back of the
motor vehicle. So, those back up cameras, if you’ve ever used one, they’re an incredible supplement to safe operation of a motor vehicle.

So, all that this, all that this proposal asks is that we include them as part of safe backing practice and allow their use by people that are under the age of 18 as they are already permitted under the broader protections of somebody who has a full driving privilege license in the State of Connecticut.

I’ll conclude quickly and take any questions that you like. There is no fiscal cost. This is a simple lifesaving provision that is, is small, but important in the fact that it will actually save lives and prevent property damage.

So, thank you for hearing me.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative. Other questions for Representative Bolinsky?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, Representative, good to see you.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Good morning, Senator.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I just wanted to make sure I’m understanding the request because I believe with all the new cars that are out there or many of them come with the back up cameras now installed in vehicles, new vehicles.

So, one question is, are you suggesting that cameras that don’t have them -- I mean, cars that don’t have them can then install third-party, after market, rear cameras for use and then more importantly, for the 16, 17-year-olds, is it, am I understanding that
the request for the use of them is so that they can utilize that technology for the passing of their driver’s training or in everyday utilization? I just want to be clear there?

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): That’s a very good question, Senator. Thank you for asking it. This exact measure was before us last year. It never raised to the committee level because there was an objection at the DMV level to the fact that this might be a way for somebody who’s taking a driver’s, driver’s test to be able to have the assistance of a back up camera to help them pass that test. That is by no means the intention here. The intention is to, is to prevent unsafe backing and the possible loss of life that comes associated with that.

You cannot look out the back window and use your mirrors and with certainty be able to see behind a motor vehicle for roughly 45 feet at a height of four foot or at a height of 4 feet. There’s a giant blind spot back there. And, you know, I think that, you know, whether this becomes something that we codify, or it just simply becomes a revision that we order for DMV to driving practice or it becomes part of a larger bill at DOT or DMV.

There is no pride of authorship here, it’s just common sense to allow this. And if there is reservation about whether or not this is a way to help somebody who might otherwise not practice safe backing practice by allowing them to over rely on a camera rather than turn around in their seat, which makes very good common sense, obviously, we can simply write it that way and exclude the fact, you know, and exclude or I’m not sure we would exclude the back up camera, but we could. But if we wrote
procedures for driver testing to refer to the fact that you use, as page 24 currently calls out in the driver education manual, that safe backing is a combination of the following behaviors, turning around in your seat, using your mirrors, checking your blind spots.

If all we did was include the use of the backup camera, I, I dare say that we can save lives with that.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, it’s not for the passing of a test, it’s really just so that current statutes and regulations are kept up with emerging technologies that would be consistent with how every day drivers use their vehicles?

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Yes, absolutely, Senator. I completely and totally understand the concern that was expressed last year. I wish we had had the opportunity to question it, just like we are right now. But this is not about passing road tests, this is not about putting unsafe drivers on the road. This is putting one additional safety measure into the hands of every driver that has a driver that’s equipped with back up cameras.

And, and to your reference about whether it’s an after market or original equipment camera, I’m not certain how to police the proper installation of back up cameras, when they’re after market. But it, there’s no denying that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, through the National Traffic Safety Act required that the phasing begin on May 1st, 2016 and be complete at 100 percent new car manufacturing compliance to have safety cameras for just this safety reason.
So, all traffic experts, you know, nationwide understand the value of this camera for that which we don’t currently see.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Bolinsky. Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you again for your testimony.

REP. BOLINSKY (106TH): Thank you. Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Mike Pollard to be followed by Jeff Joines. The floor is yours, sir.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Good morning, Chairman Leone and Lemar and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee and Representatives and Senators who are attend. Thank you so very much for this opportunity to come before you on behalf of the Mayor of Stamford, Mayor David Martin, who unfortunately had a longstanding commitment and was unable to be here today. We have redeemed Senate Bill 715, an act to create modernization of parking garages to be critically important.

In addition to that, he would like to extend the idea that in addition to the parking, it should also extend to the City of Stamford to modernization of a garage, I’m sorry, modernization of a, of a train station or the transportation center itself.

There are a number of remarks that one can make today, but first of all, we all would agree that there is a direct corollary between modernization of transportation infrastructure and that of economic prosperity and growth within communities. This certainly is the case within the City of Stamford as well as other regions.
You might also recall that Bradley Airport and Stamford are really the two most significant transportation centers in the state.

Stamford, in the case of transportation in 2016, actually had 8.5 million commuters come through on Metro North. We had 400,000 commuters to come through, which was on the Amtrak line. Mainly the changes that have happened at Bradley have been done to improve the overall effectiveness of Bradley as a transportation center. It’s been improved in operations. It’s been improved in the customer experience when they travel through Bradley. Averaged in the same wind of time, over the last 30 years, there’s been precious little change within the Stamford transportation center in light of the volumes that have gone up.

The one major change was in 2004, there was a garage added to accommodate additional commuters who were coming in by car. However, since that time, there’s precious little change that has happened. There are a number of changes though that is occurring within the users of the transportation center and the City of Stamford that cannot be ignored and must be seen as part of a change and redesign of its transportation center.

If we began, first of all, you would recognize that when this garage or when this transportation center was built, there was absolutely no such thing as jitneys or commuter buses. Today over 2,000 employees coming to, coming to Stamford take a commuter business to get to their place of work. There was never envisioned ridesharing services like Lyft and Uber. Today this is routine for people, literally hundreds of people each and every day to
do that. However, our transportation center does not accommodate these particular type services.

Within the last three years alone, there have been over 4,000 new housing units built within walking distance of the transportation center. That particular, that particular trend is expected to continue with additional housing to come about. However, when the transportation center was built, it did not anticipate thousands of people walking to it. It was designed with an intent to have single drivers driving to garages, park their cars, take trains to go to New York City and then come back.

However, what we’ve discovered is that no longer is the exclusive trend within the transportation center’s use. So, today we anticipate is additional requirements continue to grow and demands continue to change on the center. Yet, modernization is not there.

The economic prosperity and growth within lower Fairfield County and Stamford greatly depends, almost exclusively depends on the transportation center. A failure of this transportation center will ultimately lead to a decline economically within the reason and within the City of Stamford.

With this, I simply close by saying, we would greatly support the, the bill as it is, but also more importantly, that modernization must extend to the second most used transportation facility in the state.

Thank you for your time.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Pollard, that was outstanding. I think you did a great job highlighting the concerns that Stamford sees. I
know similar communities across the state share the same vision for their transportation centers but yet don’t see the amount of people coming in that Stamford does. It’s really remarkable how much that station has grown, how much utilization of Stamford garages it has seen and like the vision for your community, I think, is held by a lot of folks across the state and I think you did a great job articulating that.

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good morning, Mr. Pollard, it’s good to see you and please give a hello to our Mayor. I know he is elsewhere that he could not change, so we appreciate you being here on his behalf and for the city.

And thank you for articulating the needs for, you know, modernizing our station and garage. And this is an issue that’s important to a lot of the communities up and down the line and, you know, we’ve heard some similar requests. But maybe just to dive a little bit into the needs in Stamford, and as you know, the city has had posted growth and that growth is creating a lot of pressures. It was not foreseen when it was first built and you articulated that to, to a, an opening degree.

I just wanted to make sure that as we as a committee understand the needs that we dive in to make sure we’re doing it in the right way because we want to modernize for the future and for the potential growth.

But I guess the one question is, has the city been working with all the parties that are involved with making sure that we build and modernize in the right
way? There has been concerns with neighbors. There has been discussions with the DOT. I know there’s some issues about traffic studies and mitigation. And I just want to make sure that you can articulate that the city is doing everything possible to address some of those needs so that we can actually move in the direction that I believe we need to. But I want to make sure anyone that has any reservations also understands and hears that we are trying to do it in a way that everyone’s working together.

For those that may not know, the city and the state has tried to build a, a public-private garage a few years ago that did not go over well because there wasn’t enough information to the public for many reasons that I don’t want to get into here. But I just want to make sure that we present it in a way that allows the city to grow as it needs to for the continuing growth and the city is doing quite well economically and we want to make sure that that continues.

So, I know that’s a, it’s a big leading question, but I just want to make sure that you can articulate that the city is working with all the parties involved to make sure that we do it in the right way so that we as a state give you the tools to be successful.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Yes, and I would say that’s a very good question and there are a couple of things that we have been, several things that we have been doing over the last few years that would be very important to understand.

First of all, our current garage structure, there are actually two structures. One of those
structures has actually failed in terms of allowing it to become compromised from an engineering standpoint.

A major section of that garage actually was closed approximately a year-and-a-half to two years ago has not and will not reopen. However, we’ve worked very closely with the state in a second design for a design build for a garage adjacent to the transportation center, that is progressing along. We’ve been working very collaboratively with the state in order to get that done. But again, it’s in response to a failed garage, which cannot be used. And therefore, does not support the ongoing demand that we currently have.

The second area that is, is in, that is being worked on is with the state with respect to a grant, a bill grant, which the state secured, which will actually help from a state of repair. However, if you’ve ever been to our state, you will probably know there’s at least 16 escalators that are throughout the station, which therefore makes it a little bit unfriendly to many individuals who use the station. Hence, the area where planning becomes very important.

As we continue to grow and we have more individuals who are pedestrian oriented toward the train station that are riding sharing oriented, it becomes very important that we factor those things in. Design a train station as Mayor Martin would say, a train station for the future. So that in the year 2050, one would look at the transportation center and see one that still accommodates the requirements at that point in time.
The station we have to date is a 1980s model and there’s precious few things that we have that are 1980s that’s functionally still effective in 2019.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Senator Bergstein, followed by Representative Steinberg.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Mr. Pollard for testifying. As you know, I represent Stamford as well. So, I share your concerns and I understand that the parking garage situation has been a nightmare for decades. I also share your conviction that economic growth is, is actually dependent on the state of our infrastructure and the transportation center and parking garage situation in Stamford do not present the face of Connecticut that we want.

However, I’m just curious about this particular bill because it asks for a, the department to issue a plan for the entire state for, so, it’s not a Stamford specific bill. So, I just wonder if that’s something that if you have more detail about -- are we looking, asking the commissioner to do a deep-dive comprehensive plan for, as written, for every commuter rail station in the state or just for Stamford?

MICHAEL POLLARD: No, to be completely candid, this is one to highlighten the deficiencies within the Stamford transportation center. So, it’s very important because again, once again, it is the highest used transportation center throughout the state and probably the most critical when it comes to the economic development within south, southwest Connecticut.
SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Right. So, I couldn’t agree more that Stamford is the gateway to Connecticut. And the face that we present there and the infrastructure that we show the rest of the world there is really critical to how we’re presenting our state and also to inviting businesses to come and participate in our state.

So, I’m just questioning, I guess, to the Chairs, whether this particular bill should apply to all commuter rail stations in the state as written or just to Stamford, specifically?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator, it’s, it’s pretty much wide ranging for the state and it allows every municipality that may have testimony for modernizing their specific garage or train station the ability to do so, so that we as a committee can then take that into account to work with DOT to figure out how we can use our resources in the best way, manner, if possible. So, it can be as Mr. Michael Pollard is testifying for the City of Stamford. We have also heard previously for other towns as well and this gives us a tool to do just that.

MICHAEL POLLARD: If I may, I would only interject one thing regarding the comment about main gateway. The comments we’re making today is more about operationally ensuring that we can continue to economically grow. I’ve literally had opportunities where executives from some of our companies have made it very clear that if our transportation center allows, is unable to accommodate the timeframe that it takes your individual employees to get from the transportation center to their point of employment,
it begins to be a question as to whether or not they can continue to stay in Stamford.

I’ve had two corporations make that comment just within the last six months. So, it is a concern about the economic aspects more so than the fact that we’ve become a very welcoming place. But we’re an operating center that allows people to have jobs in economic development.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): And I could not agree more. My concern simply is that if we’re asking the Commissioner of Transportation to issue a plan for the entire state or for any particular community within the state that asks for one, we should probably refine that request so that the deliverable is clear, we know exactly what we’re asking them to do within certain timeframe, within and with certain characteristics so it’s actually a deliverable request because I agree, we should have a comprehensive transportation plan for key transportation centers like Stamford, but we need to do it quickly and we need to do it in a thoughtful way. And so, the more specific and refined the request can be, the more actionable it is.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you Senator. Representative Steinberg.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mike, good to see you. Really appreciate your testimony today. It is ironic that we continue to sort of be behind the times in Stamford when we have our own governor talking about trying to lure Amazon to Connecticut, likely to be at Stamford. We have the governor talking about 30/30/30 on the rails and Stamford would need a critical hub in making all that happen. That we need to do a lot more to make
sure that Stamford is really the hub that it can be for the entire state.

My one question for you is, you’ve alluded to the fact that this is just one thing among many that needs to be addressed with the transportation situation in Stamford. You mentioned the number of independent vans and jitney buses, which may or may not be an appropriate solution for mass transit in Stamford.

Do you have and can you share with this committee, Stamford’s plan for how it wants to address broadly the transportation issues that plague it? Obviously, starting with trains, but really a multi-modal approach to bringing it into the 21st century?

MICHAEL POLLARD: The plans really require us to work very closely with the Department of Transportation because a great deal of the infrastructure is really run, managed and controlled by ConnDOT. As a result, we have been working very closely, we’ve been very fortunate enough to have the commissioner to entertain us in terms of hearing some of our concerns and getting onboard with what we currently are experiencing within, within the city.

The critical, the critical area within transportation is within the train station area or district, which again is controlled mainly by the Department of Transportation. However, there can be infrastructure improvements in and around the transportation center; therefore, improve the flow of jitneys/commercial small buses taking people to and from their work location.
There are also ways that we can begin to add and look at other types of vehicles that will allow us to move around.

So, for example, you do have a bill that talks about cable cars. I think we need to really look very closely at what are the alternative modes of transportation that we can use to transport people from the transportation center to other destinations within downtown.

Within the jitney center area that we’ve had multiple studies over the last four years with respect to how to improve jitney service within the City of Stamford. One of the critical aspects of this, which you may or may not know, with 70 jitneys is what we have in the City of Stamford, there’s very few places in the whole nation that use 7 jitneys to go to a single point transportation center. What has happened though is that they are individually managed and controlled. There is some overall governors, but not governors for the entire network.

So, it’s critical to us to come up with a governor’s model that really manages that because then it begins to improve, or we can then find ways to better improve single points of management within jitneys is another aspect of what we can look at.

So, again, infrastructure, looking at alternative models, looking at methods to improve jitney operations within the city will be certainly critical. And then the overall design and the layout of the transportation center itself. With pedestrian volumes at the levels that we have, we have to find ways to ensure that they are safe, first of all. And secondly, that the train station
is welcoming and accessible. So, today if you are in Stamford, and you are on the northside of the transportation center, there’s a drop off area, which always represented a degree of risk because it’s very small and people often will ignore the fact if they see signs that say, do not get out, yet they get out on to, on the main thoroughfare, which increases their risk of potentially accidents occurring.

So, it’s those kinds of things that we know exist that should be improved, and we’ll continue to work with the Department of Transportation on looking at plans to improve those aspects of the transportation center.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mike. Again, anything you would choose to share with this committee in terms of what your plans would be sort of on, on a holistic basis, I think that would help us all understand the importance of this particular legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and thank you again, Mr. Pollard for your testimony. We have a few more questions. Representative O’Dea, have you caught your breath?

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you. I was actually listening on my way here to the testimony both of Representative Case and Representative Bolinsky and now your testimony. Just for the record, I actually, I live in New Canaan, but go to Stamford regularly, I work in Stamford and I’ll commute on occasion. It costs me $50, I think it was $56 or $58 dollars to go into Manhattan from Saturday and
stay at night and come back and the parking is extremely difficult. Then we put on top of that the commuting, trying to find your bus to go to downtown. Most of the time I end up walking, which I could use anyway. But I’m in firm support of this, Senator Leone and I have been talking about this for too many years. And I very much appreciate you coming up here and testifying and letting everybody know how important it is that we upgrade the Stamford station, not only for what’s going on in Stamford, but for the surrounding communities like New Canaan. When Stamford thrives, we all thrive.

So, I very much appreciate you making an effort and testifying, and I can speak firsthand how much we need it and enthusiastically endorse this, this project, this bill. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, and as you indicated in your testimony, there are a few stations in the State of Connecticut that are the linchpin to the success of the entire network we’re trying to build. Stamford is clearly one of them and is one of the few communities on the rail line that actually have actively embraced the idea of multiuse, multi-income development around their train stations. Stamford is doing everything right and their transportation has not kept up with the needs of the, of the current environment. We certainly need to invest it, if we’re going to make a success of the broad 30, 30, 30 vision come true, but just maintain adequate service in and out of an economic hub such as Manhattan.

So, thank you so much for your testimony.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Thank you very much.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Mr. Pollard, if you don’t mind, you have one more.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Oh.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Pollard.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Good morning.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): I just wanted to thank you as well because as you know, those of us who are in the delegations that represent Fairfield, Norwalk, Westport, Greenwich and Stamford have met and that one of the, one of the priorities that’s kind of a loosely formed organization called the Fairfield Five, which I know you know everything about, but I, this upgrade of transportation, particularly in Stamford, but also up and down the line is something that I, I think is, we’ll hear more about this session because you all have a very firm bipartisan policy that you are recommending in three major areas and one of them is transportation. Because if those cities don’t thrive, Fairfield County won’t thrive and neither will the 40 percent of Connecticut’s tax revenue that it contributes, continue to remain at that level.

So, I also support the initiative and I hope that, I hope we’ll make some headway. So, thank you very much for coming.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Thank you.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And Senator Leone, do you want to try and clean up for us here?
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick closing question. You touched upon it briefly and if you want to defer it to Mr. Madden as the economic director, I’m okay with that. But you mentioned the cable cars. So, if, if you had any thought about that and the reason why I ask is, that concept and that idea came up as possible legislation to think differently in terms of how we deal with transit and transporting people. And cable cars have been utilized across the country in, in select cities as well as in other continents as well quite successfully as I’m doing more research.

So, it was an idea that was presented to me out of an innovation district seminar in Stamford. So, it was brought forth to us by someone who thought it might be a good idea and that’s the reason why it was before us.

It’s a new concept. I don’t think we’re quite ready for it, but I wanted to know if the city in it’s interest in, you know, trying to think and be progressive in a way that’s positive, is there any opportunity for this to be a talking point? I don’t know if we can get there this year or when, but I just wanted to make sure that the city was aware of it. You mentioned it briefly. If you have any comments, it would be great. If you want to defer for the next speaker, that’s quite all right as well.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Yeah, what I will share with you is this and that is, the City of Stamford has had a history of looking at alternative models that would allow for a reduction in overall traffic within the
city. Traffic congestion is a critical concern for us.

Several years ago, actually in, I do believe about the 2005, 2006 timeframe, there was a study that was to be conducted to entertain the possibility of actually doing, using a ferry from Stamford to lower Manhattan in an effort to again reduce traffic, improve service by citizens who lived in the area. Unfortunately, we discovered that that did not work.

We also had an opportunity to entertain the possibility of a monorail within the City of Stamford. Once again, creative thinking, looking out of the box, looking at ways to reduce traffic congestion, yet being able to improve the services within the city, unfortunately it did not work.

So, I think what you get is that there’s a trend in Stamford that we’re constantly looking at alternative models. The key is being able to identify and find one that we can execute that would ultimately get the kind of results that we’re looking for. Cable cars is another one we want to entertain. We would like to think that the third time or maybe the third time is a charm, but with respect to being able to look outside the box is critical in Stamford and we’re constantly doing that.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And you’re so compelling, everyone has got more questions for you. Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sir, thank you very much for being here and testifying. I may be one of the few sitting up here that’s not
from Fairfield County. And we’ll, and you can forgive me for that, but I will also tell you that the theater trains that help get those trains down to Stamford also have the same needs and I come from the great City of Waterbury and we’ve been developing that train station for far too long.

So, I can understand your pain and it’s more of a comment than a question. But I have utilized the services at Stamford, and I agree that there absolutely could be some upgrade. But as Senator Bergstein said, I would be more inclined to take a look at, look at the whole State of Connecticut and with an emphasis on Stamford.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you again for all your testimony here today.

MICHAEL POLLARD: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I’m moving to the public session. We’re gonna go back and forth between public and elected officials at this point. First on the list is Jeff Jones, to be followed by Representative Turco. You’re just gonna want to hit the button right in front of you, nope the one next, right there.

JEFF JONES: Again, thank you, Chairman Lemar and Chairman Leone and ranking members and members of the committee for allowing me to speak today on behalf of the hard working men and women that work, repair and maintain the railroad tracks here in Connecticut.

Today we’re, had the opportunity to make it a safer workplace for them. In Connecticut today, the
motorists aren’t required to stop at a crossing when a piece of railroad equipment is approaching the road crossing. And so, we fully support House Bill 7098 and in section 2, it fixes that. We’re trying to add language in the state statute that’s already there to add on track equipment, other on track equipment.

And over the years, our equipment with the technology and modernization has involved into train-like equipment. And I think you may have some photographs there of some of the equipment that we use to maintain the tracks with. And we have equipment that actually pulls seven to eight cars down the track. So, you can imagine stopping on a dime. We’re not in push carts anymore like we used to be years ago.

And so we come to you today for, for the main reason is, we’re trying to protect our members that are out there on the track. And this is supported by rail labor and it’s supported by the railroads themselves and we’re hoping that you will take this up and amend your state statute now to include on-track equipment and help, help with the safety as we work out there on the tracks and around the road crossings.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much for your testimony today and for having folks come in last week and helping submit the situation to both Chairman Leone and myself. Are there any questions? If not, thank you both for the testimony and the visuals you provided to the committee, because it helped to show quite evidently why there needs to be some type of notification equipment to train cars
for this type of on-track equipment. Thank you again.

JEFF JONES: Thank you again.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Sorry, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I know and I want to thank you, your men and women for the great work that you all do. And I know that safety is first and foremost. I know this raised bill doesn’t have that consideration. But could you give your thoughts in regards to where we are in this state in regards to a positive train control in the context of it being installed versus operational? Because obviously, your men and women are, are working on those trains and safety is important for all, not only the commuters, but also your hardworking employees as well?

So, could you offer some thought on that?

JEFF JONES: Well, Senator, I tell you, our men and women that work out there on the tracks, we actually work in between the rails. We don’t work on the signals and that’s what the positive train control is. And so I’m not very versed on the positive train control, that would be the signalman.

And so, but I know they have been mandated by the federal government to hurry up. And I think that’s what they’re doing, and we work with them side-by-side every day and a, and a, as well as our members. You know, it’s a goal of us, for all of us that work on the railroads every day to get up and make sure that we have a, a safe railroad not only for ourselves, but for the traveling public as well.
And so, but as far as a positive train control, I really can’t speak on that because that’s just a different area of work that, that we work in. But, but, but I will tell you this, this, by amending this state statute, it would also, not only will it protect our people that are on the track, it will protect the other workers out there as well.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And given the work that you all do from a practical standpoint, to be you as a layman working on the tracks and ensuring the safety, what’s your definition, for instance, between installed versus operational?

JEFF JONES: Well, Senator, installed is, means it’s sitting there and there’s a lot of that stuff sitting there. Operational means is when it’s actually working. And I’ll tell you, it’s important to us because the positive train control also protects us while we’re out there working because if something gets back and we’re all human and so the positive train control folks never stop that train, you know.

So, it’s important to the men and women that work out there every day that, that, that it gets installed because that’s just another layer of safety that we’re, we can add on out there.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And again, I began by thanking your men and women for your hard work and I’m gonna end by saying that same thing. So thank you all, thanks for being here.

JEFF JONES: I appreciate it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I see no other questions. Thank you again for coming up today, I really appreciate it.
I don’t see Representative Turco. Oh, there he is, thank you. Representative Turco, you’re next in line, followed by Zak Leavy. I see a whole lot of folks from Newington here, Mr. Turco.

REP. TURCO (27TH): We’re gonna testify together, if that’s okay?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): That’s quite all right. Just have each individual introduce themselves, if you don’t mind.

REP. TURCO (27TH): I am Gary Turco, State Representative for the 27th District, which comprises most of Newington.

REP. WOOD (29TH): Good morning, Kerry or good afternoon, Kerry Wood, State Representative from the 29th District, Rocky Hill, Newington and Wethersfield.

ROY ZARTARIAN: And I’m Roy Zartarian, Mayor of the town of Newington.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Good to have you all here today.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Co-chairs Lemar and Leone, Vice Chair Simms and Bergstein and ranking members, Martin and Delvin.

As I mentioned, I’m Gary Turco, State Representative for the 27th District, and to the distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, we are here bipartisanly together to express support for House Bill 7098, which is AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUTER RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE.

While I support various components of this bill, I’m specifically here to express support for section 1, subsection 3, which includes the development of a
new commuter rail station of the town of Newington. I’m gonna speak briefly and then turn it over to my colleagues, if that’s okay with the Chairs?

The current Hartford rail commuter line already runs through Newington. And the Department of Transportation has been studying and has located a very strategic location for the new station at 565 Cedar Student, in Newington.

Now, this potential location has a lot of assets for the region, of the town of Newington and for the state. It’s located near a current Connecticut Fastrak stop. It’s located near the Route 9 freeway, so people can easily get on and get off and get to the train station and it’s right near Central Connecticut State University.

The site also surrounds 40 acres of immediate developable land with the potential of another, a total of 100 acres of developable land in the vicinity. So, I believe this is a great investment for the State of Connecticut. We’ve already seen massive success on the Hartford rail line. The demand for ridership is there. And by building this new train stop in Newington, we’ll be giving thousands of more people the ability to use a mass transit system. We’ll be providing relief from our roads, from traffic, helping to reduce pollution and increasing the quality of life for area residents.

And the potential economic development opportunities is very important to the region as well. This could result in hundreds of new businesses, thousands of new jobs and millions in new revenue for Newington and the entire region.
Also developing a new smart green transit orient, development zone that will help attract the educated and trained workforce we need to this area to compete in the 21st century.

So, I thank you very much for bringing this bill to a public hearing and I’ll turn it over to my colleague, Representative Kerry Wood.

REP. WOOD (29TH): Hi, thank you members of the Transportation Committee. I would like to just add that the economic development benefits along the New Haven to Springfield line have not yet been realized as they have along the metro north corridor. We have the opportunity here to put in a train station in a new market that currently doesn’t have this. It is a large market. The second largest market in between Hartford and New Haven, and there’s about 135,000 people serving a student population of 12,000 price point of Central Connecticut State University. This is also next to the Fastrak line, which also has a stop there.

ROY ZARTARIAN: Good morning, Representative Lemar and members of the committee. Once again, I’m Roy Zartarian, Mayor of the town of Newington. I am here along with Representatives Turco and Wood to express support for the provision of House Bill 7098, which would establish a train station in Newington.

While trains run through Newington every day, we’ve not had a local stop in town for passenger service since 1959. The train station proposed for a central location just south of Cedar Street, State Route 175, would provide inter-city travel on the recently opened Hartford line, not only to our 30,000 residents, but also to communities such as
Central Connecticut State University, without making people drive to Hartford or to Berlin to get on the train.

This section of Cedar Street where the new station would be located has for a long time been on the radar, both the town of Newington and the Connecticut Department of Transportation due to traffic flow and safety concerns. The train station would be the catalyst for a comprehensive and lasting resolution of these issues. It would move things out of the talking planning stage into something concrete actually being done.

Now, as I’m sure you’re aware, train stations in other locations have sparked economic growth with a responsible town-oriented development of the available land surrounding the proposed station site.

We foresee the emergence of a mixed-use hub with an emphasis on commercial retail and professional enterprise. To guide this undertaking, we have already begun formulating land use regulations for a transit village design district.

We are confident that in the end, the outcome will be a successful one. However, nothing can happen until an actual train station is built. House Bill 709 will build that station. The sooner a Newington station is developed, the sooner the community will reap its benefits.

We urge you to support this bill and I thank you for your consideration.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you each for your testimony here today and thank you for, you are our representation for the town of Newington. I’ve also
heard from Senator Lesser about his strong commitment to building the train station as well. So, you are well represented, Mayor, here in Hartford with the folks you brought up.

ROY ZARTARIAN: That’s good to hear.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And they’ve done a great job at indicating their priority of this bill. So, thank you from hearing from you as well.

You mentioned that you see this as a catalyst for economic development in your community, and that’s certainly how we envision the role that transit, mass transit can play in Connecticut.

You’ve mentioned talking about up to 100 acres of potential development land in and around the location that you’ve selected that we’re working with DOT on identifying as the right location.

You also indicated, focus on retail and commercial. I would just hope you would recognize that the most successful train station developments that we’ve seen both across the country, specifically here in Connecticut, include housing as a primary component of it, particularly mixed income housing.

So, I’d hope that your town would consider that as well. We’re trying to accomplish numerous goals that we make use of multi-million dollar to billion dollar investments. And I think one of those issues that needs to be included in and around these transit stops is the use of housing, particularly mixed income housing as well.

ROY ZARTARIAN: Yes.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): So, thank you. Are there any questions for anyone here from Newington today? Seeing none, thank you each for your testimony.

ROY ZARTARIAN: Thank you.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you for the opportunity.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Zak Leavy, followed by Representative Abercrombie and then Rob Rocke.

ZAK LEAVY: Good afternoon, Chairman Lemar, Chairman Leone, vice chairs and ranking members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Zak Leavy and I serve as the legislation and political advocate for Council 4, AFSCME, a union representing over 30,000 hardworking employees across Connecticut. We also represent rank and file department of motor vehicle employees that would be negatively affected by H.B. 5762 and S.B. 826, which would expand contractors used by the DMV in full privatization of the agency.

Council 4 strongly urges the committee to reject privatizing the work being performed by our dedicated members in the Department of Motor Vehicles. Our members recognize that there continues to be challenging economic times, yet layoffs and privatization will only make matters worse, rather than better, through lowering wages and benefits for workers and reducing their spending power.

The members we represent in the DMV go to work every day and provide these necessary services to the public. They have had to continue doing this work and getting unduly blamed since the installation of a failed computer, computerization system that play...
into an old trope about the DMV. But the problem was that the system was installed by privatized workers of the 3M Corporation out of Minnesota, rather than being done by the current state employees. Not only did this cause confusion, but it resulted in a cost of state taxpayers of $26-million dollars. If this work had been done by state employees, the issues that arose and the damage to the reputation of the DMV could have been avoided.

Privatization is purely an attempt to drive down cost, by seeking to continually lower wages and benefits. This chokes our consumption-based economy that thrives the economic health for small businesses, big businesses as well as our state government.

In New Jersey, we’ve seen what a disaster privatizing the DMV can be. A state commission looking into it in 2002 or put in that quote, “privatization has not worked and appears to have exacerbated an already bad situation. Employees receive zero training and work under difficult working conditions with low pay and no benefits. It is not surprising that turnover is high and corruption flourishes.”

They also went on to find that importantly it led to poor and disjointed, poor, disjointed and confused service delivery without consistency, which just led to frustration and more confusion by New Jersey state residents. They then had to bring the entirety of it back in-house after wasting money with a privatization scheme.

Additionally, in the past, OFA has shown that DMV is a major revenue provider for the state. According
to a past OFA report, it yields over $400 million dollars in revenue, while only costing the state around $60 million dollars. It is bringing in six times what it is costing the state.

Privatizing this revenue stream would be ill advised, as the state currently needs as much revenue as possible. And again, we urge you to reject privatization of DMV workers and the important work they do.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you for your testimony and thank you for representing the workers that you do. And a lot of them would like to be here to talk about what they see as responsibilities and hindrances to their operation internally. We had representatives from DMV come up last week to provide, a couple of days ago actually to provide an overview and they did an outstanding job, indicating the examples where outside contractors can work, but outlining that the vast majority of jobs need to be handled in house by our dedicated professionals who know how to handle them appropriately and reasonably.

So, thank you for educating the worker’s point of view on that.

ZAK LEAVY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Other questions for Mr. Leavy? Seeing none, thank you so much.

ZAK LEAVY: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Abercrombie. I don’t see him, okay. Mr. Rocke. Thomas Madden.
THOMAS MADDEN: Good afternoon, Senator Leone and Representative Lemar and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Thomas Madden, I’m Director of Economic Development for the City of Stamford. I’m here to speak in support of S.B. 425, which is to modify the State’s current Autonomous Vehicle law.

The City of Stamford has applied to OPM to become a “Pilot City” under Public Act 17-69, a Fully Autonomous Vehicle Testing Pilot Program that was initiated last year, in order to establish an Autonomous Vehicle zone in the city as part of both its Economic Development and its Innovation District Plans.

As a community that continuously works to advance the quality of life for its citizens, strengthen its economy, and develop its infrastructure, Autonomous Vehicles, which will create an enhanced transportation solution for the present and the future are closely aligned with the city’s goals.

I have testified previously before that AVs will eventually become the dominant form of transportation in the 21st century. They represent a radical leap forward in the automotive technology and will transform and dramatically enhance mobility around the globe.

The City of Stamford continues to work with its partners, both ConnDOT and UConn, on plans to encourage the development, deployment, and testing of AVs in a zone near the Stamford Transportation Center.
The City supports the work of the AV Task Force and offers the following amendments to the current Public Act No. 17-69.

As Stamford moves forward with its AV zone, it is important to look at the technology that is available and to move in a direction where testing will allow to solve current problems for the city and its partners.

One of these problems that have been identified is the number of private shuttles that operate at the Stamford transportation center. A recent study by ConnDOT has identified that there are 68 private shuttles that service UConn, private buildings, corporations and apartments; making this the largest private shuttle network in the nation.

As you can surmise, this has led to local traffic congestion on roadways surrounding the Stamford transportation center. One of the solutions that the City is investigating is the use of 12 passenger micro-shuttles, such as Ollie from Local Motors or Autonom from NAVYA Motors.

Public Act No. 17-69 currently only allows for AV’s that have a steering wheel and a driver seated in the driver seat, as the law envisioned that the first vehicles that would be tested in the state would be level 3 to level 5 autonomous cars and not a micro-shuttles.

One of the key differences between a car and shuttle are that shuttles are engaged by an attendant while standing and in an emergency situation are operated by the attendant through the use of a joystick and not a steering wheel.
The City of Stamford perceives micro-shuttles as a stepping stone for the public to see and experience how autonomous technology will work. The city would like to see Section 1-6, the definition for operator to be amended to and include, operator, meaning the person seated in the driver's seat of a fully autonomous vehicle with this new language, or, if there's no person in the driver's seat, causes the autonomous technology to engage.

This amendment would allow for micro-shuttles to operate within the proposed testing zone in Stamford and not have to have the shuttles be reconfigured to have a steering wheel installed.

As vehicle technology moves towards, towards from the traditional rack-and-pinion steering to steer by wire, our laws need to be ready for this. We would also like to see Section 1(d)(3) amended as well to include that same language, which would then have continuity.

The proposed amendment provides consistency with the proposed definition changes for operator. And again, keeps up with the technology that has been incorporated into the micro shuttles.

The opportunity to test AVs align with many of the city’s initiatives and priorities. An AV district will not only help strengthen Stamford but will allow the city to tie into Connecticut’s already well established military industrial complex for that technology transfer.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Madden for your testimony today and for indicating some of the
technological advances that this, that we’re making and sometimes legislation, when it’s trying to be prescriptive, doesn’t foresee. I had an individual in New Haven who told me, we’re writing laws for AVs, similar to how if they’d written laws for cars in the 1910s and ‘20s, they’d require you to, like hitch a horse to the back of it as well. And the technology is moving so quickly that to try to input current standards into that new technology just holds the whole thing back.

So, I appreciate your willingness to come here and indicate how we need to advance to move this forward correctly.

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And we’re into the afternoon. Good afternoon, Thomas, pleasure to have you here and I’m thankful that you’re here to talk about AVs. As you know, we brought this up just, only a year or two ago, this concept, which started out as a concept and very quickly because of your leadership and the city’s leadership, we realize that we had an opportunity to take advantage of this emergent technology.

And ever since we proposed the legislation, I have been sought out by so many players, not just here in the state, but outside the state, in how we can make sure that this legislation moves in the right way, because as you’ve mentioned, it is the new way of how transportation is gonna be utilized. And even the manufacturers, the big manufacturers are now putting a lot of investment into autonomous vehicles. And that can only have a ripple effect across the spectrum in so many ways that we’re not even able to articulate them all here.
You mentioned about making sure that we have the change to make sure, not about the steering wheel. I’m glad you brought that up because we had come to that knowledge in the closing hours of the session. We weren’t able to input it at the time and it is something I wanted to make sure that as we continue to put thought into this technology that we stay ahead of what we need.

So, I’m glad that you brought that up. We will be looking to do just that. We do have a task force that we hope to get some comment as well. So, I would ask if you’re not already, stay in touch with them as well because we will look to them to give us any additional concept that we need to be aware of as it progresses.

So, your involvement is key. Coming from Stamford, I see all the great things that we’re trying to do as a city and hopefully if we can get it right, it can be a model for not just other cities in this state, but maybe within the region. So, thank you on that.

And then in parting, any comments on the cable cars? You can just make it a quick comment. I just want to make sure that we’re at least thinking about, thinking differently if the opportunity presents itself in any way to be successful?

THOMAS MADDEN: I’ve actually been working with that company over the last several years with that cable car concept. Now, in terms of cable car, I think we have to explain to the audience that it’s not a cable car like in San Francisco where it clamps on, it’s a trolley that runs along the ground. This is an actual, the company is called Airborne, it actually has a cable car that actually lowers to the
ground and then raises up and then moves along an airway along cables that way where it clamps on to. So, it’s a little bit different.

You know, I think you heard Mr. Pollard speak earlier. Stamford has always been on the cutting edge of innovation. We look forward to trying to find as many solutions as possible for the different problems that we have within the city itself.

We had looked at the cable car solution to be able to across some of our east branch and west branch waterways as opposed to building bridges. It might be a cheaper fashion to shuttle people back and forth and that was one of the things that we had suggested that could be incorporated into the study and look at to see the feasibility.

And I think the study itself is more of a feasibility study, similar to what the ferry was earlier and the monorail to be able to say, does this actually work for Stamford, you know, what is the rate of return on this and will it, the technology not be surpassed by other technology.

So, we encourage the study and we support the study and we look forward to seeing at least the results of it.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, and I appreciate that and I’m glad the city’s looking at it. But I also hope other towns and cities are looking at it as well. We do have some hilly and mountainous, small mountainous areas or whether it’s across a river or from one peak to another. So, it might be an opportunity for others to weigh in. And I’m just glad that we’re thinking about it back home also.
So, thank you for your testimony. Those are things that we will be looking to make sure that we stay on top of to make sure that you have the tools you need to be successful.

THOMAS MADDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Madden.

THOMAS MADDEN: I’m getting off easy. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Abercrombie.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Good afternoon, Representative Lemar, Senator Leone and Senator Martin. I’m Representative Cathy Abercrombie. I am the Co-House Chair Woman of Human Services. I am also the Co-chair of MAPOK, which is the Oversight Council for Medicaid.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. I am testifying in opposition of S.B. 66, AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONEMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION OF ELDERLY PERSONS OR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CONFined TO A STRETCHER.

You have my testimony, so I’m not gonna read my testimony. But I’d like to just hit on a few points.

Number 1, I want to paint a picture for you. Currently, individuals that go to dialysis, quadriplegics, elderly that have hip replacement, are transported to either home, rehab facilities in what we call a flat bed, which currently is done through our ambulances.
What stretcher vans are, are vehicles sort of like a mini van with a bed in them that has no medical staff, nor does it have any medical equipment.

We as a state have had this issue come up over the last six years and we have not voted this out of this committee because we believe it’s a public safety issue.

Individuals that have to lay flat should be transported in the most safe type of transportation, number one.

The second issue I want to talk about is the payment system. You’re gonna hear a lot of testimony today that’s gonna talk about it being a cheaper reimbursement. Yes, stretcher vans are a cheaper reimbursement. But what people are not telling you about and talking about is that in our system, we have different levels of Medicaid. So, we have what is called dual, which means they’re Medicare and they’re Medicaid recipients.

Currently Medicare is the first payer of these individuals, which in Connecticut we have about 200,000 recipients. Medicare does not pay for stretcher vans. Let me be clear, Medicare does not pay for stretcher vans, which means Medicaid would have to pick up that reimbursement, which would be a cost to the state.

Currently about over $15 million dollars comes, is paid through the Medicare program, which means half of that now the state would have to pick up.

Second portion is, we also have what’s called semi duals, which most of you have heard, MSP, Medicare Savings Program. Under the system, those that are in that program would no longer, would not be able
to get reimbursement under Medicaid for these services, which means it would have to come out of their pocket. Think about that folks. One, Medicaid’s gonna go up if we do this. Two, individuals now, who are Medicaid recipients, who are low income families, will now have to pay for these services.

And I think as we talk about this, people need to be honest about what this means as a state. Medicare, you’re also gonna hear and I’ve heard that people are saying that New York is looking for a waiver to be able to do this service under Medicare.

I think individuals are getting Medicaid, which is state funded, and Medicare mixed up. Medicare is a universal policy throughout this, throughout all the states in the country. It’s a set fee. You don’t go to congress and ask, you don’t go to the feds and ask for a waiver, it actually is an act of congress to change any of the benefits under Medicare.

So, when people tell you that there’s some kind of waiver in New York, what they’re probably talking about is Medicaid because you would have to apply for a waiver.

I think the third thing that people need to consider when we talk about this is, and I’m sure there’s nobody in this room that hasn’t heard this, Veyo, our non-emergency transportation provider right now, who we have had many, many issues with. And it’s because they have changed their transportation system to what we currently have done in this state to what’s called independent drivers, which are Uber and Lyft.
Personally, I don’t have any problem with Uber and Lyft, I’m not here to talk about them. I’m talking about the fact that we are making decisions for people that are low income to have to use a less expensive form of transportation, whether it’s safe or not.

So, as you consider this legislation, I really think that you need to, you need to consider this, we, as a state, and we, as policymakers, have a responsibility to make sure our most vulnerable population is served in the best way, right?

We need to make sure that they are protected. And by putting someone in a vehicle with no medical staff, no medical equipment, in my opinion, is the wrong way to go.

So, I thank all of you for hearing my testimony today. I would be more than happy to answer any questions at this point.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Abercrombie for your testimony here today and thank you for lending your experience and knowledge about this issue. You know, we look at it in the transportation sense about, you know, whether the approval of a livery license is appropriate, whether or not we can define regulations for this. But you providing your experience in Human Services, having the background that you do and understand the constructors at play and sort of addressing some of the information we received earlier is vital in us understanding, more broadly, this topic.

There are a few questions, I think, that we want to hit at from the DOT side and how the, you know, a process could be established, how we would even
think about regulating these. The bill envisions DOT just simply issuing a permit, based upon an indication that this person has the requisite size parameters in place.

Someone who requires a stretcher van, I would presume, would need additional help and safety considerations in that van beyond that of just having an available bed. Can you talk to me a little bit about what is required, or you think is required for individuals like this who, like who needs a stretcher van, but also does not need some sort of medical support during the transport or during the multiple hour even that they’re being transported to? And what kind of requirements other states might think of placing on stretcher vans?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Sure. So, a couple of things. I’ll address other states. My understanding is there’s only a handful of states that do have stretcher vans. And the criteria they use for these vehicles is very, very strict.

So, you would definitely have to come up with your own policies under DOT. My understanding is that the former Commissioner, James Redeker, had testified last year, March 18, 2018, opposing this. And I’ll quote one of the things he said. “In order for livery permit holders to register vehicles to be used to transport people through the use of stretcher van, Connecticut DOT would have to develop a complete set of vehicle specifications and promulgate, and we know how challenging this is, regulations to be in compliance and to make sure that the customer safety is being adhered.”

The other part of this is is that some of our medical equipment, medical vehicles right now are
also licensed through DPH. So that, so chair cars for example are done through DPH. So, there’s a cross over with agencies there.

The second question was about the safety, right? So, nobody knows after you’ve had a procedure if you’re gonna have an episode, right? So, right now on stretcher vans you can’t have oxygen. What if somebody has an attack in the vehicle? There isn’t any medical personnel and there isn’t any medical equipment in that vehicle.

In the ambulances right now that transport these individuals, they sit in the back with these individuals. I have not seen a stretcher van out there that has a chair in the back for these individuals to even monitor them, right? You have the two seats in the front and then you have the stretcher in the back.

So, you know, I don’t understand how you think that that should, that could be a safety; you know, how do you do a safety component of that because you’re not allowed under state law right now, under the definition of stretcher vans to have medical equipment. I hope that answers your question.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): It does. Thank you again for your questions. Are there other questions? Representative Morin?

REP. MORIN (28TH): I’ll defer to you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both. Good afternoon, Representative. I just, I’ll be quick. Do you know how many patients would be affected, if this was changed or?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): So, there’s different categories of individuals under Medicaid. One of the categories that I talked about were dual, which
there’s over 200,000 currently dual here in Connecticut, which means they’re Medicare from the feds and Medicaid. Medicare is the first payer, Medicaid is the second. Because Medicare does not pay for this type of transportation across the country, no Medicare pays for this, Medicaid would have to pick that up.

There’s also Medicare individuals that have no Medicaid that if you put this in place, now those individuals would have to pay for the service out of their pocket.

REP. MORIN (28TH): So, that’s and that’s I guess where I’m going. I’m trying to listen to both sides and get a better understanding. You know, they talked about quite a bit of savings that the state would, would recognize. You’ve been dealing with this in your committee for quite a while. What do you think of that, are those numbers accurate?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): No, I think they’re false because they’re not taking into account the whole population. They think that they can cherry pick who they’re going to deliver services to. And I don’t think that our providers have enough time to decide which service they’re gonna offer.

So, if I’m a hospital, and I got a, I have to get someone discharged and send them, say, to a rehab center after they have hip surgery, do you really think they’re gonna take the time to look and see if this person is Medicare and Medicaid and say, well, Medicare’s not gonna pay, so I better put them in the ambulance so that I make sure that we’re getting payment for this. Or this person is Medicare, stretcher vans are not paid for under the policy, now this person’s gonna have to pay out of pocket.
I don’t believe in our healthcare system there’s enough hours in a day for individuals to take a look at that. So, I’m very fearful as to what this would mean for our most vulnerable population.

Let’s remember, we’re not talking about taking someone to the grocery store. We’re talking about medically fragile individuals. Your loved ones, my loved ones and the constituents we represent.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Leone, followed by Senator Martin.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, Representative --

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Good afternoon.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- it’s always a pleasure.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Oh, sure.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): As you know, we are hearing quite a bit on this particular topic. Both sides have some very compelling testimony and we’re in the middle of trying to figure out what is the right thing to do. So, in that vane, any questions that are just coming from, from trying to learn where we are.

As I’m hearing Medicare and Medicaid and the expense that if something were to go awry, they may not cover this. And I completely get that, and I think that’s a real issue that if we were to go forward, we’d either have to address that or not go forward because it’s a big, it’s a big, I think, issue,
especially for people that may rely on those, those funding to get around.

But on the other side, there seems to be the ability that there are people that don’t need the medical services in order to get to a destination for when they want to get somewhere. And I guess the question is, is there a way to have a service that can be safe with certain regulations that would need to be articulated for a person that does want to bet somewhere and maybe even have to pay out of a pocket because Medicare or Medicaid won’t cover it, and that’s where the expense becomes a compelling argument. Why pay a $300 service through an ambulatory service, when you might be able to pay, say, $70, if the person can afford it, they don’t need a medical service, they don’t have a medical condition at the moment. And when I look at it that way, it’s somewhat akin to someone who goes out and buys, you know, a van for their family member for wheelchair capability. They’re transporting their loved one to save on all those expenses. And if there was a medical emergency, then you go through the medical process.

But if you don’t need the medical aspect of it, why couldn’t we have someone who could afford it out of pocket, if they just want to get from point A to B, without medical intervention?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): So, I think it’s a little bit more complicated than that and that’s where my concern comes into play.

We all know that anytime that we put into statute different payment systems that they cross over. So, you’re talking DOT deciding on medical necessity, which no offense, DOT knows nothing about medical
necessity. And then you’re also talking about Public Health, DPH, that has a component of this.

So, I think it’s a little bit more complicated. What I will say to you is, I don’t believe it’s, it’s worth the risk to the individuals that we represent.

I don’t believe that people that are on Medicaid, our elderly, have the resources to even pay for this out of their pocket at this point.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you and I appreciate that. And the only thing that I’ll add is, we are getting requests from people saying they want this service because they want to get around and not be reliant on just one entity. So, I don’t know where we need to go here. We’re just hearing from both sides, we’re collecting information.

I think you bring a very strong testimony for the issues that we need to weigh in on, if we were to go forward. So, I look forward to some more testimony. And as you know, there are other representatives and senators that have a different view and we’re trying to work with all sides on this one.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): So, let me just add this, why can’t the individuals that think that this is the transportation that they can supply to individuals, why don’t they just do it? Why do we as a state under Medicaid have to pay for it? That’s my question to you because that’s what they’re saying. If Lyft and Uber can do work for individuals and not have to have the state pay for it, why should we here change what we do as a state to provide safe travel for individuals with medical needs. So, there’s the difference there. If these
guys behind me want to have stretcher vans and put a notice out that if somebody wants to go to the grocery store, they’ll deliver them, do it. But why should we as a state have to pay for something that’s not safe?

So, I guess that’s where the difference lies for me.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Representative. Just one quick question. Can you elaborate a little bit more about Uber and Lyft and what’s going on there?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Under the Veyo system?

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): You, you mentioned that --

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Sure. So, so, I’m sure most of you have gotten calls over the last year from your constituents about where we’re having an issue with our non-emergency transportation in DSS right now. The vendor that DSS contracts with is called Veyo, they’re out of, from another state, they’re actually from Arizona. The way that Veyo does their system is, they use, Veyo, I mean, they use Uber and Lyft as part of their transportation. Whereas in the past, what we did was, we had contracts with our, our cab drivers. So, we had a system in place. We’ve had a lot of issues under Veyo with transportation, with them getting people transported from point A to point B. By bringing in people that are not familiar with a certain population that we serve.

So, let me give you an example. Kids that have mental health issues, right? You’re putting them in
a vehicle with someone that has had no training around this population. And we have had a lot of issues with this contract over the last year and we’re still trying to figure out where do we go from here.

The other problem is, with Veyo is that they decide what the best form of transportation is. So, over the, over the first six months of the contract, we had nine individuals that went, did not to their dialysis and ended up in the hospital because they did not get from point A to point B, because you brought in a vendor that didn’t know Connecticut.

So, there’s concerns with changing a system that one, works and two, is a public safety issue. That’s all I’m saying. This is a safety issue for our most vulnerable population.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, you mentioned the cab, cab industry. How are they doing things differently if they’re getting people from point A to point B on time or to the right service? How is that, are they trained versus those Lyft and Uber drivers are not?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): So, my understanding is, and I don’t know if any of those guys are here, but there was a continuity within the system with our cab drivers. So, they got to know their population of individuals that they had to transport. So, they, they knew them on a personal level. They knew what their needs are. Right now, under the Uber and Lyft system, and I don’t have anything against them. So, if these guys are behind me, I’m not taking it out on them, but what I’m saying is, you never know who you’re gonna get, right?
So, you could have somebody that’s picking up an individual that has to go to Yale for mental health treatment that doesn’t understand the person that’s in their vehicle.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): You’re welcome.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I see no other questions. Thank you, Representative Abercrombie. And clearly this is more than just a transportation issue. So, even if this does receive majority support in this committee, I would presume this ends up in Human Services, where it probably rightfully belongs.

Thank you.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Thank you. Thank you everyone and please take a look at the testimony from the Commissioner Redeker a couple of, from last year. If you need it, I’d be more than happy to send it to you.

Thank you. Have a good day.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again. Rob Rocke, Mike, I apologize, Mike Digiviancarlo. Followed by Representative Buckbee.

MIKE DIGIVIANCARLO: First of all, thank you for this here today. My name is Mike Digiviancarlo, I’m a 13-year Veteran of the Waterbury Police Department and I’m also fortunate enough to serve as an Alderman in the City of Waterbury. I came here to support H.B. 5366. Over the past four years, I’ve been a strong advocate of trying to eliminate the out of state plate problem that is growing as we
speak. Year out, year over year, the, the amount of plates in the city, they are growing. It’s a problem that just doesn’t plague the cities, it’s small towns and the state’s, state lose registration fees. Obviously, in a state dying for revenue and cities. We lose revenue on the avoidance of paying the registration fee in towns and cities, they’re avoiding, intentionally avoiding paying the local car taxes.

The, also for the cities ourselves, we have a growing school population. Right now in Waterbury over 19,000 students in our school system. Those coming in from out of towns where, where people again avoid, you know, registering in our cities as far as license, registering their cars to the cities to avoid taxes. If you come to our schools, the least you can do is, is, is pay your end on the, on the taxes.

As far as public safety wise, you have a vehicle from say, let’s say New York, in the city for a year or two, ends up hitting one of our residents, there is a big conflict as to whether that insurance company will actually pay that, that, that, that accident, pay the poor victim of that accident. Now, we have businesses in the city that are using New Jersey plates. We have businesses in the city using New York plates.

If you’re a resident of the city or a business in the city, you should have to follow the laws of Connecticut and we do believe that over the years you guys have made some adjustments to, to the statute, to 1412, and we believe that we, I’m here to speak basically on a, on a revenue side for the City of Waterbury. I believe that the towns and the
cities should have more ability to go after these tax evaders. We have one resident that since 2012 has had New York plates on her vehicles, very expensive vehicles, has yet to pay the City of Waterbury tax. Has sent the kids through public school, middle and high school and yet has not paid a car tax to the City of Waterbury.

We think it’s wrong. We do think it’s intentional. And we’d like to, we believe, seeing it every day, witnessing it very day that we do have the, the fixes that could be made to make it simple for towns to chase these out of state plate offenders.

And honestly, the right thing to do is, the out of state plate holder should be judged by the same standard as the Connecticut plate holder, Connecticut resident.

If 60 day, if it comes to the time where their vehicle, by statute, is unregistered, then it should be considered unregistered and it should be towed. I’m not gonna speak on that end of it. I’m gonna let the, Sergeant Hansen speak on that end of it.

But again, thank you for having us and again, it’s a problem that plagues the whole state.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Sergeant Hansen.

GEROLD HANSEN: Hi, good afternoon. Sergeant Gerold Hansen, City of Waterbury police. I’ve been a police officer for the past 16 years.

I’m here to address House Bill 5366 in regards to the joint or a task force being created. I think in, in some of those task force, we like to shore up the definition, there’s some definitions that are
relatively vague. A resident as defined by the commissioner of motor vehicles, six months and then by 1412, it’s 60 days past the six months.

So, as the Officer Digiviancarlo had mentioned, you have many residents from out of state coming to our City of Waterbury, town of Watertown, you name it, any local town or city, registering their child for school, not actually claiming residency for six months and then they have 60 days to register their car. Now, you’re eight months in the school. It’s, now it’s almost the nine month school year.

Curtailing the system, finding the apparent loophole in that, in that statute. So, in that task force, I’d hope that they could or would shore up that definition, shore up the, the remedy to, to those, those problems.

In addition, if this bill does proceed, I would hope that the legislature would task somebody with boots on the ground, per se. I would hope that that task force includes members of the police community to direct that task force, to help direct that task force in the accomplishment of their duties.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you both for your testimony. And certainly, having the broad experience that you guys have in Waterbury, similar to what I’m hearing in New Haven and a lot of our committee members are experiencing throughout their community. The issue was brought to us by numerous individuals. Representative Reyes brought it to my attention what he’s been trying to work out. In Waterbury, Representative Harding brought it to my
ranking member, Laura Devlin’s attention about what he’s trying to do in Watertown.

There are numerous thoughts and ideas about how best to approach this and that’s why we took the task force approach rather than a specific bill because there were some concerns about the interaction between schools, police, DMV, what should trigger an automatic registration, what should trigger, you know, forcing individuals versus how an assessor might deal with this. We’re trying to iron out the most appropriate way to deal with what we all recognize as an expensive issue that’s taking place in community after community.

I do appreciate you being up here today sharing your experience. And I guarantee to you, whatever task force construct we come up with, we’ll certainly take your experience into account. So, I appreciate that.

Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming up for your testimony. I know we’ve had extensive conversations on the out-of-state plate situation. Today’s, I just have a couple of questions for you. In today’s scenario, you have an out-of-state plate from New York that you’ve witnessed for six months, a year. What’s the best case scenario today?

MIKE DIGIVIANCARLO: Best, best case scenario is you can, if you are, you better have proof that you’ve been sitting in the car for six months or watching the car or, you know, witnessing it there every day. But you can give them a, you can give a simple ticket for failing to change your registration in 60
days. And you can most likely give the ticket as far as not changing your license for 30 days. The problem with that being is they’re gonna immediately claim they’re not a resident of the city. It may not be their vehicle. They’re only visiting. So, there’s the battle there over when they claim residency, which is, by the way, by statute the problem. It lets the, it lets the, by statute says when they claim residency. They should not claim residency. Residency should be claimed when you’re, the day one your vehicle is in this city, state, town, that should start your residency.

And I believe firmly if you have a child in school, your residency has been made as soon as you place that child in school. Taxpayers of the City of Waterbury are paying for that school system and even state aid is also helping, but to say you’re not a resident after 60 days of having your kid in school, that, that was an issue. But again, after that 60 days, that car is deemed unregistered by the statute, yet we don’t want to tow it. We’ll tow a resident of the City of Waterbury, if they are unregistered. If they’re unregistered, operating that vehicle and we feel the need to tow the car, we will tow that car. Yet a person, from an another state, that’s been operating for six months, there’s that still that fine line of whether we can tow that car. That is the biggest experience, the problem that we’re experiencing is it’s not, it’s not defined in that statute that, hey, your 60 days is up, you’re now unregistered just like a person after 30 days in Connecticut is unregistered, now that vehicle can be towed. And we don’t have that, that definition.
REP. REYES (75TH): Thank you, Officer Digiviancarlo. And this is a very important topic for me as a Hispanic person in the City of Waterbury. And I’ve gotten quite a bit of criticism from some people for bringing this up because the, in the City of Waterbury, a lot of the offenders have to be Hispanic.

So, I believe in what’s fair and just for the city, the municipality and the state. And I think that it’s regardless of gender or race that this is something that’s abused in large municipalities, more so than in the suburbs or rural sections of the state and is something that is leaving millions of dollars on the table for municipalities that are really scratching for every penny. So, that’s why I think this piece of legislation is very important and is something that really needs our undivided attention.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your advocacy.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative. Just, Representative Labriola has got a few questions as well. I just want to clarify one thing. I, I myself had an issue with the idea of school triggering a potential criminal action by the registration of a child in school, potentially yielding a negative reaction for a family.

I was concerned about that construct of this conversation. I do recognize the underlying issue, of course, like I see it. I think we all see it daily in our communities and need to, to, you know, attack this head on and find a way to make sure that everyone’s paying their fair share.
My concern again was the school registration triggering something. That, that is where my concern is going to remain. But I will work with you and I think a lot of us want to work with you to find a good, a good result.

MIKE DIGIVIANCARLO: Sure. Yeah, I just want, by no means is this an issue that would ever be taken up and we want our children to go to school, get educated and come back without any hassle from the police department, nor will we use the school as a target. It’s been mentioned from our chief down that we will, and our traffic unit that we don’t, we’re not trying to attempt to bother any of the school children who come to the school. We’re actually looking for compliance is all we’re looking for. We’re not looking to punish anybody, ticket them, tow their car. We just want compliance and we just want the person to pay what every other resident in the City of Waterbury, that’s all.

We are definitely, it would never be used as a tool to, our school department would never be used as a tool to, you know, to find the offenders, so.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Terrific. Thanks for the clarification. Representative Labriola.

REP. LABRIOLA (131ST): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming up and testifying about this task force. It does seem like the formation of that task force is a good idea.

I want to ask you about a related but still, I think, a big problem that’s happening in Waterbury particularly, I know from my law practice. I see these cases where people from out-of-state dealers are using their dealer plates, and I’m wondering if
you could speak to it about the nature of the problem where some of these dealers aren’t really dealers themselves, but they are operating under these out-of-state dealers, dealerships and using these plates and handing them out to, to numerous individuals and, you know, they’re from Florida or Georgia. And yet these cars are in Waterbury all the time and I’m wondering if you could speak to that and then also, do you think there’s any legislative fix that we could do to make your job easier to confront that particular problem?

GEROLD HANSEN: Well, thank you for the question, Representative. My, my particular unit I, I oversee the traffic division, newly formed traffic division in the City of Waterbury. We have an officer, including myself, that are very attuned to what you’re saying as far as the, the dealer plates are involved in the city.

The current statute actually covers the, you may be referring to say, Florida dealer because I see those a lot. We see those a lot. The current statute, they are misusing that Florida dealer plate in the State of Connecticut. Okay. So, somebody, even a Connecticut dealer plate, okay. So, a Connecticut dealer plate, you have to work for the dealership. You have to be either or a repair. You have to actually be employed by them. You have to be out showing a customer a car, taking them on a, show them a car. Those are some of the statutorial guidelines that are already in place.

When they hand somebody a dealer plate, they are saying, okay, go ahead, use my dealer plate. It’s not a legitimate use of that plate. So, we are able to, do you work for them, no. Do you know the name
of the dealership, no. Do you know who gave this plate to you, no. It’s very, it’s a matter of educating all the departments. It’s being able to say, a motor vehicle law, it’s a seldomly used motor vehicle law. So, it’s not like somebody running a stop sign. It’s, you know the law is being violated versus, well, how do I figure out that that plate does not belong on that car with that person? There’s a more in-depth process.

I think the current statute covers it. There could be some reviews, maybe some tweaks here and there. But right not it’s, it’s, I think it’s okay. We just need to apply it more aggressively.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you, gentlemen for your testimony, very much appreciated.

Next up is Representative Buckbee, followed by Bill Schietinger, and I apologize if I’ve said that wrong. Schietinger.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Good afternoon. It seems like kind of a, kind of a little quiet here this afternoon. Make sure nobody’s dozing off here.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): We’ll let you mix it up.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Well, I’m gonna try. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have two different topics here, I guess, in back-to-back slots. I don’t know which one you’d prefer, I might go with.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Either is fine. We’ll give you the allotted minutes.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Well, let’s, let’s go back with the officers who were just here on 5366. All they’ve said is absolutely true, regardless of the
area in which your living in the state. But one of the things, as I’ve pointed out. One of the things I initially presented bill but got kind of put together with this one was, all vehicles that are on the road. You have these smaller vehicles, you have these 50-cc bikes, you have all these vehicles on the road that aren’t registered and not insured. So, that’s a concern for the safety of the people who are on the road.

Aside from the fact, somebody can come by with one of these small bikes and hit the side of your car, even if you see who it is, it’s not registered, you’re not gonna be able to follow that person or follow that vehicle, it’s not registered anywhere and it’s using the road. So, that’s a concern that I think there’s responsibility on the table for us to take a look at that as far as the registration of any vehicle that’s on our roads should be paying to be registered on the roads. On their own property is a different story. But I think that’s, along with everything that was just said, I’ve submitted written testimony, but I really wanted to touch base on that one piece for you as well. And if you want to bounce from one to the other, I don’t want to take up a tremendous amount of your time, either. You have a lot of people on the agenda today. Do you want me to roll them both together for you?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Please do.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Oh, that’s fair. That’s great.

For the last two years, this makes three, I’ve been coming up to talk to this committee about trains in New Milford. Now, we’re the largest town in the state and no trains have run there since, and some
will get a chuckle more than others out of this, but since the year I was born was the last time a commuter rail ran through New Milford. So, may say 1856, it was actually 1971 the last train that ran through New Milford.

I’ve been doing a little bit of research and some is tougher to find than others. But over the last 10 years, about $4.6 billion dollars has been spent on rail in the State of Connecticut. That’s a lot of money. For that kind of money you can probably buy the Red Sox and the Celtics, maybe put them together.

But how much of that’s gone into western Connecticut and I can’t even get that number from OLR. We can’t find out how much of that money’s been spent there because it’s been so minimal to what’s gone into western Connecticut and let alone to the, where the town, we’re the southern part of the quiet corner, right. So, that’s around a bit, places like New Milford Hospital have staff who live down, and we’ve heard about Stamford today, Norwalk. People would love to take the train up and don’t have that opportunity, it just doesn’t run far enough up.

So, we’re about 60 miles to connect us to Danbury. And it really isn’t that far to make that connection so that we could have our residents not have to drive, not only to Danbury, they drive over to New York state and take the rail from there.

I really want to connect the state. I’m not as worried about the New York City, although we have a lot of residents in New Milford who commute to New York City and will take that half hour drive for a two hour train ride.
So, that’s a little bit, it touches on a little bit of that. I have submitted testimony for both, and I’d be happy to answer any questions you might have.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative, I appreciate your comments on both bills. Very, very good for us to consider. As you mentioned, we have multiple requests, which is why we have combined some bills so that we could just manage them in the proper way.

In regards to the rail infrastructure and getting New Milford on to the line, I think that’s something we should definitely work towards, as that part of the state is actually growing.

I was up there not too long ago, and I saw all the development that’s ongoing. And, you know, it’s a good thing to see are the growth in the area, which then just means our infrastructure needs to keep pace, which is not an always easy end to fulfill. The good news is, as you’re probably aware, the new commissioner being, once he gets confirmed, being the rail guy that he is, he has some very interesting ideas. We have talked about trying to figure out how to integrate all the rail throughout the state and even look at some non-utilized old rail infrastructure. So, there may be an opportunity to, you know, talk about that and, and, and have your concerns addressed. That is our hope.

That is my hope anyway. So that we figure out how we can do that and how we can get there. Whether we can do that by the end of this year, I would suspect not. But at least if we have that conversation, we’re moving in the right direction.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Kind of chug along, right, Senator, chugging along.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Exactly, exactly. With that, I think that there are some questions, Senator Martin followed by Representative Lavielle.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Representative Buckbee. Just quickly, when in your research did you come across any cost analysis as to what, you know, the revenue and the expenses of operating or construction of that line would be?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Thank you, Senator. We, the initial cost I’ve seen was about, about a million dollars a mile for the track. The freight line is already there, and the problem is that was run on the possibility of a diesel train coming through. Where some of the additional research to reduce the cost as the old Budd cars, do you remember the Budd cars, the smaller cars that were really about as loud as a motorcycle running through. But the state, as I’m told in some research, owns these Budd cars. I’d love to look into that deeper. If it’s equipment that we already have and it’s a matter of cleaning up the equipment and using it again, it almost will work like the shuttle service. And we might not have to redo the lines entirely. But that was the initial number was about $16 million dollars, a million dollars a mile to do the track, that’s what we’re looking at. Thank you, Senator.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Representative.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Good afternoon, Representative.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good to see you and --

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): You as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): -- and good to, good of you to come and talk to us about this proposal you’ve made several times.

Would it be possible in your view to use as well the existing cars on the Danbury line just to go straight up there?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): I wouldn’t see why not. Yeah, and again, it’s a matter of usage and what might be available. I think the concept of the Budd car is just to reduce some of that cost and to really give it that true litmus test to show everyone’s who in question that it will work.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): How much do you think extending the line, well, actually a question for you first. Between Danbury and New Milford, what else would you consider a viable stop for that line?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Sure, as well as the stop in Brookfield as well. I’ve spoken with representation from Brookfield, they would love to see a stop in there, too. So, now that 16 miles really is for two stops, not just one. I’d hate to speak on behalf of the people of Brookfield, but I’m told that they’re very interested in having this commuter rail run through there as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And that, so that would be the, the only midpoint or whatever?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): We’re not that far from Danbury as much as people think. You know, that 16 miles really would be Brookfield and then --
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Right.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): -- New Milford, but we’re really, while we’re in the middle of the woods, to some people we’re really not as far as you might think.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And what do you think would be the anticipated affect on ridership on the total Danbury line at that point? Do you, how many, how many daily passengers would you think, I know you can’t know for sure?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): It’s tough. It’s tough to say. There’s been estimates done of a hundred, a hundred to a hundred and fifty in New Milford alone, not counting Brookfield. I’ve heard some higher numbers, I’ve heard lower numbers. But I know there’s a number of people that have come to me, who work in New York City, who work in Stamford. Again, the discussions with local business who have staff that work down the Route 7 corridor. It’s so difficult to pass for the vehicle and is, is, it’s a hindrance on hiring as well as we’re on Candlewood Lake, it’s a beautiful area for those who want to take a weekend trip. Those who do, you see this new trend now across the board with millennials, right, they don’t love owning cars. They like, they like public transportation and it gives them a weekend trip to be able to come on up and see the lake or to go skiing north of us even.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Do you think there’s a lot of demand for, you know, as you said, not everybody’s going to New York.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Right.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Is there a lot of demand for using the Metro North main line from New Milford, Brookfield, that area to come down and go both ways?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): I think it gives that opportunity. Right now, people in New Milford don’t want to drive to, to Danbury. The parking area isn’t as well, we’ve discussed some of the concerns with parking in different areas and it being more commuter friendly. But I think more people in, from my area, tend to go over to, to Brewster. You know, Brewster north and over that way to, to take the train in. These are people who are finding an easier way to commute with Metro North going to New York.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): You know the stations on the existing Danbury line are, I believe, all of them, if I’m not mistaken, free parking.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Yes.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So, is that something you’d anticipate in New Milford and Brookfield as well?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): I wouldn’t see why not. The idea is to make it a better place for people to be right, a better place to take the train from. And I think that’s something we could, we could certainly work on within that whole project.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Yeah, I think the, the what I see personally is as the, one of the advantages of this is not only the greater access to and from New Milford, but the, the effect on ridership of the line as a whole, which as we know need some considerable improvement.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Sure.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And the greater the ridership, probably the better chance of that happening because the greater the revenues. And it sounds as if this would not really result in a huge uptick in cost at least initially.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): It’s a wonderful opportunity and I think it’s, it’s a step that needs to be taken next, especially for when, again, when you look at an area that has been, I don’t want to use the word neglected, but in a way neglected, for the last, that’s at least the last 10 years. It’s a long way back since we’ve seen any upgrade in type of system for us to at least have freight now, which is freights running through New Milford, there’s no reason another car can’t do it.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): One, one other area. We have for years discussed the re, it is re-electrification for Danbury line because it was, it used to be electrified and then they de-electrified it or un-electrified it in the ‘50s, for reasons no one seems to understand.

Would it, it’s a two-part question. Is it necessary to complete electrification before extension or if it isn’t necessary, would it be helpful once it’s done?

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Great question. So, right now it’s not necessary. Again, the different vehicles could do it, different Budd cars, different types of trains could do this without electrification of the line. I think it would be better off in the long run if we did have an electric line again. I think that would be the smart way to go. The impact of diesel fuel, of course, is a concern. And upgrading to an electric line would allow for higher speed.
It would allow for a cleaner vehicle. I think that’s a great thing down the road. And in the meantime, I think it’s, while we build and set that goal as we reach to attain that goal, we show that we can be a revenue generator for the state as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you. I think you’ve thought about this a lot. It’s, I know that in all of our prior discussions we’ve sort of considered electrification as a necessary prerequisite for extending the line. And the question has always come down to money, of course and --

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Right.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): -- priorities. But I think if, if it were possible to increase the ridership through extension, without doing that first, it might give the argument for electrification more compelling.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): That’s right.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So, I appreciate your thinking on that and I hope we can pursue it, the, the ridership on the Danbury line has suffered because of the, the speed and the lack of reliability and I think anything that we can do to kind of restart that and get it going would be very, very welcome by everybody in the area.

So, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Are there any other questions? If not, thank you, Representative for your testimony.
REP. BUCKBEE (67TH): Senator, thank you. Enjoy your day, everyone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up Mr. Bill Schietinger. You can correct me on the pronunciation, please. Then followed by Shari Cantor, Mayor Cantor.

BILL SCHIETINGER: Good afternoon, Senator Leone, members of the Transportation Committee. I submitted written testimony, so I’ll just make some brief points, if I may.

My name is Bill Schietinger, I’m the Regional Director for American Medical Response, in Connecticut. AMR provides ambulance services to approximately 18 communities in the State of Connecticut. And then we provide mutual aid to another 19 communities. We also provide emergency and non-emergency transportation to approximately 16 hospitals in the state as well.

I would like to submit testimony in opposition to S.B. 66, AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONEMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION OF ELDERLY PERSONS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CONFINED TO A STRETCHER.

The proposed use of stretcher vans is not in the best interest to patient care. It is in direct conflict with the high levels of patient care currently provided by ambulance providers throughout Connecticut. It creates liability exposures for the transporters, the physicians and healthcare facilities and it does not result in any savings to the State of Connecticut. The state’s managed transportation broker and its livery providers are reeling for more than a year of significant delays and failures on behalf of the patients and the providers in the State of Connecticut.
Inadequate service, significant delays and failure to provide basic equipment such as wheelchairs have been a few of the many complaints that we’ve been dealing with over the past year.

In years past, this General Assembly passed legislation requiring that any patient transported on a stretcher must be transported in a licensed or certified ambulance. It was enacted to enhance patient’s safety by ensuring that stretcher transportation would be provided by only providers with medically trained personnel, namely licensed or certified ambulance organizations.

Connecticut has not and should not provide lower modes of transportation services to Medicaid patients in Connecticut, which would have the unintended consequences of undermining the fiscal structure of the EMS system in Connecticut.

Stretcher patients are generally the sickest, weakest and most infirm patients transported. Providing non-emergency medical transportation with no medical oversight or ability to intervene and administer aid is just plain dangerous.

The American Ambulance Association, which is a National Trade, our National Trade Association, does not support the usage of stretcher vans, stating, “Stretcher, stretcher chair car service is not in the best interest of patients being transported. As it puts patients at risk when not staffed or equipped to meet their medical needs.

The American Ambulance Association believes that every patient who needs to be in a stretcher during transport must have a medically trained EMT to attend to his or her medical health and safety
needs. It is a misguided public policy to blur the distinction between medical care provided by ambulance services and transportation for patients in non-medically equipped and staff vehicles.

Further, Medicare does not cover stretcher van transportation service, as it doesn’t have an established rate to do so. The federal government currently reimburses the State of Connecticut approximately 60 percent of the state’s Medicaid covered medical transportation costs. It does not recognize stretcher van transports under Medicare. If the state were to allow stretcher van transports under Medicaid, it would be responsible for 100 percent of the cost.

The current reimbursement for Medicaid non-emergency ambulance transports is on average $176.96 per trip. This is an amount that is significantly below the actual cost to the ambulance provider. The stretcher van operator would have to be paid a rate, a Medicaid rate of approximately $70. This rate simply can’t cover the basic operational cost between the vehicle, the labor, the stretcher, the stretcher itself an amount and the ambulance if it was based on current safety standards that are in the ambulance industry.

In conclusion, the EMS system in Connecticut works. The delivery of care both on an emergency basis and non-emergency basis is the result of the years of planning, mutual cooperation and commitment. The proposed radical change in the delivery of care is not in the best interest of the EMS system as a whole. It will reduce the quality of patient care, especially for those who currently receive Medicaid
benefits and it will result in no cost savings to the state.

I respectfully urge you to vote against Senate Bill 66. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you for your testimony. And as you’ve probably heard, we’re bouncing back and forth on the pros and cons of this concept.

I guess my one question, as we were trying to learn more, and I get the fact of the Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement doesn’t cover this type of transportation and it’s unclear whether it should or should not. But regardless, is there a role to play if stretcher vans were allowed for it to be non-Medicare/Medicare reimbursable, if someone wanted to pay out of pocket in order to get to a graduation or something, so that they wouldn’t have to go through all the regulations we’ve put in thus far in terms of medical conditions.

So, is there a role for an A service to play, if it’s got nothing to do with Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement?

BILL SCHIETINGER: You know, I, I think it’s a tricky question. You know, for a patient who requires transportation, currently we have different levels of transportation in the State of Connecticut. We have the taxi, livery, wheelchair transportation and then your stretcher transportation now, which is done by commercial ambulance providers for non-emergency transportation.

And the Medicaid system is set up to do medical appointment transportation. So, those patients that require transport to a wedding, a funeral, trips
such as that, those individuals are such a small population in the state. AMR and I’m sure our commercial ambulance providers usually provide those trips for free as a benefit to the community.

We take patients who are stretcher bound. A high majority of those patients have medical conditions anyways and that’s why they are stretcher bound, usually. When we, when we get a request to take somebody to a wedding, we’ll do that as a community ben for the patient and we’ll put two EMTs on that ambulance to transport them to a wedding and stay with them at the wedding and then transport them back.

Those are so few and far between that I don’t see a stretcher van need in the state. The cost to regulate that on its own for such a small population, I don’t think is worth it.

Currently in our ambulances, in order to put a patient on a stretcher, we have to meet, we have to meet federal standards for safety in there. And Connecticut adopted these standards that the stretcher mount and the stretcher itself in the ambulance have to meet certain specifications in case the vehicle’s in an accident, so that stretcher does not come out of its mount. That stretcher alone currently we pay $25,000 for. The stretcher mount itself can be anywhere from another $10 to $30,000 alone. So, I don’t see how livery companies will be able to meet these standards and ask somebody to pay only $50 to $70. It just doesn’t make sense in my eyes.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you for that explanation. Representative O’Dea.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just real quick, how many, how many of those rides, those free rides do you think you give, I mean as a percentage of your work? Is it a 1 percent, a 10 percent, 50 percent?

BILL SCHIETINGER: Extremely small. It’s, and that’s why I say the population is so small because we, we get these requests and we usually get them through either private calls or through hospitals that deal with these patients. And I would say in a year time, I, I represent AMR down in Fairfield County. I might do five a year.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And when you say the population is small, is it 15 people, is it 15,000 people, is it --

BILL SCHIETINGER: The people that would require a stretcher, I couldn’t give you a number but, you know, there are different levels of service. Somebody was talking before, I think it was Representative Case, who said that the patients that might have paralysis in their legs don’t necessarily need just a stretcher. They could sit safely and comfortably in a wheelchair in a wheelchair van. And that’s what those wheelchair vans are meant to do. There’s, there are, the capacity to take a patient confined to a wheelchair, or who may just need a wheelchair to get around, and those are locked into tiedowns in the wheelchair van, with the seatbelt, we have a nine, nine foot security strap that goes around them and the wheelchair. So, those, I have been doing this since 1986 as an EMT. I have never in my career seen a patient who requires just a stretcher without medical attention.
Those patients are usually in a wheelchair that can recline. If they need to recline a little bit, they could still go in a wheelchair van with a wheelchair that reclines 10 or 20 percent of the way. I, I’ve never met a patient who requires to lay completely flat on a stretcher and not require medical attention.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): So, if you were writing a bill, how would you save money for the state in this situation?

BILL SCHIETINGER: I mean, I, I wouldn’t look at putting stretcher vans on the market. Like I said, there are a few states out there. If you look at, in my testimony, I believe I put in the American Ambulance Association verbiage that there are a few states out there who have outright banned stretcher use, stretcher van use all together because of the inherent dangers of it. You know, as far as saving money, I wish you luck on that one.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you very much for your testimony and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative Steinberg.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony today. You made reference earlier to this past year being particularly trying for your organization. Do I take that to mean due to the changeover to the new vender Veyo and could you share some of your experience for non-emergency medical transportation over the past year?

BILL SCHIETINGER: Sure, the, you know, the switchover like any change, there’s hurdles, there’s
I’ve heard various reasons. I’ve come to some of the committee meetings that Representative Abercrombie chairs with the MPOG there. The, the issues that have occurred are many. Some of them have been repaired, some are still ongoing, where members are either left abandoned, there, there’s no pick up. The pick ups are delayed. Providers, you know, are showing up at the wrong facility.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): What’s been your experience? I’m always interested in your company because of the kind of services you provide?

BILL SCHIETINGER: Sure, our, our experiences over the last five months, we’ve gotten, we’ve gotten better experiences with Veyo. We do primarily ambulance, so that’s the stretcher in a medical vehicle and then wheelchair provisions. So, our, our experiences have, it’s been getting better.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): That’s what I wanted to hear. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Any other questions? If not, thank you for the testimony.

BILL SCHIETINGER: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up is Mayor Cantor, followed by Raphael Podosky.

SHARI CANTOR: Thank you so much, Honorable Chair, Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Representative Martin and all of the --

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Please step up to the microphone.

SHARI CANTOR: Sorry about that. Sorry about that. Again, thank you to honorable chairs and all the
ranking members and all the members of the committee, I apologize for that.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 7098, AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUTER RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE.

While the act calls for the implementation of many worthwhile transit improvements, I am most especially supportive of the development of the commuter rail station in West Hartford, as called out in Section 1, sub-section (3).

Plans for a West Hartford Rail Station on the Connecticut’s rail line are many years in the making. The station will be sited across from and connected to the Flatbush Avenue Connecticut Fastrak station, creating a true, multi-model transit hub.

The town, the Department of Transportation and the Capitol Region Council of Governments has worked collaboratively on station area planning issues and major progress has been made towards a final design. The station has yet to be funded for construction. The funding and construction of the West Hartford rail station is critical to our efforts to attract private investment and promote transit oriented development on, on the New Park corridor.

This mile long corridor is anchored by two Fastrak stations, very unique, major retail and a wide variety of businesses have also opened up. We’ve changing zoning to allow for a variety of activities along that, and development along that corridor.

The district also includes a Home Design District, attracts shoppers and contractors. It also is close to Triumph, Colt, and other major employers in the
area. People don’t think of that, but it is, supports thousands of workers in the area.

It is also in close district to utilize the rail station, the two Fastrak stations, which really make a very critical connection with the hole hub, train of, set up that was, this state invested so much in.

But primarily, what is unique about West Hartford was really forward thinking. I think we opened the first mixed use, mixed income apartment along a Connecticut rail line and that is significant. To live in West Hartford without a car and with affordable housing, opportunities available is unique. And this train station will open up incredible opportunities. This is also a federally designated opportunity zone.

So good things are happening along New Park, including two state grants, which total $3.5 million dollars that will be used for a new streetscape, allowing also for bicycle and pedestrian friendly improvements which continue again to make this an affordable option for so many people that want to settle in the capitol region.

Construction funding for the West Hartford rail station, together with complete streets improvement. all of the ongoing investment that is already been invested and is, is actually there is in future and also future interest is, is critical to the economic vitality of the capitol region and the state.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mayor. Great overview and I appreciate the testimony in supporting the concepts because I think the rail infrastructure, especially in our major urban
centers are so critical to the success of the state. And I like the fact that you articulated the mixed-use concept, I think that goes a long way towards really great economic viability, especially for the younger generation, which is, I’m no longer part of, so, not that I’m talking from experience.

But in any way, in any regard, thank you for that. I think that’s a great thing. And I’m hopefully you’re, if you haven’t, I hope you establish a relationship and a rapport with the incoming commissioner because between your expertise and his expertise, hopefully we can come to some great symbiotic relationship for West Hartford and Hartford in general as well as some of our other towns.

SHARI CANTOR: Thank you so much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And thank you for your testimony. And again I want to highlight what I think is extraordinary consideration on your part and the town of West Hartford’s part. Looking at the underlying zoning around the [Inaudible - 02:49:30] station, I mean, the joint planning, the beginning of the joint planning actually with the City of Hartford as well, again, I think it’s imperative that we look at these as economic drivers for communities, growing jobs, but also allowing new housing types to be developed, mixed income housing types to be developed in all the surrounding towns all along that rail line. That is where the real economic driver of our cities will be and providing opportunity for all income levels to experience that I think is a major priority.
SHARI CANTOR: Absolutely.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): And I do appreciate that. West Hartford is taking that seriously and fully utilizing the economic boom that transit stops can provide. So, thank you again for your testimony.

SHARI CANTOR: Thank you so much. All right. Thank you so much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mayor.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next, Raphael Podosky, followed by Representative Linehan.

RAPHAEL PODOSKY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Raphael Podosky. I’m a lawyer with the Connecticut Legal Services and I’m here to speak just very briefly on one bill, which is Committee Bill No. 6588 that deals with the issuance of parking citations by private property owners.

The, the bill is a little bit confusing because the title of the bill and the purpose, statement, purpose of the bill are actually opposite, seem to be opposite each other. So, it’s worth saying that under existing law, no, we do not allow private issuance of parking, parking, essentially parking tickets on private property. There are other remedies for improperly parked vehicles, including towing, including wheel lock under some circumstances.

What this bill does is, is it’s not that it prohibits the issuance by private commercial property owners, that’s already law. What it does is it admits the issuance of such tickets by non-commercial entities. So, I guess that seems to mean
residential entities. And our suggestion to you is, there’s no reason to make that distinction, that it’s not as a general rule a good idea to have parking tickets being issued by private entities, it’s really a public function. I’m, there’s not a clear process for how one challenges those kind of tickets.

We know that people very commonly challenge parking tickets that are issued publicly and there’s a procedure for that. In the landlord/tenant context, it’s really unnecessary because that can be addressed by lease.

So, you know, we don’t really know the source of the bill or the reason for it, but we think that there’s no reason to change the existing practice in the existing statute, which is that you don’t issue. Private property owners do not, are not authorized to issue parking citations. To the, I can answer questions if I can.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Raphael, and thank you for making that distinction because I don’t think that was the direction of the bill. It was more in line with trying to help an entity such as a university for the students and other folks that come on to those grounds, not so much a private party, say a landlord or something to that effect.

So, I think we’ll, we’ll dive into that distinction. We would love to have your input on making sure we, we don’t overstep the bounds or the intent of the bill. I thank you for the proper perspective for us to consider.

RAPHAEL PODOSKY: Okay. I would just say that you should also take a good look at the process because
it becomes very important in any kind of a parking situation how one challenges a parking citation. And I’m not, I’m not sure what process is built in under this. It’s certainly, it’s easier to deal with if we simply don’t issue the citations. But you should make sure that there’s a process in place, if you’re gonna go in that direction.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I think we will definitely look at that aspect as well. Thank you for that. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to offer another point of clarification. There was apparently a change in legislation last session that suddenly precluded private universities from being able to issue parking tickets on their campuses, which isn’t motivated necessarily from a revenue perspective, but from a safety perspective.

So, to the point that you raise, I think now if you park in a private parking lot, I don’t know that you get a ticket, you usually will get towed. But your points are well taken. Just understand the origination of this and the objective of it and you raise a good point to ensure there are other unintended consequences with any changes that are made to put things back the way they were. Thank you.

RAPHAEL PODOSKY: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Any questions? If not, thank you very much.

RAPHAEL PODOSKY: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next, Representative Linehan and followed by David Moyer.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Good afternoon, I am Representative Liz Linehan, I represent the 103rd District. And we’re here to testify on House Bill 5559. I’m going to yield my time to my constituent, but before I do that, I just want to know that in 2017 we passed legislation to train police officers on how to have safe contact with individuals with autism. After my constituents testimony, I’d be happy to answer questions regarding that and how it will affect this bill and how they would work together. So, go ahead.

LYNNE CARIGLIO: Senators Leone, Lemar, vice chairs, ranking members and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Lynne Cariglio, I am from Cheshire and I’m here to support H Bill 5559, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER INTERACTING WITH THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.

I’m in favor of putting this blue frame on license or IDs for people on the spectrum, because I believe it will add a layer of security for people on this spectrum. I have a 23-year-old son, who currently drives from Cheshire to Gateway Community College and then to his job at the Prospect library. He also happens to be on the Autism Spectrum. While he’s learning to do things and become an independent individual, it takes him longer to do those things. And when he interacts in unfamiliar situations, he tends to stutter, stammer or freeze and not really sure how to interact.

There have been many unsettling situations with law enforcements when they don’t know that that person has Autism. And having this blood indicator, a blue
frame on his license will take the guesswork of when they need to put their training into play.

My son, Tanner, doesn’t really like to disclose, so he would not offer that information up to the police officer. So, again, I feel that this additional layer of security will give him the opportunity to, not to get away with anything, but to just be able for people to understand.

Some people argue that this is invasion of privacy or could potentially be discrimination and I totally understand that, and that’s why I would suggest that this be a voluntary situation where Autistic people and their families can make that decision.

Thank you so much for allowing me to come up and hearing my personal story. I really appreciate your time.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you both for that great testimony. Representative Linehan, did you have anything to add? I’m sorry, you were about to speak.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yeah, so I can just add to that. In 2017, we did pass legislation that created a training program for police officers that essentially would teach them how to best communicate with people on the spectrum. And while I was, I was interval in putting that together and so, these, the training itself kind of morphed into not just young children on the spectrum, but also toward young adults and that’s where this idea came from, I knocked on her door and she told me about this idea. And, and we’re running with it.
But what we found out during this training is that police officers, when they come in contact with these individuals, have to adjust their training in a way that works for people on the spectrum. For instance, a police officer is normally trained where they have to take down an individual to put them in a prone position with their knee on their back to keep them from standing up.

However, individuals with autism sometimes have an underdeveloped chest wall. And to put them in the prone position with their knee on their back could actually cause them to suffocate.

Additionally a lot of people on the spectrum also have a very high tolerance for pain. So, if a police officer was to look at this license and see the blue frame, they would understand that they should not use tasing equipment on them because many times it would not subdue an individual and additionally, you can’t put someone with autism in a cell, a holding cell by themselves because many of those on the spectrum self-harm. And so we found that if they’re alone in, in a holding cell, they might bang their head against the wall or do something else that would be dangerous to them.

So, the training that is already offered through POST, Police Officer Training, some, Police Officer -- anyway, POST, what they do is, is they, they train police officers on how best practices for people with autism. This will actually alert them to go ahead and put those best practices with people with autism into use.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you both and I appreciate that comment because one of the questions is gonna be is how law enforcement has to adjust and
are they currently doing that, or do they need to do more. And, I, I like this idea of the blue border because it’s a quick indicator where they don’t have to do all their questions to figure it out on their own. And I would think without them knowing who the person is, they have to treat every person as a potential difficult situation to diffuse.

So, by having this border that will alert them that it might not be as serious that they may originally think. So, that’s step one. And, and making sure that our police officers and law enforcement know about this and have all the tools up front before that, I think is, is critical, so.

As we work on this, I’m sure we’ll be talking to law enforcement, so I’m hopeful. My understanding that you’ve already had those conversations with law enforcement on this issue?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Correct. So, when I originally met her, she had discussed the possibility of a blue dot. And so, I took that to law enforcement and their answer to me was, well, we’re concerned that we wouldn’t be able to see that dot. So, they are the ones that --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): -- just thought a blue frame would be more appropriate. So, we’ve had that conversation on an unofficial level, but I’d love to have that conversation even further.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, and thank you, Ms. Cariglio for bringing up your testimony. Because usually the best testimony is from someone who has lived it and can tell, then give us the right perspective on why it’s necessary.
You did bring up the issue about privacy on how some may not like that. So, are you, are you suggesting that this would be permissive, pending either from the person themselves or from their guardian to say that this is okay to have, it’s not something that would be mandated for all on the spectrum, I would assume?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Right. We would never do that. This is, the system is an opt-in system. And like she said, a lot of times people don’t want to self-identify. We found that, not just within the autism community, but actually across the board. And so, they only have to self-identify once on that form. And after that, it, it speaks for itself. I do want to make a note that once this passes, knock on wood, I will them amend the training, the police officer training that we had. I will amend that to include that the blue frame might be on someone’s license, but the absence of a blue frame should not have you consider the situation that the person might actually be on the spectrum.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. So, as we look to trying to craft this in a way that can be helpful, make sure you speak with DMV as well because they’ll weigh in on this and there might be a technical issue that we have to consider that we’re not aware of right at this moment. So, we want to make sure that we take everything into account so that we can be successful for the needs. And from a personal aspect, you know, anything we can do for anyone who’s on the autism spectrum, I, every time I get involved, always learn so much more and I’m always amazed at the possibilities. We just got to help
people get to where they need to go. So, I’m supportive of the effort.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you so very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): All right. Are there any other questions?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Representative, and thank you for coming out today. I really appreciate your willingness to come out to testify to share your personal story. Senator Leone touched on the question that I had, mostly for you, Representative Linehan is, have you interacted with DMV on this issue?

I don’t see in here, in their testimony a consideration of this at this point. So, I don’t know if you’d had any preliminary conversations with them?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I have not had those preliminary conversations, but I make myself available at all times. This bill is one of my top priorities. And so, I’m more than willing to have that conversation. And if you would permit me, as Chair, to have that conversation and then resubmit some information to the rest of the committee and let you know where we are with that?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Certainly, and we will certainly touch base with them as well. I just wanted to know if there was like a technical aspect of this that we need to consider while we’re also moving forward with legislation?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Not that I’m aware of, but it’s worth the ask.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Correct. Sure. Thank you so much for your testimony today.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Representative Morin.

REP. MORIN (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Representative Linehan and them, thank you for your testimony. You did answer really a question I was going to ask about, you know, what this might do to help save people. I appreciate that answer. And I just, some, this is a great education for, for me personally. You know, it’s something, you know, we’ve all had interest in, some more than others. But it’s, it’s good to get education and get the personal touch. And I look forward to working further with you on this.

Thank you. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Thank you so much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Any other questions? If not, thank you both and thank you for taking the time to come up --

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I appreciate your time.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- I know that’s always tough. Next up, Mr. David Moyer, followed by Representative Borer.

DAVID MOYER: Good afternoon. I’m David Moyer, I’m from Wilton, Connecticut. Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, Ranking Member Martin, Ranking Member Devlin, and members of the Transportation Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of H.B. 6973 and for the opportunity to speak with you today in support of its passage.
In 1987, Connecticut required front license plates on automobiles. Compliance is easy if your car was manufactured with a designated mounting position and brackets for a front plate.

However, certain vehicles, especially some classic cars, have no hardware or place for a front plate, and attempting to create one is cumbersome and can lower the value of the car.

H.B. 6973 would protect the aesthetic contours of affected cars and relieve those vehicle owners of the burden of having to create mounting holes on original bumpers.

Connecticut has a thriving community of car collectors, and a thriving economy of classic car restoration shops. It’s important to keep our state friendly to this hobby and the businesses that support it. Exempting the small subset of automobiles that can’t mount front plates comfortably is part of an environment friendly to these cars, collectors and shops.

H.B. 6973 would save money, conserve resources and bring Connecticut in line with other states that have moved to a single plate requirement.

Nineteen states do not require front plates at all. New Hampshire and two other states are currently considering legislation that would bring the total to 22. While this bill does not affect the vast majority of cars in Connecticut, it is in keeping with the direction of motor vehicle legislation nationally.

Classic cars brighten the days of those who see them on the street, those who drive them, those who are benefited by the charities that car shows support.
and those who work on restoring and maintaining them. Together these aspects of the collector car community combine into an ecosystem that is advantageous to Connecticut’s quality of life, sense of history, number of jobs and economic health.

I urge the committee to support the bill to enhance that quality of life, history, employment and robust small business.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Moyer. So, as I’m hearing your testimony, am I to take this, this is for older vehicles that is something like, say, a 1960’s muscle car, an Old Studebaker, whatever the case may be. Is it just older vehicles or are you also anticipating some of the fancier new vehicles that may come on line that for whatever reason don’t have a plate?

DAVID MOYER: Senator, the way the bill is currently drafted, it applies to all cars. But in different states, it’s been proposed in different flavors. So, which you’re restricted just to classic vehicles, 20 years or 25 years and older.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, that and that’s kind of where I was going. We do have the 20-year-rule for the antique vehicles. And I believe we had, I can’t remember all the language of the statute, but so you would be looking at doing, following that legislation 20 years and older, not newer vehicles?

DAVID MOYER: It can be written either way and I’m agnostic.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, we’ll take that into consideration. Representative Lavielle.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, David, for coming to discuss this. You’re a classic car owner, right?

DAVID MOYER: I am.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): When, if you know, when did cars begin to be made generally with a place to actually put the front plate on the car?

DAVID MOYER: I don’t think that there was any particular cross-over year. A lot depends on the designer. I have two older cars, one of which has a perfectly convenient spot and it displays both plates. To some extent it’s, it’s a function of the aerodynamics of the car and what the designer’s intent was for the contours aesthetically.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): But your concern if I, correct me if I’m wrong, is, is your concern primarily cars that don’t have, for whatever reason, that do not have a place that is specifically made for the plate. So that if you were to install one, you might damage the car, is that basically your, what you’re after?

DAVID MOYER: That is correct, Representative. There are certain cars that no matter what you do, it’s nearly impossible to, to fashion a place for a front plate to be mounted without damaging the automobile. Others you can, you know, kind of squeeze one in somehow, but a Jaguar E-Type, for example, the bumpers are very thin. It’s nearly impossible to get one on there. In Britain, they actually paint the registration numbers on the front hood, which is unattractive. So, on some it’s just very, very difficult. And hobbyists would prefer to not have the requirement.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So, you’re not asking either that an owner of such a car be exempt from purchasing the plate or registering for the plate, that it’s just the act of having to place it on the car, right?

DAVID MOYER: Correct, that wouldn’t result in any loss of revenue for the state.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Right.

DAVID MOYER: They would still pay the full freight.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And have there been solutions in other states, when they were concerned about things that law enforcement might use in photographing the front of a car and not being able to see a license plate, were there some other things that they’ve, measures they’ve taken in other states to circumvent that as well?

DAVID MOYER: Well, these tend to be distinctive vehicles, and nobody uses a ‘37 Packard as a getaway car. Not anymore.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): True. I hope not.

DAVID MOYER: But much of the technology today simultaneously photographs both the front and the back of an automobile. One of the bills proposed in one state required anyone not carrying a front plate to be required to carry an easy pass type transponder which, of course, the police can use to identify vehicles.

So that the law enforcement issues are really minor.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay. Well, that’s all good to know. Do you have any idea offhand how many
classic cars there are in Connecticut of this type? I mean, any guesses?

DAVID MOYER: I wish I did. The four C’s, the Connecticut Council of Car Clubs, covers over 2,000 collectors. But Caffeine and Carburetors, a car show in New Canaan has regularly had more than 800 vehicles show up for a simple show in a relatively small area.

So, the total is probably much higher.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Any idea how many classic club, classic car clubs there are?

DAVID MOYER: I believe the four C’s has 39 members.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Yeah, I, I, I think it’s, you know, it’s substantial. There’s, there’s a lot of them in our area that they’re all over. It seems to be something that appeals to just a wide range of folks who either have them or enjoy looking at them.

DAVID MOYER: It does and the number of, of dealers, brokers, restoration shops in the state is really quite substantial in every corner of the state. After this meeting, I’ll be driving to the very northeast corner to visit a shop. I live in the southwest corner. There are businesses that thrive on, on this hobby all over the State of Connecticut.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So in, basically just to summarize it, your proposal is, is, does not affect any revenue to the state, it, it should not affect anything law enforcement is trying to do and essentially is for the preservation really of the aesthetic of these cars?

DAVID MOYER: Of these, of the aesthetic of these cars, yes, and also just to keep the environment for
these cars and these car collectors in Connecticut positive.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Excellent. Well, thank you very much for your testimony. I think it’s, it’s a very reasonable request.

Thank you.

DAVID MOYER: Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up, Senator Haskell, followed by Representative O’Dea.

SENATOR HASKEL (26TH): Thank you for being here today, Mr. Moyer and thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your patience in waiting to testify today. I’m rapidly learning that these public hearings can go on and on and we’re so grateful that you made the trip from Wilton.

DAVID MOYER: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR HASKEL (26TH): You know, when you brought this bill to my attention, I think it’s, it’s such an interesting issue and I have to confess, I’m not an antique automotive person myself. I am familiar with Caffeine and Carburetors, as anybody who’s lived in New Canaan is, it wakes you up in the morning. Just the noise of all of those cars coming to town.

But what particularly struck me is that this is not something in which Connecticut would serve as an outlier. I was fascinated to learn in your testimony that there are 19 states, perhaps soon to be 22, that don’t require front license plates at all, is that correct?

DAVID MOYER: That’s correct, yes.
SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Can you talk a little bit about the benefits this legislation would have for state revenue, in addition to the fact that it wouldn’t cost the state anything, some of the local economic activity that you’ve witnessed, not just in southwestern Connecticut, but as, as a hobbyist in this area across the state? Do you think this would spur economic development among both consumers and also retailers in Connecticut?

DAVID MOYER: It, it’s a small ask, frankly. And I’m not saying that every collector is gonna leave the state if we don’t pass it. But it helps the hobby and if somebody’s looking at a car and thinking, gee, I’d like to buy that. In Connecticut I’ve got to butcher the front end, it may be better to say them, not a problem.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): That’s really interesting, fascinating in fact because I take from your testimony that this legislation may actually increase state revenue in addition to not costing anything, by fostering that economic development and that consumption.

DAVID MOYER: Anything that helps these shops increase their business, yes. It affects taxes and increases revenue to the state, yes.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Fantastic. Well, those are the questions that I have. Thank you again, Mr. Moyer for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

DAVID MOYER: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator. Next up, Representative O’Dea.
REP. O’DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Moyer for coming up and testifying. You are in my district. Actually, you’re in Gail’s district, sorry, but you’re in Wilton, which is my district. And I am familiar with Caffeine and Carburetors. Thank you for reaching out to me about this bill. I was unaware of it, previously I have co-sponsored it. I think it’s a great idea. And I understand from your testimony, you know, in the unlikely event, extremely unlikely from the Chairs, I’m sure would agree that tolls ever come to Connecticut -- just for the members of the committee and the people who may be listening, my microphone was turned off accidentally. In any event, that’s outstanding.

Oh, I understand your testimony, if we do pass this and at some point in time, it maybe 2050 or 2060, there are tolls in Connecticut, you would not be opposed to mandating an easy pass if you don’t have a front plate, is that, is that fair to say?

DAVID MOYER: Absolutely.

REP. O’DEA (125TH): And I’d just like to point out to everybody, I’m gonna invite both chairs and ranking members, and both ranking members to the next Caffeine and Carburetors, which is April 14th at Pine and Elm, in New Canaan. It’s actually an outstanding event and I’ll buy the coffee. But thank you very much for coming out up here and testifying.

DAVID MOYER: Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. I don’t know how that technical glitch happened, so, we’ll have to make sure it doesn’t happen again.
But I would, I may even take you up on that offer. Many of are, are classic car buffs. We don’t always have the opportunity to afford to keep one, so it’s nice to see that the hobby is alive and well.

Before you go, we have another question, Representative Haines.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Hi, actually thank you, Chair. Not really a question, just a, a vote of confidence for you. I am an owner of a 1957 Midget. And I would love to not be able to put a plate on the front. And I’m also somebody who has gotten very involved in my town’s project, Red Car Show. So, talking about economic development as Senator Haskell did, it’s really important to be able to bring car shows to high school graduation fund raisers that keeps the, you know, classic car hobby alive. And it is a great economic driver and I know that there’s many, many, many clubs and many classic car nights all over the state during the summer.

So, anything we can do to continue that and bolster that small little niche economy is a great thing. So, I’m all for it. Thank you so much for coming in.

DAVID MOYER: Well, I like the Midget, Representative, and I think it’s great you have that car. You do raise an interesting point. There is interaction between the hobby and young people. And there’s a shop in Norwalk, for example, that reaches out to the community to bring in disadvantaged youth as interns to train them. And that same shop is working with Sikorsky to develop interest in engineering among those individuals.
REP. HAINES (34TH): All great stuff. We should continue doing anything we can do to bolster this.

DAVID MOYER: Terrific. Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Thank you for that testimony.

DAVID MOYER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up is Representative Borer, followed by Jim Jinks.

REP. BORER (115TH): Hello everyone. Chairman Lemar, Chairman Leone, Ranking Member Devlin, Ranking Member Henry and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, I’m offering this testimony in support of H.B. 6959, AN ACT CONCERNING SEAT BELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES.

While I know there have been similar bills that have come before this committee in previous years, the one difference is that since then, in May of 2018, the National Transportation Safety Board has now declared its recommendation for seatbelts on school busses, which it had not previously. This comes following investigations into a series of bus accidents across the country.

Although school buses are some of the safest vehicles on the road, they can be made even safer with a lap-shoulder belt requirement. Many of our buses on the road today have the same safety technology developed in the 1970’s and that has not changed since.

There has been an argument in the past that compartmentalization of school bus seats will keep children safe in the event of crash. While it’s true that the high front and backs are inherently
safer than cars, the compartmentalization only works when students are facing forward, seated, and aren’t in the aisle while the bus is moving.

Additionally, the compartmentalization argument loses ground because of the global issue of lack of adherence to the capacity rules.

Elementary students are put 3 to a seat, which typically does not encase all 3 within the compartment and are often hanging off the seats spilling over into the aisle, especially in 2019 when every child now has a bulky backpack.

As a result, the buses can become unsafely overcrowded and un-compartmentalized.

There has also been the question of who will enforce the students wearing the seat belts. To that I would like to remind everyone that those currently of school age have grown up inherently buckling up as second nature, unlike previous generations which required education, convincing and reminders about the importance of seatbelts.

It is easier for the bus driver to tell everyone to buckle up than to continually tell them to sit down and stay in their seat.

Who will be liable if the student doesn’t buckle up, worry about who to blame if there’s an accident and the child gets hurt should be secondary to keeping our children safe in the first place.

While we understand retrofitting school busses is cost prohibitive, requiring new school buses as they are replaced to have the seatbelts is a more feasible option.
The cost, according to the National Association of Pupil Transportation, is approximately $7,000 to $10,000 to fit a school bus with seatbelts. The lifespan of a school bus is 15 years. So, if you amortize that over the 15 year lifespan, it’s much less extreme.

I think it is important that we begin the process of equipping. We need to ensure we are taking every possible measure to ensure the utmost safety of all motor vehicles responsible for transporting our children. Let us join California, Florida, Louisiana, New York, New Jersey and Texas in a common sense approach to keeping our children safe.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative, for articulating some of the pros and cons and that we’ve been working on this committee for many years now when it comes to school buses and seatbelts, it’s been an ongoing issue. And we’ve heard from so many folks. Our previous Chairman was a staunch supporter as many of us are on this legislation. And we had created a fund for municipalities to tap into to offset some of those costs.

Unfortunately, not many municipalities ever took advantage of that to, to our dismay. So, I, even, so, I know the concept is, is worthy and sound, but we need to also make sure that municipalities play a role and want to participate in this, especially their boards of education, which are separate entities.

So, as we look towards future new vehicles coming on line, they have a part to play and they have to be just as vocal as you are that this is something that
they want or need. And then we can work on all the other related issues that we need to make forward. So, hopefully we can make some progress in that regard.

So, I thank you for your testimony.

REP. BORER (115TH): Thank you. And I’d just like to add on that line item that was developed for, that line item that was developed, it was about $600,000 that was put into the budget for municipalities who wanted to take advantage of equipping their, their school buses with the seatbelts. I don’t think it was really communicated or marked to them that that funding was available because I polled a number of districts and asked them if they knew that that funding was available, and they did not. And then I talked to the Department of Transportation and asked what steps were taken to let them know it was available and it wasn’t, it wasn’t a promoted program.

So, that could be a reason why nobody took advantage of it.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Yes, I’m sure that was part of it. But at the same time, some of our representatives or their constituents need to get that message across too. So, we all have to do a little bit more.

And I think you’re doing more than your part, so thank you for that. Don’t go away, Representative Garibay has a question.

REP. GARIBAY (60TH): So, what we’re talking about are seatbelts in busses, correct? So, as a former bus driver for eight years in my younger years, even without some of the things happening today, it was
important then. Buses are very, very unsafe. They are unsafe. When they were leaving kids on the bus, they would bring them back to the bus yards and then they’d find out a kid was on. They instituted a system in the back of the bus, where the bus driver now has to go to the back, hit the button, before he can turn the vehicle off.

As a sole bus driver on a business with kids jumping up and down, yelling, screaming and everything’s that’s going on and the seatbelts, you know, kids falling out of seats, I totally support whichever way we have to do it.

REP. BORER (115TH): Thank you. I, you brought up a good point. You know, there’s a lot of activity that’s on the business while you’re driving it. And we know that a lot of bullying activities happen on the school bus and it’s impossible for a school bus driver to attend to activity on the bus while you’re driving it, it’s a distraction.

REP. GARIBAY (60TH): It’s scary, seriously.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you for both of those comments. Any other questions? If not, thank you, Representative, for some great testimony.

Next up, Jim Jinks, followed by Representative Rochelle.

JIM JINKS: Thank you, Mr. Chair and ranking members and the other members of the committee. It’s great to be here today.

My name is Jim Jinks, I’m here to speak in favor of S.B. 775, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT LOOP TRAIL.
I’m the Executive Director of Bike Cheshire, we’re a community-based nonprofit, focused on encouraging and improving biking and walking in Cheshire. The organization operates a community bike share, holds bike public safety sessions, organizes group rides and advocates for, is advocating for a Cheshire Village bike route network, which is a 40 mile network of bike-friendly streets in Cheshire.

I’m here today to speak in favor of 775. 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 the 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, and 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 these are our epidemics, can be greatly improved by increasing access to biking and walking facilities.

Tourism and small business success, eco and agritourism have emerged as big business in Connecticut and around the country. In 2015, in Connecticut, agritourism 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. And biking encourages discovery, which means kind of allowing smaller, local businesses to compete with larger national chains, which are more like car-based destinations tend to be.

In terms of residential and commercial property values, in 2016, to complete a master’s degree in public policy, I did a 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, one of the oldest rail trails in our state. I studied twenty years of sales data, and my findings were that basically within a half mile of the greenway trail in Cheshire, homes that are on average smaller, older and have smaller lots, actually have a higher value per square foot than homes that are located three to four miles away and tend to be larger square footage, larger lots.

These findings are consistent with similar academic studies and then private-industry analysis of greenway trails going back to the 1990s, and I have provided a copy of my thesis to the Committee.

In terms of 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, which is No. 6 on that list of the top 1. The odds of dying from a pedestrian incident are 1 in 556, which 9 on the top 10. And the odds of dying in a motorcycle crash are 1 in 858, which is No. 10 on the list off the top 10.
So, if you’re keeping track, investing in bikes and bike facilities, allows us to, you know, kind of improve on 8 of the top 10 reasons that Americans are dying every year.

So, for all of these reasons, I urge you to vote yes on S.B. 775. It 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 are on 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.

So, please vote YES on S.B. 775.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Jim, for your testimony and for your background in this effort. I know, you know, the Farmington canal line is not just a recreational trail, it’s a community trail and more and more throughout cities and small towns are seeing people take advantage of the bicycle infrastructure as a mean means of getting to and from school, work and other locations. It’s not recreation. And sometimes it’s sadly seen as just a recreational trail, when so many people can find ways to commute by taking advantage of this infrastructure that exists in so many forms.

So, thank you for your work on all sorts of trail-related issues across the State of Connecticut and for your support for this as well.

Are there any questions? Representative Devlin.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony today and for being here with us most of the day to share your words with us.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): No problem.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Can you just clarify for me how, how long or how big would the expansion be from miles or distance perspective?

JIM JINKS: The expansion of the existing trail?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): No. To connect the Air Line trail with the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail?

JIM JINKS: I know --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): What kind of distance are we talking about?

JIM JINKS: John Hall is here today, who’s --

JOHN HALL: 24 miles.

JIM JINKS: 24 miles, 24 miles.


JIM JINKS: I was gonna say 20 miles, but yeah, about 24 miles.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Great. Thank you. I just didn’t have a frame of reference, so that’s very helpful, I appreciate that. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again. Representative Rochelle, followed by Dawn Middlemass.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Thank you Representative Lemar and members of the Transportation Committee for having me today to submit some testimony to you all. You have my testimony. I just want to, I’m
gonna go off the testimony a little bit and just kind of give you the background of why I’m here.

I am speaking in favor of Bill 7098, and particularly with the train investment discussing the Waterbury Line. The Waterbury Line as a whole and some of the train stations in the Waterbury Line.

Currently, this Waterbury Line is built, but it is infrequent. It’s only on time 60 percent of the time and does not have regular service as often as is needed in peak hours.

For example, if you’re coming back up the Waterbury Line, you’re transporting in Bridgeport because you work somewhere along the New Haven line. If you don’t make your 6 o’clock train, you have to wait until 8:30 to get your next train.

So, we find that we have a big problem with ridership not because we don’t have folks that want the line, but because the line itself just doesn’t work for normal people’s lives.

In addition to that, we have, we know that when you increase the amount of trains on the lines, you do see an increase in ridership. Our last train addition was in 2008, we had an increase in service of 40 percent at that time. And we’re looking at a situation where we have this train line that which is, is not, it’s underutilized for sure. And the trains themselves, the actual cars are the oldest in the state. They don’t have basic amenities like electric plugs for the riders.

And in addition to that, our stations themselves are often very limited. I would akin them to what a bus stop is. It’s just a basic, very small covering.
In addition to my testimony, you’re going to find testimony that’s been submitted by Jim Gildea, who’s the Chairman of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council in favor of increasing service in the Waterbury Line as well as from Rick Dunne, the Executive Director of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments.

I want to highlight in his testimony that he submitted along with it a Waterbury branch line infrastructure priorities report, which is 8 pages long that gives you photographs and details about each station and the importance and the order of what to invest in first to get the Waterbury Line more functional for this region.

I also want to note for the people in the room that the, three of the top five most economically distressed municipalities in this state are along the Waterbury train line that’s in Ansonia, Waterbury and Derby. Also, for the top 22, Naugatuck is number 22. So, we’re looking at communities that will have a large economic benefit from having regular ridership or having these trains working more functionally.

Particularly, I’d like to note that in Ansonia and Derby, we have downtowns that are within the TOD zone that are both under economic redevelopment right now. We have between the two towns about 100 acres of land that is less than a half mile to the train. And Derby is less than a quarter mile, it’s very walkable to get there. And all of the people who are submitting RFT’s are saying, you know, what’s happening with the train lines. And our future and being able to build these downtowns really is contingent upon having functional train
lines so that we can, you know, get these towns developed so our [Inaudible -03:35:44] get taxes down for our residents and really the communities moving forward.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony and thank you for your passion for your district and what you’ve been able to communicate both to myself and other members of this committee about the need and importance of transit-related development in your communities.

What are we talking about size wise? You know, we’ve got two downtowns, generally that I think of, that I know of, that have large building projects that could happen, multiple acres of land in an area around each of the designated spots where we think the transition could be expanded.

Do you have a sense for the scale that we’re talking about here?

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): So, I would recommend the first train stop that should really be focused on to build the tracks right now, we don’t have raised tracks, would be the Derby train station. The reason being that we have essentially the entire southside of Main Street is, is all the buildings have been knocked down a few decades ago and hadn’t been rebuilt. We’ve got water from property that is completely viable and in fact is being looked at for mixed use. We have our fees that are in. We have one developer that’s trying to move through P&Z. So, we have in the works 200 housing units that are in the works. But again, we have space for a lot more and we’re holding this up as trains.
The reason why Derby is also important is because Derby’s the last stop on Route 8, where you really have the space to put cars before you get down to the bottom, that is the 95, Route 8 connector. There was a national report that just came out that listed the 8-95 connector as the 74th most congested connector in the entire country.

So, we do have a problem there. We want to get cars off the road, and we want to get people, you know, using train service. Getting the Derby train station up would be a very, is a crucial way to do that. The reason why I’m advocating for Derby and Ansonia, besides that they’re my district, is that the Derby, the Ansonia station is low hanging fruit. It has some parking capability already. But again, it doesn’t have an actual station, it has a bus stop at it. The Derby line is connected to Route 8 and Route 34, so it’s a great, very efficient way to get people off the highway, onto cars and onto the train, or out of their cars and onto trains.

As far as scale, it’s walking distance in both towns. There’s a high concentration of housing and a plan that can be used for mixed use.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And I think that’s one of the opportunities we recognize. So, again, you’ve been here for a while now. You’ve seen communities come and talk about the importance of what rail could do to transform their communities. And they often talk about sort of a greenfield development, like if you create this train station in this new area, then all this new development will come. And you represent a district that has seen dramatic development in the past and it’s just maybe
20, 30 years of limited support from the state of private market development.

So, what this would do was resurrect formally thriving communities --

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Absolutely.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): -- to get them back on board.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Yes.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I think the testimony that you’ve alluded to in your testimony from the Naugatuck Valley Community Council of Governments helps illustrate sort of where their priorities are and the cost structure both. I think you’ve done a great job of outlining where the priorities could be and how would could pick this up for the state.

So, thank you again for your testimony.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony.

REP. ROCHELLE (104TH): Thank you.

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: Good afternoon, hi. My name is Dawn Middlemass, I’m from Ansonia. I work for a family-owned gas station distributor in Danbury, Connecticut, by the name of Wheels of Connecticut. We own and operate gasoline stations and sell motor fuels to retailers throughout Connecticut.

I’m here today to make you aware of the negative impact of the S.B. 419 will have on our business and our ability to bring competitive gasoline prices to the street. Wheels of Connecticut gives discounts
to many dealers who as well, who sell gas and if passed, S.B. 419 would ban zone pricing and eliminate our ability to continue to have flexibility when pricing gasoline.

We have invested a lot of capital into gasoline stations and this bill will discourage us to invest more in the future.

The S.B. 419 does not take into account individual market realities but force us to set price of gasoline the same for all of our retailer dealers, regardless of the cost and competition.

One price for gasoline essentially means that I, as a wholesaler, cannot lower the price for one gas station without lowering it for all of them. That being the case, there is no way I can financially justify any discounts whatsoever as they have to be given equally to everyone, despite what the competitive reality may be for our locations.

Passing laws that limit or take away our ability to be flexible when pricing gasoline would have a devastating effect on our ability to remain viable. Restricting how any company sells products, stifles the competition and discourages growth.

This bill hurts local businesses and consumers. Please oppose the S.B. 419. Sincerely, Dawn Middlemass, Wheels of Connecticut.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you for your testimony, Dawn, and for coming up today and spending a lot of time with us. There are a few questions, if you don’t mind.

One, you indicated your concern for appropriate price controls based upon unique parameters that may
be true for one gas station versus another. I’m gonna outline what I see on a pretty consistent basis and see if it’s a unique circumstance at a local gas station or something a little bit different than that.

For example, I live in the City of New Haven, which on a day-to-day basis I can find the type of fuel I use for my car for about $2.89 per gallon, generally that’s where we are right now.

Now, I think that’s pretty high. If I go into Fairfield County and see that, you know, literally nine miles away every gas station there is looking for the same type that I use at about $3.09 per gallon. So, I’m feeling pretty good in New Haven, $2.89 is great, that’s not as bad as $3.09 just, just down the street starting in Fairfield County. But then sometimes when I’m coming up to Hartford I get stuck in traffic on 91 and, you know, ways tells me, can you just get off here and go on to the Berlin Turnpike. And then all of a sudden I’m seeing $2.49 per gallon, like what is going on? Like how can it be that gas is so different literally just eight miles apart. And, you know, you start to investigate, well, what is it that’s causing these huge price discrepancies in such a small geographic area.

And then you try to get answers and you’re, you know, limited in what you receive from folks, until you come back to this idea of zone pricing. What, I’ve learned a lot more from my good senate colleague, Senator Hwang, which is why we’re having the public hearing today and from my colleagues in Fairfield County who’s been fighting this fight for a number of years.
So, it seems to be that there’s something more to it than just discreet unique location-related specific circumstances that may yield differences in price. I think that’s what we’re trying to get to. No one’s attempting to say that gas is going to be so heavily regulated as to create one price point across the State of Connecticut. But they are, in fact, trying to get to some underlying issue that may be unfairly creating a restricted marketplace that it’s more expensive than it needs to be. That may be too many words to explain what I feel the concern is, but it’s sort of what we’re trying to get at here.

And so, I don’t want you to feel like we’re, you know, specifically targeting your business, but people are recognizing the discrepancies in this marketplace. With that, Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for being here, Dawn. Did you submit testimony to the clerks that we have a file of your testimony? Okay. I just didn’t see it. No, that’s okay. Thank you for coming up. You kind of mentioned something that was quite interesting to me. You said it would hamper your ability to, to be able to be flexible in your pricing.

So, take me through that and, and what, what would you think this bill does to hamper your ability to kind of set your pricing reflecting the market?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: I really don’t know the exact answer, but I can definitely let my trade representative answer that question.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I think from a standpoint of understanding the bill, I think the bill’s
intentions and it’s introducers are looking at a real transparency and a real market force driven type of a gasoline pricing.

And as the good Chair cited, there is tremendous discrepancy, but they’re based on the same distributor. The fact is, do you have a zone price map that you could readily share with the general public?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: No, I do not.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So, how do you gage your pricing point; do you base it on the, the gasoline station at the next street, the next corner, or do you base it on what the average pricing in the town, but how do you base how you do your business?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: I don’t have the answer to that.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, thank you very much for testifying and I just wanted to kind of share with you. Please read through the bill from a standpoint of your arguments and we are fully in support of so many of our small businesses and gas, you know, distributors throughout the state.

We are fully supportive of the business I that regards, but I think in, in, in my advocacy of the bill, it is all about transparency, consumer fairness and your ability to compete on an open market place because then you would know the data.

So, I thank you for your testimony.

DAWN MIDDLEMESS: Okay.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I welcome more dialogue on this.

DAWN MIDDLEMESS: Thank you.
SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Steinberg, followed by Representative Devlin.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think as Senator Hwang’s comments, it’s very important to us to distinguish between price flexibility, as you describe it as being a competitive market factor and price controls.

If anything, we’re talking about something that’s supportive of the idea of an individual gas station having flexibility to compete in a market place and reflect actual costs. But you said to Senator Hwang that you don’t necessarily have a zoning map. Are you at least aware of what zones your stations are in? Is that even a consideration?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: I don’t, I do not have that answer.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Okay. So, we may be addressing these questions to the wrong person because really it’s those who control the zones and the pricing within it that is really what we’re most interested in getting to. But I think to the comments you’ve heard, if you just cross a county line or even a municipal border and you’re obliged to pay 20, 30 cents more, just because of that line, that proximity, doesn’t that sound anticompetitive to you?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: It’s everyone’s opinion. I don’t have an answer.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you for your testimony.

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: Yep.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here today and taking all our questions. And I think the point that I just want to reinforce has been made by some of my colleagues here.

I represent Fairfield and Trumbull. So, in the zone that Fairfield happens to be a part of, we pay on average about 25 cents more a gallon than if I drive to Milford and get gas there on the Parkway. And it’s arbitrary. So, in your, you know, testimony you mentioned that it was more fair pricing for consumers by keeping this structure. And I just don’t understand how that’s the case, since there seems to be no rationale for why, in the area of the state that I live in, we pay on average 25 cents more a gallon versus other areas. And I’m not familiar with all the fluctuations of all the various zones, besides the one that I’m in and pay for.

So, from your perspective saying that it is better for consumers, how do you justify that?

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: I don’t have the answer for that.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Well, thank you very much.

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: Yep, thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much, Dawn for coming up today.

DAWN MIDDLEMASS: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative, is Representative Slap here, I’m not seeing him. Phil
Gold, to be followed by Susan Smith and then Representative -- Senator Lesser.

SAMUEL GOLD: Good afternoon, thank you Co-Chair Lemar and thank you members of the Transportation Committee. I am here representing the lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments, also known as RiverCOG and I’m also representing the Southcentral Regional Council of Governments. Carl Amento is in Washington today, and he sends his regrets, so I’m here representing him as well.

We are, we are here to support Senate Bill 775, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT LOOP TRAIL. I’m gonna try to keep my comments brief because I’ve submitted a letter already and also a previous speaker from Cheshire hit a number of the public policy goals of investing in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in our state, from economic development to public health to tourism.

What we are in particular supporting is the completion of the Loop. We have the Farmington Canal Trail and the Air Line Trail and the Charter Oak Greenway Trail, all coming towards completion. And the one element that’s missing is the southern end of that Loop, which is connecting Middletown to Meridan to Cheshire.

Those communities along with Portland on the other side of the Arrigoni Bridge, are working diligently to plan and construct within their, their, their own abilities sections of trail and the three COGS that represent that corridor. I also think Naugatuck Valley COG has submitted testimony in support of this. We’ve been assisting our municipalities with the planning and trying to program what funds we
have. But the importance of this bill today is to raise the profile of this important connection and also to make the point that once we have a connected group of 111 miles, that the net benefit to the State of Connecticut, whether it be for transportation, commuters, tourism, is multiplied than any one of, any specific section of trail.

You know, just to give you an example, you can go to other parts of the country, you can go up to Quebec and it’s very common to have tourism on bicycle. This will become something that people will travel to to ride on.

We also point out that we’ll connect to our new CT rail commuter rail service in Meridan, which provides more, more ability for people to get around without a car.

And the final, I think, point that’s important here, and I had some packets of maps, which I didn’t have a full 55, but I don’t know if you were able to get these. It, which, which identifies the corridor and if not, I can get this to you after the hearing.

It’s one of the very few east-west connections in Connecticut. The topography of Connecticut with its rivers and its ridgelines are all north-south. Getting east-west in Connecticut on bicycle or on foot is very difficult. And this is, this is a key connection east-west to connect and provide, provide connectivity to the Air Line trail, which is an important state park and to the Farmington Canal trail, which is our, our longest greenway trail in Connecticut.

So, with that I just, I’ll leave it there and welcome any questions.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Samuel for your testimony today. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you so much.

SAMUEL GOLD: All right. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Susan Smith, followed by Senator Lesser.

SUSAN SMITH: Hello to the Transportation Committee, Chairpersons Leone and Lemar and other legislators here today.

My name is Susan Smith, I represent Bike Walk Connecticut. I’m the Executive Director. We are a nonprofit statewide organization trying to work to make Connecticut streets safer for pedestrians and walkers.

I’m here today on behalf of Bike Walk Connecticut to express support for actually four bills. No. 422, 5934, 7058 and 5282. I’ll begin with No. 422, which has to do with the automated traffic enforcement.

The consequences of running red lights are significant, since they endanger motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

The Insurance Institute of Highway Safety states that in 2015, 770 people were killed and 137,000 more were injured in crashes involving a driver that ran a red light. Approximately 5 percent involved a pedestrian or bicyclist.

The National Safety Council estimates that the economic cost of red light running fatalities in that year was $1.2 billion.

Even more interestingly, AAA found 93 percent of drivers consider it unacceptable to drive through a
red light when they could have stopped safely, yet 36 percent admit to having run a red light in the last 30 days.

More enforcement needs to be done in our state to assure that motorists recognize that running red lights is dangerous, and that they are likely to be penalized.

Research shows that automated enforcement systems can be an effective tool for improving roadway safety, especially when combined with other measures; such as road engineering, traffic-calming, traditional enforcement, and public education programs.

Bike Walk Connecticut endorses a task force study as a first step in considering automated traffic enforcement devices in Connecticut.

If we’re to move on to the next bill, would you like to do that? Okay.

So, that is 5934, as having to do with pedestrian safety in crosswalks.

We believe it is very important to amend the crosswalk law to its previous language when motorists in Connecticut were required to stop for people at crossroads. Why the law was changed in 2007 to wording of in crosswalk provides no efficiency of road use and decreases the safety of persons crossing roads. Bike Walk Connecticut supports changing it back, so that motor vehicles won’t keep traveling through the crosswalk, while people are on the side of the road waiting to cross.

Nationally, Connecticut shares in the preventable epidemic of pedestrian fatalities, where 425
pedestrian fatalities have occurred in our state between 2008 and 2017, and unfortunately, the trend is on the increase.

During those years, U.S. pedestrian deaths have increased 35 percent, while walking only slightly increased less than 1 percent. Yet traffic deaths among motor vehicle occupants are down 6 percent.

Smart Growth America identified that pedestrians in Connecticut are at a higher risk of danger on our streets compared to the national average in the U.S.

When we encourage more folks to use our roads, as they are entitled to do, then we have the responsibility to make our roads as safe as possible.

Bike Walk Connecticut believes that this bill concerning pedestrian safety at crosswalks will help to do that.

Moving on to the next bill, which is 7058 --

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Susan, we’re gonna need you to -

SUSAN SMITH: Speed it up?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Speed it up, please.

SUSAN SMITH: Okay. And actually, I am in the homestretch here, so. Greenways account, Bike Walk Connecticut supports this bill to assure that the funds obtained from the Greenways license plates is directed as originally attended, to be used for Greenways purposes in Connecticut. When the purpose, when the public invests in a Greenways license plate, we believe that they anticipate that
their dollars invested in those plates are being utilized for that purpose, so they should be.

And last but not least, which is bill 52, I’m sorry, yes, 5282, having to do with distracting driving and increasing the penalties on that.

Financial consequences change behaviors, so increasing penalties for distracted driving will help increase accountability for motorists whose carelessness, caused by moments of distraction, lead to injury or worse, fatalities, to our most vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and bicyclists.

Bike Walk Connecticut testified on distracted driving enforcement bills in 2013, and we appreciate Public Act 13-271 for fines established at that time. And today we recognize that more needs to be done to further reduce distracted driving for our Connecticut roads.

Thank you very much and any questions?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much, Susan for your testimony. Comprehensive of our entire agenda almost, but we do really appreciate Bike Walk Connecticut weighing in. You’ve been steadfast advocate on a number of allies, a number of issues the last number of sessions. And so we appreciate your continued support of the issues that are taking place here in Connecticut.

SUSAN SMITH: Thank you very much.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Are there any questions for Susan? Seeing none, thank you again.

SUSAN SMITH: Thank you.
REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Lesser to be followed by Cathy Flaherty.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): With the Committee’s permission, I’m here with my good friend and colleague, Mary Abrams, if that’s okay?

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Abrams, you’re more than welcome to take Senator Lesser’s three minutes.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much. It wouldn’t be the first time.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): Thank you. I, I’m here to testify in support of two bills, but I’m here with Senator Abrams in support of, we’re gonna just talk about one bill briefly, if we can squeeze that in, in our three minutes.

It’s in support of Bill 775, which we introduced, concerning the creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail.

I think this is a real important opportunity for the entire region benefiting at least 20 towns across central and eastern Connecticut, connecting the Farmington River Canal Trail to the Air Line Trail. Through out districts and Senator Needleman’s district as well, but also providing a benefit to a huge number of people in the area. It’s, you heard earlier from the Council of Governments under strong local support all along the way, but we do need the assistance of the state to provide that last, a few inner connects, leveraging existing infrastructure.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I agree with everything Senator Lesser said, but also would say that I think it speaks a strong message to how the state feels about tourism and wellness. How it feels about
transportation and looking towards future ways of getting from work or getting to businesses. And all of that speaks to keeping young people in our state because I think that’s what they’re looking for for their future.

So, I think it’s a very small investment that could have a huge payoff. So, I hope you’ll support it.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): I’m happy to take questions of that or I could also move on to the separate piece that I’m just testifying on my own. I’ll just defer to you, to Chairman Lemar also Ranking Member Martin and what, how you want to proceed.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Let’s have you go on to the second piece of your testimony and then we’ll take questions after that.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): Sure. Thank you. I also want to testify in support of the portion of 7098, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT COMMUTER RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE, pertaining to building a train station in Newington.

I believe you heard earlier from local elected officials in Newington. They are strongly in support of this proposal. But we’re willing to work with the department and the committee in finding ways to best leverage this as a resource that benefits the entire State of Connecticut. There is a, there is work currently underway in Newington to make sure that a development is a, is a major component of this and I think that is moving forward. The Cedar Street location currently contemplated, doesn’t just confer benefit on Newington, of course, but it’s also proximate to the border with New Britain. And specifically, it’s
within walking distance of Central Connecticut State University providing much needed access for the students there, obviously to the Springfield, Hartford, New Haven and New York corridor.

So, I think it’s gonna be an important and exciting piece of economic development. The whole delegation is in support of that proposal. And I think it would confer a benefit in terms of element to the whole state and decided to work with the committee and the department in figuring out ways to make that happen.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you very much, Senator Lesser and Senator Abrams for your testimony. Senator Lesser, in your case two bills before us.

To the first point regarding the Loop Trail, what an exciting potential development both, we’ve heard testimony on tourism and benefits, the recreational benefits. But as I’ve seen in New Haven, the use of these as a primary transportation modes, really aware of the gamechanger as in allowing folks access to an east-west route that connects them to, you know, the Hartford, New Haven line and more broadly to commuting options throughout the region is really a gamechanger. And I think you’re exactly right, that if we can build this, it will leverage additional investments and additional options throughout the area.

So, I think I, you know, commend you on your foresight to see this and what a great opportunity for that part of the state.

Secondly, to the request for a train station in Newington. You know, that Cedar Street location has been identified for years as a potential point where
we could leverage tremendous private investment and see private capital come in, opening up potentially a hundred acres of developable land in and around the train station.

I see often times contemplated commercial development and business development in that site. I would, as I mentioned earlier to your House members and the Mayor, to recognize that the most profitable and the most successful transit locations throughout the country incorporate multi-income and multi-use development, meaning residential development around the corridors.

And that location, you know, 100 acres of development, but what will really be a gamechanger for the town would be if you found ways to incorporate residential development for all income levels in and around the train station. That’s how we really build equity in that system and ensure that the tremendous investment that the state would make in that site yields multiple benefits.

So, I hope you would encourage your community to consider that as well.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will certainly pass that on. And I do believe that I’ll have to check with the town manager on where things are, but I do believe that a robust and comprehensive definition of housing was included in the transportation overlay zone that they’re currently looking on a municipal level, but I will convey your remarks to her and to the town.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Terrific. Thank you very much. Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your time today. Thank you very much.
SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Cathy Flaherty, to be followed by Representative Harding and then Ken Comms.

CATHY FLAHERTY: Good afternoon, Senator Leone, Representative Lemar and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Cathy Flaherty. I’m the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project. We are a legal aid agency that represents people living with mental health conditions to protect their civil rights. Also, a member of the Keep the Promise coalition and the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance.

I am really here testifying on behalf of autistic individuals who have relayed to me their opposition to H.B. 5559, which is the blue frame around the license plate.

I was here when Representative Linehan and the mom testified, and her constituent testified about the bill. I have absolutely no doubt of the very good intentions behind the bill, but one of the things that struck me was when the mom testified that her son doesn’t like to identify. And that everybody was saying, well, he only has to identify once and then he has this license and doesn’t have to identify again.

Think of all the times you have to show your driver’s license for things. You’re getting carded at a store when you’re buying liquor. You’re going to a bar. You might have to show -- you are, you would be having that person self-identify as autistic in every interaction where they’re showing
their ID. And I’m not sure that the people who even proposed this bill realize that.

When it comes to the interactions with law enforcement, I served on the board of the Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement for several years. And part of that, the mission of that organization is to make sure that law enforcement knows how to interact with people living with mental health conditions and really all of their constituents.

But when you talk about those communication practices or even their physical interaction with other people practices, it should be best practices for everybody, not somebody with a frame around their license.

Law enforcement should be within the bounds of safety in doing their job. They should be patient, they should learn how to deescalate situations. They should display empathy and understanding for the people that are there to protect and serve.

So, while I understand the motivations behind this bill and believe that they, this proposal was made with the best of intentions, I am not convinced that it’s going to make anybody safer. And, in fact, I think it actually could make people, you know, even though people are volunteering for this, I’m not sure people thought through the consequences of it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Cathy, for your testimony today. And I wouldn’t disagree with you at all, except to suggest that if you could speak to the proponents and maybe understand where they’re coming from and try to, if there’s place in this conversation that, you know, there is compromise or
there is understanding and there’s a different approach that we want to take, that might be worth investigating. Because I did get the sense from both the proposer of the bill and the individuals that brought it up that they are thoughtfully trying to engage a best practice.

So, I don’t get the sense that they would be antagonist towards your concerns at all. So, hopefully there’s a way that we can think through a way that addresses their underlying concerns, but also what you rightfully bring up and something I, frankly, hadn’t considered, so.

CATHY FLAHERTY: I will certainly reach out to Representative Linehan.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony on this. And as the Chairman mentioned, this is really an important bill for us to consider in the sense that what we want to do is in the best interest of those who are on the spectrum. For those that are not affiliated with what that really means, we don’t want to overstep our bounds by any measure. We want to be helpful to the individual and to the family members asking for whatever help they may require.

It sounded like from the proponents of the bill that they had worked with law enforcement to overcome some of the ongoing issues that someone on the spectrum may actually face as they go about their day-to-day business or get pulled over. And because they’re, you know, from the perspective that they were inquiring, you know, law enforcement personnel doesn’t know anybody from Adam until they start to
do a question and answer. If someone may have been swerving, they may think the opposite of what it really is. But they have to go through their procedures and sometimes that can be a detriment to someone on the spectrum. And they may not be very articulate and so, you may have a good law enforcement agent that knows what’s going on and maybe one not up to speed, whatever the case may be.

So, what we want to do as a committee is to make sure that we’re gonna be helpful. What we don’t want to do is get into an hurt your point of view or your client’s point of view or your families point of view that doesn’t want to be identified in this way. And from the way I took it, this would be permissive only with the guardian’s input or the person themselves, if they are in a position to make that decision.

We don’t want to articulate that in legislation. I don’t think that is our place. What we want to do is be helpful to those that are asking for it.

So, I think to the comments of my Chairman, we would ask you to work with the proponents of the bill to see if there is something there or nothing there we need to know. What we don’t want to do is play referee with an issue that can be very important to everyone involved.

We don’t want to pick one side over the other because it’s not really our role. We want to help anyone that needs the help. We just want to give you the proper tools.

So, I don’t know where we need to go, but I would ask that you have that conversation so that we go in the right direction.
SUSAN FLAHERTY: I absolutely will and appreciate taking that under advisement because it’s a common situation that especially we at CLRP find ourselves in because, you know, we represent the person with mental health conditions. Their family may want a very different thing to happen, but our clients are the person who has the mental health condition. And can definitely appreciate what it’s like to be a family member versus being somebody’s attorney.

So, thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I guess maybe the final question, if the person who is not on the spectrum is capable to make their decision and they wanted this, would that be sufficient for you?

CATHY FLAHERTY: It may be. I think part of the reason I decided to testify here today is that people might not really have thought through the consequences. You know, people might say, yeah, that would be a great idea for when I interact with law enforcement, but have they thought through, well, there are a lot of other times in your life you may be showing your identification and do you realize that people will know, well, if you have this blue frame, we don’t label people. We have ID’s that look the same for everybody and we don’t put other things on there that identify what people are and give them the freedom to choose in all situations where they have to show that piece of government identification who they are.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): Fair enough. I think that’s legitimate. Maybe there needs to be a secondary card that they could show instead of their license. I don’t know, but I think it would be worth to work
on something that maybe we can come to an agreement where everyone is happy.

CATHY FLAHERTY: I’ll reach out to Representative Linehan. Thank you.


KEN COOMES: Hello. My name is Ken Coomes, I’m the wholesale marketing representative for Aldin Associates. We are a third generation family owned motor field distributor based in Connecticut.

I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the committee today. And I’m here to voice my opposition to Senate Bill 419, concerning zone pricing.

Based upon my experience of over 22 years as a self-employed gasoline dealer, and over 40 years total in the petroleum marketing field, I would like to share with you my observations on how this legislation would be harmful to consumers and small business based on my experience and how the gasoline market is changing.

The evolution of the market place will illustrate why this legislation in unnecessary. Zone pricing references the practice of fuel suppliers establishing dealer tank wagon pricing, DTW, for individual locations as opposed to a set price for a geographic region.

There are mitigating factors to why costs should be different per location such as transportation and
different costs of doing business in respective locales.

DTW represents a delivered cost to the retail outlet and was typically charged to the major oil lessee/franchisee dealer.

Gasoline distributors, who are also known as jobbers typically pay what is called rack price. The jobber is responsible for delivery costs. Rack prices are posted for both branded and unbranded fuel products. Each terminal has its own price, i.e. New Haven, Connecticut; Providence, Rhode Island, et cetera.

The marketplace has changed. In 2019, very few majors own retail properties in Connecticut and lease them to dealers. The independent dealer class of trade has been largely replaced by commissioned agents. A commissioned agent will typically lease a property from a jobber, they receive a fixed per gallon commission on fuel sales and retain the proceeds from the convenience store or other ancillary business.

Where independent dealers operate, their fuel is usually supplied under a rack plus pricing formula, which factors transportation costs and supplier markup. Jobbers often provide counseling and other support services which justify this markup, their markups.

Looking ahead, the market evolves, and new pricing methods are being offered by suppliers. Jobbers and dealers now have the option of index-based pricing. Formula deals which are based upon pricing index quotes (Argus, Platts, OPIS) plus a set differential markup per terminal.
Pricing indexes are services that monitor the cash market transactions within a given spot market, typically New York Harbor.

In conclusion, it is obvious this proposal is well intentioned and intended to benefit consumers and retailers alike. However, at this point it is obsolete.

The vagueness of the legislation could have the unintended consequences of limiting pricing options and future innovation. The gasoline market is vibrant, robust and extremely competitive. Let free market forces prevail.

Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you so much for your testimony here today. Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): One quick question and I know this is, we’ve had this issue over the years. And it always comes back to us in the sense that we hear from your constituents and other folks that travel on the roadways, why the difference in pricing when gas stations that are very close to each other and just cross state line, the pricing can be so disparate, sometimes 25, 30 cents can be normal in terms of the change.

So, as you’ve sort of explained a little bit about how the gas and the petroleum gets from point A to point B through various intermediaries, which is all the details people don’t understand that side of the business, it’s not communicated how it’s done. Even for us to get a handle on it all the time and be experts on it is, is difficult.
At the end of the day all you see is that when you travel the roadways you cross one county into the next or two towns separated by a town line and the price differential is so difficult.

How, how does that occur when you’re talking about offering price flexibility? It doesn’t seem to jive for a state that is so small. I can understand if we were out west and we were traveling hundreds of miles, but we’re talking less than 10 miles, sometimes less than 5 miles and the price can be quite substantial to the point that people will drive that extra distance to get the cheaper gas.

So, the price flexibility you might be providing may not necessarily be getting to the person you’re intending to get to because people are traveling somewhere else.

KEN COOMES: Understood. And I think what you do have to be aware of is the development over the time of the big box merchants.

So, typically as independent business people, dealers are free to set their prices however they see fit. We haven’t had price controls probably since the late 1970s when the market was deregulated. At that time, the maximum margin was 16.8 cents, and everybody made the maximum margin.

So, take into fact what establishes retail is competitive forces. So, if you have the misfortune of being a retailer in account with a big box, Costa, a Stop & Shop, you have to realize that their advantages in pricing fuel is, it’s not their primary line of business, it’s a secondary line. And it’s often used as a draw.
The other thing is if these guys, these larger institutions have trading departments and they have, they have people working the commodities market in conjunction with the retail to give you that good offer. Retail, most of the retail dealers and distributors aren’t quite that sophisticated yet.

So, it’s a case where they use economy as a scale, they use it to their advantage and that could lead to the thing. And based upon what I heard earlier, I mean, I think it’s wonderful that you guys are here and acting on behalf of your, as advocates for your constituents to bring in the lowest price fuel available, I just think, in my personal opinion respectfully that this regulation doesn’t achieve that. To accomplish what you’re looking to achieve would require price controls at the retail level. And if you open that can, then you’re looking at, is the $2.69 gonna come down to $2.49 or is that gonna allow the guy at $2.49, is it gonna make him raise to $2.69?

So, I think it opens up potentially a slippery slope to go down the road of retail price controls.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Hwang, followed by Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for being here. I want to thank you for being here, but I also want to hang on what you said in closing when you said, this bill would be counter to free market activities.

So, so take me through that and why you think that would hamper an open marketplace competition; like your station, do you not check the prices of your competitor down the street? Do you not try to match
up and provide equal services? This would be the antithesis of price control.

So, share with me some of the rationale that you have in saying that, you know, the current system is a free market system?

KEN COOMES: So, to address your point, typically at a retail location, a number of surrounding sites are surveyed typically on a daily basis. And you attempt to remain competitive with that. You know, obviously each station has a profit ultimate ability. I have retail dealers that buy from me, none of whom are in pricing zones, they are all rack price deals. And the counsel that I give my dealers is to find, you have a line of profit, you have a line of volume, and what you want to do is to price your fuel accordingly where those lines intersect, where you can do the most amount of volume at a reasonable return and meet your objectives.

So, with that said, in, in some instances, there are, there are, you know, there are disparities in classes of trade. There are disparities between jobbers and retailers, we’re the big box people. But this is something our industry has always had. And it’s not gonna go away any soon. Now, with, with some transparency, typically it’s relatively easy. If you want to find out supplier rack prices there’s numerous services that will show you wholesale costs.

There are, but that doesn’t essentially go into, you know, other costs to people who have done trades based on the NYMEX or other commodities instruments. So, it’s not, it’s not cut and dry. And I think again what’s concerning here and I think from, from a standpoint is, let’s say I’ve got a deal with one
of my dealers and he’s, we did tank replacement and he’s a little slow to open, I might go in an offer him what we call in the industry a temporary voluntary allowance or a temporary competitive allowance. Something to say, okay, for a certain amount of time, you know, I’m gonna, I’m gonna waive my margin. I’m gonna work with you. You’re gonna price aggressively and we’re gonna restore sales.

And I just feel that in the vaguity of the bill, I might not be able to do that because it’s, it doesn’t, you know, again, we have, at the federal level we have Robinson Patman to make sure that one class of, you know, that a class of traders is treated fairly. And we’re not sure with the vague language of the bill how that’s, how that’s gonna affect our ability to meet the needs of our, my customers.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): As I asked before, I, I don’t see your testimony. It said here that it was late in coming. Will you be able to leave testimony?

KEN COOMES: Yes.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Okay. And, and maybe I missed it early on. What is your business and, and what is your role in this business? Are you a distributor?

KEN COOMES: I’m employed by a distributor, yes, sir.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Okay.

KEN COOMES: The background, I started pumping gas in the late ‘70s, while I was in high school. Subsequently, I went to back through school and in 1986 I purchased an AAMCO franchise in Middletown,
Connecticut. AAMCO withdrew and sold me the property. I was there for over 22 years. I had a second location for about five years. I left and I went to work for Aldin Associates as a wholesale marketing representative. I sell fuel to customers that are like I was, the mom and pop operators. And I’ve had that, I’ve held that position now for 10 years.

So, I wear a lot of different hats with the company. I’m involved with logistics, transportation. I’m involved with helping my customers succeed. I’m involved with helping them comply with environmental regulations.

So, when we, when we have a markup, I’d like to think that my presence, we bring a value added service to our retailers for, for our markup.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And I appreciate the value that you bring and your grassroots experience, it is valued to the clients you serve. So, it’s actually very helpful for me, for you representing a distributor. And really for me it’s about consumer, you know, free market and also transparency.

So, in representing distributors as you go to different, you cover the whole state, correct?

KEN COOMES: Yeah, I cover the whole state.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So, do you have a zone map?

KEN COOMES: No, sir. No, sir.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So, what you’re saying is, you, the distributors do not have a zone map?

KEN COOMES: We don’t and there are and based on my knowledge of some of the operations of other
distributors, relatively safe to say that they don’t either.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So, how do you define different areas with different prices? As, as Chairman Lemar cited earlier, the, the discrepancy in regards to pricing between New Haven to Milford to Fairfield are distinct. I don’t think it’s a market reaction. I would tend to think that if the consumer of the gas dealerships are looking at that pricing, they would definitely look to compete.

I will tell you that the gas stations in, in Orange would very dearly love to be able to compete with the gasoline prices in Milford. And I would offer to you that house gas dealers in Fairfield would rather keep their customers than have them drive up to Milford.

So, let me repeat again, you’re saying to me that you do not have a zone map that delineates specific geographical areas that’s available to you or available to this committee?

KEN COOMES: That is correct, sir. And with regard to Milford, I’d like to make the statement, in that Milford market, you’ve got numerous big box retailers, you’ve got Costco, which does tremendous volume. The Costco, and I have a dealer account in Milford at the Old Gate Lane exit that’s a low volume account with a convenience store and they struggle. But the competition for them is brutal. They’ve got Costco, you’ve got a Stop & Shop down there and you’ve also got Pilot, which is a very, very large chain. And again, we get into the, we get into the things of economy and scale at scale and what they can do.
In a case like, in a case of like Pilot, they’ll be more aggressive on gas sales because their focus is selling diesel fuel and getting people into the store facilities.

So, so as far as why is Milford so aggressively priced, I think it’s, it’s based on the, the set, the current configuration of the market, sir.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Current configuration, how so?

KEN COOMES: Retail, retail that you have the presence of Costco, you have a Stop & Shop and you have a Pilot, all large big box competitors. That’s what, that’s what maintains, that’s what causes those lower prices. The rest of the dealers are reacting, follow them or get as close to them as possible without losing money because there are times you’d essentially lose money to match these people. But that’s what, that’s what sets that baseline so low is the presence of your big box retailers in certain markets. Same with the Berlin Turnpike, you’ve got, you’ve got Sam’s Club up there, which is very aggressive, and you had a large chain, well you have, was food bank, that would follow them. And the rest of the competition would strive and aspire to get as close to them as possible, so.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): So, you’re saying there’s no zone map and it’s free market by indicators. So, if I have, I can go to all my dealers gas stations in Fairfield and say to them, go to your distributor, ask for the current pricing that you’re charging Milford because there is no zone pricing blockage in that regard. There is no guideline. What would you say to them, if they all came in mass and said to
you, you know what, I want Milford prices for my gasoline that you’re distributing to me. What would you say to them?

KEN COOMES: What would I say to the dealer? Well, first of all, I’d want to talk to the dealers and just to make sure that, as I alluded, there are still a handful of, of pockets of retail dealers. The biggest exodus when, when Mobile had the largest amount of franchise dealers in Connecticut and they sold to Alliance. Now, those were typical, as I outlined in my speech, lessee/franchisee dealers who paid a dealer tank wagon. Now, Alliance, which is Global, subsequently bought those stations. There could be dealers on, on that paying dealer tank wagon. There also could be some Sunoco’s, there’s a handful of Sunoco direct properties that are leased. But for the most part, the most part, if you own your property, you have the right to control the fuel supply agreement. You’re free to go to a multitude of distributors and negotiate a deal.

Now, I could come to you and say, yes, I could come to you, if, if, if you control the supply agreement, let’s say you could reach out to me and say, okay, what can you do for me? Because typically if I were to address you, I would talk to you and say, what, what are your needs? Are you looking to do improvements, we can help you with that, we can provide financing. But essentially, what I’m gonna provide is, I’m gonna provide you the rack, the posted rack price for the supplier, whatever Exxon Mobile branded supplier, based on New Haven, Connecticut terminal, that posted price is verifiable every day in DPN fast tracks, Opus, you can see that price every day. I add in, we use a common carrier. So, I add in a price for freight
and it’s typically a mileage based component based on time and distance. And the other, the other additional item is my markup. What, what do I have to markup.

So, obviously, if I’m making an investment in the station for the dealer, if I’m gonna help him with tanks. I’m gonna give him basically zero percent financing, there’s, there’s some provisions I have to factor that in to my market, the calculations could make that viable. But as a dealer, you have every right. Now, as a distributor, I could also go to you and say, sir, I’m gonna, I’m gonna give you so much money and I’m gonna charge you dealer tank wagon price. Well, it’s really, it’s caveat emptor, it’s, it’s, I almost fell into this pit when I bought my location in 1987. I had, I was, I was young, AAMCO withdrew. They said, we’re giving, you know, we’re, I was in business two weeks, they withdrew from Connecticut. And they said, you know, we don’t know what’s gonna happen to you. I was on the hook for a lot of money. Well, the end of the year went by. They offered the property, I bought it and I was all set. I had a distributor that waived a $40,000 pop, you know, lump sum in front of me for a dealer tank wagon deal. And I needed the money and I almost was gonna take it and it was actually another distributor, Mike Devino, from Mercury Oil who came in and said, Ken, whatever you do, we might not do business, but make sure you get a rack price deal, a rack plus deal. And I swear to God, if I had, and I heeded his advice and at the time I had a deal for delivered rack plus two-and-a-half cents, New Haven, Gulf terminal. Had I taken that other deal, I would have been out of business. And who’s fault would it have been? Mine, because I
didn’t educate myself, so. So, that’s my personal story.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you for sharing that. Now, obviously, your markup, which is what you just described as the differential --

KEN COOMES: Yes.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): -- it’s proprietary, it’s how you do business, I understand that. And, and we have a bill right now that’s talking about eliminating zone pricing. But in listening to you, what I’m hearing is, there’s really no zone pricing map or restriction.

So, maybe through the Chairs, we may not even need a bill, but perhaps maybe letting the gas stations in Stamford, Greenwich, Fairfield go to their distributors and say, you know what, you know, I’d like to get Milford’s price. So, so maybe we just don’t even propose a bill and we make it say, hey, we don’t have zone pricing because you don’t have a map and you don’t really have that kind of a conscious effort in regards to price control. Then perhaps we should serve to educate all of those gasoline dealers in that area to say to their distributors, you know, there’s no legislative prohibition. I’m gonna strike the best deal and talk to you as a distributor and say, give me Milford’s price.

KEN COOMES: But I think, the other thing that you have to -- the fact remains with these individual properties, does the dealer, ultimately, does the dealer own the property or is he operating a business? In which case, when, when, when I signed on as an AAMCO franchisee it was understood. They
own the service station. I leased it from them. And I also bought my requirements of fuel from them. So, that was a condition where, and at that time it’s like, this is AAMCO’s price, this is what you’re gonna pay.

So, in an instance where you might have a handful of dealers down there that don’t control the underlying supply of the, of the location. But for the most part, generally speaking, the majority of your dealers that would, that would apply. They’re free to go out and talk to multiple suppliers and there’s a lot of us out there, it’s competitive. And they’re free to educate themselves and get the best deal that’s possible.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, I appreciate that. And I appreciate that you’re having this opportunity. But I’m hearing this, I’m very encouraged to be able to say to our consumers and to those gas stations, you can go strike a deal. You, you go back to your distributors and you say, you know what, there’s really no prohibition, there’s really no guideline, let’s talk about striking the best possible deal we can for my consumers, for my own business to attract customers, use it possibly as a market leader to come in. I think it’s very encouraging to have these kind of learning process that truly maybe we have a real open marketplace that the consumer and the dealers have not utilized with the distributors.

So, I want to thank you for your time on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

KEN COOMES: Thanks.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Ken. And then we’ll move over to Senator Haskell for a minute. I just
want to say that you’ve been more open, I think, in your 20 minutes here than we’ve in prior experiences on this conversation. And my degree is in behavioral economics and I wish it was in more practical applications of economic theory, but it, I’m not gonna lie to you, I think Senator Hwang and I went down the same road of thought as you were speaking, that there does appear to be an artificial market inflation somewhere in this system that is leading to higher prices. And we’re maybe going down the wrong road of approaching how to manage that artificial market inflation.

KEN COOMES: And again, I think in the certain market’s address, I think you’re looking at more so is it artificially high. You’re maybe looking at more so artificially low in subsidized prices by the big box establishments.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for being here, sir, and for your openness in talking about your business.

I, along with our Chair and Senator Hwang, was incredibly surprised to find out that there is not a map that you utilize because we have a host of people signed up to testify today against S.B. 419, not on the grounds it would be obsolete, but on the grounds that it would undermine their economic model and how to distribute gas in the State of Connecticut.

So, I think it’s certainly an interesting conversation. I would want to home in on a few adjectives that you used at the very close of your testimony. You said the gasoline market is vibrant
and robust. I would not object to those two adjectives. It certainly is because we all rely on this every single day, whether you’re a student or a retiree or somebody who’s commuting to work every day. We don’t have much of an option, but to engage in a vibrant and robust gasoline market.

The adjective that I object to is extremely competitive. It does not feel extremely competitive when a retailer in Stamford is forced to pay 50 or even 60 cents more than a retailer in Rocky Hill per gallon that is.

And I guess what I don’t understand is how it can be described as competitive when ultimately it’s the, it’s the larger companies that are forced into that price, that are, that are creating that markup from the rack price that you reference in your testimony.

Could you explain a little bit about what you find competitive in that?

KEN COOMES: Well, again, we basically get back into the varying classes of trades. So, we have the big box marketers, the Stop & Shops, the Costco’s, the BJ’s, we have those now and they are top competitions. We have large independent chains like Cumberland Farms. They’re not a refiner, but they’re very large. They build beautiful units, they’re expanding like crazy. We have large distributors like Reliance Energy. And, and, and the other thing of note is our industry is undergoing a kind of consolidation where the distributors are all being rolled up into one and becoming larger entities, which may, or time will tell whether or not that’s a good thing.
But we’re talking again, with the percentage of the market, the, the, the class that you’re talking, your talking very few numbers of dealers that would actually be in a situation in a franchisee/lessee agreement where they are obligated to buy fuel for their supplier at dealer tank wagon price.

Now, I know in some instances where majors divested stations, the dealer, they were divested with supply agreements, but typically they were based on, on rack plus deal.

So, again, the overall grand scheme of the market place and how your break down your retail establishments that one class is, is a very small, is a very small portion that, that would even be paying to a tank wagon, so. And really not large enough to affect, you know, any, anything on a broad scale.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, thank you for your testimony today.

KEN COOMES: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. I had to step out, so I didn’t hear all of your testimony.

So, how many different distributors do you have in this state that you all buy from?

KEN COOMES: How many, how many suppliers do we buy from?

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Or are there any in Connecticut?
KEN COOMES: In Connecticut that offer product at the rack? If you take into account some, some, like a company like Shell offers product unbranded and unbranded bases, Irving’s the same way, we’ve probably got over 20, access to 20 different suppliers in the New Haven rack market.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): And you as a retailer, who sell to the consumer, able to buy from any one of them?

KEN COOMES: In the instance where if the, if it’s a branded outlet, Exxon Mobile, where we display the trademark Sunoco, I’m buying branded, I am buying branded tank wagon based on their posted dealer tank wagon price. If it’s an unbranded location, I have free reign to shop wherever I can get it, wherever I can get it at the lowest price.

Typically, with the brandeds, over the course, there’s times where the differentials fall, but it’s generally about on regular unleaded maybe a 5 cent differential between unbranded and published low rack and branded, and branded rack.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Just one last question. Does the distributors, one, have a zone pricing map, would they?

KEN COOMES: No, no, sir. As far as, you know, as far as with our company, we have one location in New Haven that we operate directly and the rest of our locations are all commission agents, we have 18. And there’s no, there’s no map. Basically, the prices are established by my boss, the COO of Aldin, getting retail price surveys from every location on a daily basis and adjusting accordingly, so. But
there is no zone. There is no map that entail zones.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Ken.

KEN COOMES: Thank you.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you again, Ken, for your testimony here today.

KEN COOMES: Thank you very much. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Ron McLelland, followed by Joe Sculley.

RON MCLELLAND: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the Transportation Committee. My name’s Ron McLelland. I’m President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent SCIU, Local 511. We represent over 3,600 state workers, approximately 1,500 of which are Department of Transportation maintainers. These transportation maintainers plow our state roads, perform critical highway repair and maintenance work in our state. And we’re proud to provide quality public services for the citizens of Connecticut. I’m providing testimony today in support of House Bill 6392, AN ACT CONCERNING WORK ZONE SAFETY. I want to bring your attention to, there are two other testimonies submitted by Louis Powell and Chris Troutman, both DOT maintainers, Chris Troutman was the worker who was hit two weeks ago on Route 9. Really compelling testimony. I urge you to look it over.

The men and women who work for the Connecticut Department of Transportation, highway operations are continuously in danger of being injured or killed by motor vehicles in our highway work zones. Motorists
also sustain injury and loss of life in work zone accidents. The most recent data from January 1, 2017 to December 31st, 2017, indicates 1,131 crashes occurred in Connecticut highway work zones. Of that group, four motorist fatalities, two worker fatalities and 88 injuries. Other injuries are not always reported or recorded. And there’s many other times when work zones are compromised and it doesn’t get reported.

The major factor contributing to this problem is the driving culture in our state, a reduced trooper presence and lack of enforcement gives motorists free reign to disregard posted speed limits and signage. Drivers are aggressive and distracted with a myriad of electronic devices. This nonsense does not stop when they see a work zone.

The legislature specifically, the Transportation Committee has recognized this problem and has worked with us over the past 10 years to improve work zone safety. There are now tough fines and statutory crimes for endangering, injuring or killing a worker in a work zone.

However, the lack of enforcement has made this an ineffective approach. The State of Maryland has implemented a comprehensive work zone safety system, called Maryland Safe Zones. The work zone safety system is one example of a model that should be considered to permanently change how motorists drive through work zones in Connecticut.

We have submitted written attachments that include Maryland safe zone model, highlights and statutes as well as information regarding Connecticut statutes that reference the highway work zone safety issue. These workers are not just statistics, they are
mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. Their families depend on their income and need them to come home safe at the end of the day.

It is our duty and responsibility to protect the workers that maintain our highways. The cost of a safety program is always an issue. However, the cost to a family due to a death or a life altering injury is immeasurable. At the end of the day, safety programs save money and protect people.

I ask the members of this committee to support House Bill 6392, AN ACT CONCERNING WORK ZONE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT. Thanks for your time and consideration.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Ron. And thank you to all your members who’ve been out quite a few hours over the last 36 hours, I know wanted to be here today, but we had other requirements for them as a state and they are living up to their obligations and their duties really well. And I had a chance to look at Mr. Powell’s testimony and it is, as you mentioned, quite compelling testimony. And I think it’s gonna, if people read it, will be reminded, oh, right, I’ve heard of other stories similar to this over the last number of years.

And it is true, whether it’s you and I going home late at night or friends of ours, you know, going to work in the morning, that there were numerous occasions where we see just irresponsible drivers who are jeopardizing not only their lives, but those of us on the road, but more directly, those of us who are working on the sides of the roads to keep our highway safe and travel both and all vanes and hours of the day. So, I want to say thank you to you and your members. But also, if you have a
chance, talk to Mr. Powell, and I know how well that testimony will be received by this committee and thank them again for --

RON MCLELLAND: I appreciate that, and they do as well.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Morin.

REP. MORRIS (140TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the leaders of the committee for raising this bill and allowing it to have a public hearing. In years past, this committee has always taken a positive hand in, in trying to work with these workers and come up with legislation that was fair and and would help protect them.

And Ron, I just want to touch base. Often times people are not, I talk to them about this bill. I say, well, there’s always state troopers on, on projects and, and on DOT construction projects that is the case. That’s built into the cost of the contract. Can you explain to me how often it happens, if you know, on maintenance projects?

RON MCLELLAND: So, the private contractors that do road maintenance and improvements, the cost of a trooper on the scene is written into the RFP of the project. So, there is funding for that trooper and we typically do see that.

On our state work sites, where our state DOT maintainers work, occasionally there is a trooper. There is a fund called Big Orange that does try to fund some enforcement in the work zones. It’s not enough. It’s really sporadic. It’s only for the construction season. And we’ve tried to increase that funding. And looking at the, looking at the Maryland model, I think one of the keys and the key
piece that I really want the committee to take away is money is always an issue. I can’t in my mind, where measuring the safety and health of these workers against the funding, but we do have a mechanism to fund enforcement and that is the very folks that are being irresponsible in driving through those work zones are gonna pay in fractions. And in other states what they’ve done is they’ve taken that revenue and used it to keep the program going and keep that enforcement out there. If we lose that revenue source, then we’ve done our job.

REP. MORRIS (140TH): Mr. Chairman, this is not, and I want to be clear, this is not a mentality of got you, where we just want to go out and, this is not a money grab. This is, I would wish, prefer we didn’t even have to do this. I wish people would drive through work zones and when they see those signs that you’re entering a work zone. I can tell you this, I spend a lot of time on the road in my other job. And when I approach a work zone and I slow down, people are riding right on me. I put my four ways on, people are riding on me, they’re getting aggressive, they’re angry that I’m slowing down. It’s, it’s a real issue. They’re cutting over. I, I really wish that there was an opportunity for a couple of the men and women that do this job every day to come here and address this. I know there’s only a few of us here. But I think if you had a chance to listen to the things that they go through, whether it’s pothole patching on I95 in Fairfield or on Route 136 on a little winding road, where they’re trying to do something, the dangers are real.

I used to make a kind of like tongue and cheek in the previous meetings that we should hold the Transportation Committee meeting on the side of an
interstate highway where I’m sure they would be happy to put some cones up in the breakdown lane so we could stand there. And just the feeling of, of a vehicle blowing by you at that speed, it’s very unnerving. And yet these folks, they know what their job is, they do it every day. But I think we really need to step up and start making people aware that they just can’t drive haphazardly through these work zones.

So, thank you, Ron for coming and please extend my thanks to the folks that wrote testimony.

RON MCLELLAND: I will. And you raise a really good issue and that is, it is the driving culture now that’s the problem. We have the ability to change that culture. And the example I’ll give is, driving under the influence culture is nowhere near what it was 20 or 30 years ago, right? We did some things to turn peoples thinking around. And I’m happy to see that, you know, there are services like Lyft and Uber that people take advantage of. But people are much less likely today to get in a car impaired than they were 20 or 30 years ago.

We need to send that message to the public that when you see that work zone, when you see those lights, you see that signage, you have to slow down and if you don’t, you’re gonna pay a price for it.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here and an extended thank you to the men and women that are out there working on our behalf because safety is absolutely critical and essential.
Can you talk a little bit about the use of technology. What would be some additional utilization of technology, maybe the flashing signs, the lights or what would be some of the technology to really kind of send a loud and clear signal for people driving through that zone?

RON MCLELLAND: So, to my knowledge there are various devices. There are speed monitoring devices. The lighting is an issue that gets into, into some legal issues about legally what color lights you can have because I know there’s been that debate. In the example that I cited with Maryland and Maryland Safe Zones, they actually use an e-ticketing laser or combination laser-camera system to and it’s, you know, it’s, it’s got an officer that’s monitoring it. It actually monitors cars going through the work zone and it’s set for a certain span of, amount of miles over the limit. It takes pictures of cars. It generates infractions that have to go again through law enforcement and have infractions issued.

So, there are a number of technologies that have been developed.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): And we talked about enforcement and obviously in all the sites as we drive through them, there is law enforcement officials there, right, that are sitting through at, at any work site location, is that correct?

RON MCLELLAND: That’s correct for some. And as I stated earlier, when we have private contractors doing jobs, it is in the RFP and in the bid process it’s part of the contract that the cost of having a trooper on the scene is written into the contract.
But for our state maintainers, for the most part, they don’t have a trooper out there. We’d have to have a lot of troopers in order to, in order to do that. If you think about how many districts and how many garages and how many jobs are going on at the same time.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I know in my local municipalities when there are work site projects, there’s always a local police and maybe this is something that I need to learn through the committee and the LCO is the fact that they’re always outside of their cars in a visible presence. Is there a prohibition to, to law enforcement officials that are on those highway work sites that they have to remain in the car? Because I very rarely see them outside at a visible, you know, presence like your fellow members that are working. Is there a prohibition against them coming out of the cars and, and being a visible presence?

RON MCLELLAND: I would not be the person to ask, but for the most part a trooper protecting a work zone on a limited access highway, you’re gonna see them in the car. I believe it’s a safety precaution because the difference between standing out on a road, on a secondary road, and a limited access highway where the traffic is, you know, exceeding 60, 70 miles an hour, is two different things. So, I would, I would reach out to the state police and I’m sure they could --

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Well, I think, that’s why I asked the question. Maybe there is a deterrent or safety issue, which brings back to the focus of what this bill was saying is, your employees are not
protected, they are quite vulnerable and they’re doing the job on behalf of the community.

So, I want to thank you all for being, thank you for being here. But I also want to extend a special thanks to Representative Morin for raising this bill and being such a champion on your behalf on this issue. So, thank you.

RON MCLELLAND: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative McGorty.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, thanks for coming in today. The good Senator answered, asked one of the questions I wanted answered about the technology. But you did mention Maryland. Are there any other states that do this kind of monitoring?

RON MCLELLAND: To my knowledge, I believe there is somewhere between 10 and 19, if I have my numbers correct.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Okay.

RON MCLELLAND: I know Illinois is in the process of instituting an electronic monitoring system in the work zones. I think you’re gonna see more that are limited to just the work zones.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Okay. All right. That’s good. I travel about 56 miles one way coming here every day and I see the guys out on the Wilbur Cross and the Merritt Parkway, they’re doing tree work also on 91. And I do see people going, you know, really fast up to it and then when the lanes merge down, I see the people actually come right up to the back of that first truck that says, lane closed. And, you know, they’re right on them. It’s really
dangerous and I know that the troopers are there protecting the scene for some construction sites. But I know that should somebody go by at a high rate of speed, I do believe a trooper is not gonna get in their car and go chase this person because then they would leave that scene unprotected, where they’re protecting those people. But maybe there could be a little added to that that the state police be on that and when they see them coming up, they radio and they have kind of like a squad there, just pulling people over left and right. And maybe that would send the message, you know, how they do it. I travel around, my daughter goes to school at the University of Alabama and I travel that highway down there and I see how they do work zones and if you’re going over 45, and that’s what is posted, they’re gonna get you at 46 or 47 miles an hour. They don’t mess around. And I know, you know, we don’t have room on the Merritt Parkway and Wilbur Cross to pull people over, but sometimes maybe we do that a couple of times, people will slow down. And thank you for coming in and thanks for looking out for the safety of our state workers.

RON MCELLELAND: Thank you. And you raise a really good point and that is to have really good enforcement, you need a trooper to protect the work zone and another one as a chase vehicle as well and, you know, that gets down to the amount of troopers available and staffing as well.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): And that it does. But once in a while, maybe a little task force go out like they do for the, around the holidays for the DWI’s, maybe just work zone safety kind of little sting type of thing.
RON MCLELLAND: You’re speaking to the choir here.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): We’re on TV, so hopefully they’re listening. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Thanks for the testimony. Thank you to Representative Morin for bringing this to our attention, as he does so many times in the past and really work, work safety issues. I think you just mentioned a lot of the things that we have to be worried about, especially with the law enforcement side, the chase vehicles and so forth. I was gonna make that point. I’m glad you made it for me about you may have a trooper on site, but if they go chasing one individual, A, they leave it unprotected and every other person gets away scot free. So, there’s got to be a method to the madness there. So, we will work with our public safety committee members and talk with them from the law enforcement side to see how we can bring the two committees together to craft the right legislation.

But I think the most important thing you mentioned was the culture, the mindset of people on the roads these days. I think everyone is just using the roadways to get from point A to point B in the fastest way possible and not always paying attention to the rules of the road or who’s there in front of you. Because I can’t tell you how many times either I’ve been passed or if you do move over ahead of where the work zone is, there’s always a countless number of people that want to just drive by you to get that extra three cars’ length in front of you so they can keep on moving quickly. And it’s really all about the cultures.
So, we need to find a way to deter that so that they know there is a workplace safety issue. And I think finally as a, a comment on state of affairs, the fact that you have done such a good job, you and your workers, we take for granted that the roadways work as well as they do or that you’re making improvements as you go in the middle of all this traffic, it’s not like you have the luxury to shut something down all the time, fix it properly and then, and then do the next one. Many times you have to do it while it’s already being utilized. And I think people are just, become accustomed to the fact it somehow gets done and no one gets hurt. And we now hear that that’s not always the case.

So, we have some support for this effort. We just want to do it in the right way, and we look to working with you to make sure we do it right. So, thank you.

RON MCLELLAND: Thank you very much. And I just want to extend to, if any of the committee members, you know, those who aren’t in attendance, if they ever want to get a window into their experience, we’d be happy to get those workers and meet with you and they can tell you stories all day long. They’re not good stories, but they are compelling and give us the energy and the drive to do what we need to do.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): I will take you up on that. I’d love to visit the maintenance facility down in New Haven and certainly hear from folks whenever I can.

RON MCLELLAND: I appreciate that. And frankly, look, I think you were referencing Maryland to the potential opportunity inherent in their legislative
language and package, they developed an advertising campaign that they, you know, promoted pretty broadly. And, you know, those old commercials where they had maintenance workers and having cars running through peoples kitchens, and just trying to show an example of what it meant to have, you know, that rate of speed that close to you in your daily work life. Like that was, I think, pretty compelling testimony. Only had enough money to go out nationally to the federal government for about a six-month period. But Maryland’s developing their own infomercials in sort of like really targeted advertising to really get to problem drivers and help illustrate the problem.

So, I think, you know, help illustrate that this is not a revenue grab, maybe those revenues that we would gain as part of that ticketing program can be redirected directly into marketing programs that help create safety and maybe sends a positive message to our folks that we’re not doing this just to -- just trying to protect safety. Thank you.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Thanks.

RON MCLELLAND: Thanks a lot.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Joe Sculley, followed by Mike Bahme.

JOE SCULLEY: Chairman Lemar, Chairman Leone, Ranking Member Martin, and committee members. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 713, AN ACT CONCERNING OPEN REST AREAS. I would like to thank Senator Osten for introducing this bill, which was ultimately referred here.

A couple of years ago funding was cut for rest areas to the point where they are only staffed from 8:30
a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for the state owned rest areas. The buildings are locked otherwise. The problem, one of the problems with that is commercial truck drivers have to take mandatory rest breaks per federal hours of service rules at all times in the day. It depends on, you know, when did they start their clock. They all start at different times. If varies from company to company.

So, they need rest outside of this window of 8:30 to 3. For your reference, generally the rules are that you have to take a 30 minutes off within your first 8 hours of driving and then once your 14 hour on duty period is over, you have to take 10 hours off. So, the drivers would go back into the, into the sleeper cab and sleep for at least 8 hours.

Now, Connecticut has a severe shortage of safe truck parking. We know this because of studies that have been done by the Federal Highway Administration under a law called Jason’s Law. Somewhat sadly, Jason’s Law was named after a truck driver named Jason. This was down in South Carolina, but there was no safe parking left. He had to park in an abandoned lot somewhere. Someone broke into his truck, robbed, killed him. He had $7 on him. So, that’s where this study of what can we do to provide more safe truck parking.

I would point out that the news reports from a couple of years ago when funding was cut it said the state would save $2 million dollars. So, $2 million dollars out of this fiscal year’s special transportation fund budget is 0.1 percent. It’s such a small amount of money that will come out of a fund, which is heavily funded by the, by the taxes and fees paid by the trucking industry. I feel like
it’s the least we can do to show respect for our truck drivers out there, who have a difficult job. You know, this would just ensure that they have clean restroom facilities to use before and after their break and then they’ll be on their way. It’s not much money and besides aiding truck drivers, I think it would benefit tourism as well. So, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you today for your testimony. And it’s not just you, I think it’s constituents throughout the State of Connecticut who recognize the loss by having the rest stops close at 3:30 p.m. Any questions? Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you, Joe. Thanks for testifying on behalf of the truckers. You guys do so much and as a whole and industry, you guys do a pretty good job and sometimes you get beat up. So, I give you kudos there. The only question that I would love to see the rest stops open more. And obviously we have to find the funding. Hopefully we can address that this year. I guess for the public, anyone who might be listening, where do your truckers, if the rest area is closed, what’s their only other alternative? Do they have to pull over either before they’re scheduled to mandatorily pull over or they have to pull over on the side of the road and park, which in itself is a dangerous thing to do. Would that be a fair statement?

JOE SCULLEY: Yeah, I mean, either of those things could happen. I would, in fairness I would say that even though the funding has been, been cut. The area is still accessible. And when I drive by the Willington’s most often and I still see trucks in
there, but I, I just think it’s, it’s a, it’s a safety and a security risk by having this unsupervised area. In terms of if there was literally no space, whether it’s at a state owned rest area or a commercial one, if they have time left on their, on their clock in the hours that the federal government says they can drive. They’ll keep going and look for another legal space. If it gets to the point where they’re going to hit the maximum number of hours, I think what most drivers would be inclined to do is find the next best option. Is it a highway on ramp, off ramp, spot in a shopping mall. The best thing they can do because once you go over your hours, now that we have the electronic logging device mandate from the federal government which basically says you can’t use paper logs anymore, you have to, you have to use a computer that’s tied to your engine, you get penalized for that.

So, it’s almost like pick one, are you going to violate your hours or, in search of safe parking, or are you gonna find the best parking situation that you can, even though it may not be legal. So, especially in the northeast, including in Connecticut, that’s the dilemma that we face.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you for articulating that because I don’t think everyone’s always aware. So, that is helpful for the discussion. So, thank you for your testimony.

JOE SCULLEY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Representative Carney.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you very much. Thank you, Joe for testifying. I apologize, I came in
just as you were finishing up. So, you may have mentioned this, but I’m just curious, you know, I’ve been trying to reopen the rest areas for, for, ever since the one in West Brook closed. You know, it’s very frustrating to see it closed.

So, one of the things that I explored is certainly, and I know that one of these, I think it’s H.B. 5162, looking to see alternative funding for these welcome centers. One of the things I’ve been exploring is, is trying to change federal law. Are you aware of the federal law that prohibits the commercialization of these welcome centers?

JOE SCULLEY: Yeah, I am aware of that and we would be onboard with, with changing that law. It just makes so much sense. Does the state need to be doing this, no. Let’s let a third-party take care of it, the private partnership which we are striving for more of those, I believe.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Do you know if there’s any effort on, on like a national trucking level to change that law?

JOE SCULLEY: I can tell you that the, there’s a group called the National Association of Truck Stop Operators, who represent the big chains. And they are opposed to that for, for reasons that you can probably imagine, I won’t get into that. But we, we don’t agree with that. They’re not, they’re not members of ours, but besides that, again, it just makes so much sense to open this up. And, and, and let the private sector provide a service here.

REP. CARNEY (23RD): Thank you so much for bringing that point up about large chains. Because I believe that is, I believe that is why this law had not
changed and there’s been hesitance in congress to change this law is because of all of those stores that you would go to upon exiting the highway. I did speak at length with Congressman Courtney and he and a congressman from Indiana, I can’t remember his name, but he was a Republican, Courtney is a Democrat, did put in legislation to try to update this law. I don’t think it’s been updated in a very long time. And I think it’s, it’s about time that we do so, especially for states that are unable to commercialize their welcome centers, like Connecticut, and then see them close. You know, it’s really important, I think to the trucking industry, tourism industry, to get these, these welcome centers open because right now they’re just blight on our highways and it’s a shame to see that in the State of Connecticut.

So, I appreciate your efforts to, to reopen these welcome centers, whether through the state or through a public-private partnership, which I think would actually the better way to go if we can change that federal law. But I do appreciate you testifying today.

JOE SCULLEY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Seeing no other questions, thank you, Joe.

JOE SCULLEY: Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Next up Mike Bahme. Is Mike not here? Okay. We’ll move on. Greg Allard, followed by Joe Miller.

GREG ALLARD: Good afternoon, Senator Leone, Senator Martin and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. I thank you for allowing
me to speak today. My name’s Greg Allard, I’m a Vice President with American Ambulance Service out of Norwich, Connecticut.

Today, I’m here to talk to you about Senate Bill 66 and my opposition to that bill. In my 27 years of service in EMS, I can say with confidence that people that require a stretcher are patients. The simple fact that they require a stretcher means that there is some sort of underlying condition. Because of that underlying condition, these patients deserve medical monitoring by trained professionals, professionals in the event something should occur.

The company I work for again, American Ambulance Service, does a few transports a year for people requiring transports to funerals, weddings and other important life events. We typically do these for no charge.

We also conduct the Sentimental Journey Program with the Center for Hospice Care in Norwich, and these journeys are typically four hours, four-hour excursions and are done for free.

My counterparts in like services also do these types of trips with great infrequency. Ambulance services use stretchers every day, multiple times a day. The frequency for which these funeral, wedding and other life event trips occur would be very infrequent and if livery services that are looking to introduce this type of business, this line of stretcher van into a business would lead to safety concerns due to the lack of proficiency with such, such equipment.

Testimony earlier mentioned something about an OLR report. And back in 2012, after the publishing of this OLR research report in 2011, the legislature
actually passed a bill to allow stretcher vans in the State of Connecticut and that was done in special session.

It was done so in part as a potential savings to the Medicaid system. And all of this was for naught as further research by the state departments involved in this, DSS and DOT, realized that there was no savings in the implementation and thus it was revoked.

A topic continues to come forward, as you all know because we’re here today talking on it, for reasons other than savings and I can appreciate the desire of the people putting it in, but with the lack of data that I have not been able to find, I don’t really see that there’s a need. And showing a need is something that EMS professionals are constantly looking for because we’re asked to provide or show that need when we’re looking to expand our services or our places of operation with OEMS.

I did provide testimony, written testimony for you, you have that to look to and refer back to. But that’s really all I have on Senate Bill 66.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Allard and, as you know, we’ve been hearing, we’ve been going back and forth on this. So, I appreciate the testimony. You bring up a, the, the idea of the life events and the data and that you have provided it for free, which I think is great. And that’s, that’s something I have not heard to any real degree other than the testimony today in terms of other members that have brought it up.

So, in regards to data, is there data out there to show us from the industry how many times you’re
providing these, these free life events to counter the argument that it’s, it’s a need that’s not being addressed.

So, it seems like I’m hearing that it is being addressed. I don’t know what that means, one time, how many times you do it versus someone else. So, I guess our committee needs a little bit more data to substantiate or negate whatever or whoever’s got a particular point of view on this. I think data should drive it, but we need good data. And so, I throw that out to you as well as to any other members pro or con on this issue that we need information so that we can make the right decision here.

We’re not sure that we have that decision capability right at this moment, but if you’re telling me that you’re providing free life events, I’d like to know how many times you’re doing that and whereabouts your doing it and so forth so that it can help us with this discussion.

GREG ALLARD:  Sure. As a member of the commercial or the Association of Connecticut Ambulance Providers, we all have that ability to track that data. I certainly can make that ask and we could provide that to you as the Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH):  Thank you.

GREG ALLARD:  You’re welcome. I’d like to take one other moment. The bill that was just testified on, the House Bill 6392, with regards to the safety in the work zones. There is a law in place for the Move Over Law, and I think that EMS or first responders are also part of that as well as the highway work zones. So, if you do do anything, just
keep first responders in mind when you do that for any kind of protection. You know, we appreciate that as well just as much as the highway workers.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Will do. Thank you for that. Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. I just want a little bit more information regarding the Medicare and Medicaid for reimbursements.

So, from what I understand, Medicare, this transportation is paid for. Medicaid, should we go to this service, it would not be covered. Is there any type of reimbursement for Medicaid from the federal government?

GREG ALLARD: So Medicare, this is non-covered Medicare service. So, Medicare pays for ambulance transportation. They do not pay for wheelchair transportation or stretcher van transportation.

So, monies coming from the federal government to offset or subsidize the Medicaid program would not come through in this because it’s non-covered service, they just would not send that money through.

So, the burden for coverage for a stretcher van, for a payment for a stretcher van would be required by the patient themselves, the patient requiring the service or by the Medicaid system in its entirety.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): So, if I hear you correctly, there is no reimbursement from the federal government --

GREG ALLARD: That is correct.-
SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): -- regarding the stretcher service? Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Seeing no others, thank you for the testimony.

GREG ALLARD: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up, Mr. Joe Miller, followed by Doug Low.

JOE MILLER: Good afternoon, Senator Leone, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Joe Miller, I’m with the Curtin Transportation Group. I’m here to testify in support of Senate Bill 66, concerning nonemergency transportation with a stretcher. You have my testimony before you. So, I’d just like to make a few other points.

I actually agree with AMR, who previously testified that patients should not be transported in a stretcher van. We’re talking about the transportation of passengers. My, I’m sorry, in Pennsylvania, you’re allowed to be transported by a stretcher van. My father was, had an episode and was transported by ambulance to the hospital. Today he’s being discharged, he’s being taken home with a stretcher van. This is last days in, there’s no medical necessity for an ambulance. He’s confined to a stretcher. He’s being transported back home with a stretcher van.

Some of the other testimony that was given to you, Department, Department of Public Health is concerned about patient’s safety. Again, we’re talking about passengers. These are people with permanent or temporary disabilities that do not need any type of medical assistance.
The State of New York currently is reimbursed 50 percent of its Medicare stretcher ambulance costs, it’s their code T2005. That information comes from the New York State Department of Public Health Bureau of Transportation and Management. I can give you that contact information. So, in regards to Representative Abercrombie’s testimony, we don’t need an act of congress to get this reimbursement.

This has been going on since 2012, when it was first passed. And since then, issues with safety has come up in addition to the driver must be utilized, we agree with that. Former Senator Gerratana, Senate Bill 345, Amendment A, two sessions ago, the amendment wanted a physician’s permission that stretcher transportation is appropriate. We agree with that as a commonsense approach. We are not in the business of transporting patients or persons with medical needs. We transport passengers, frail passengers daily in our wheelchair vans.

Our staff and staff of the livery industry can be trained to the standards of EMS to transport. It’s 12,000 pages, your EMT manual. Four pages are dedicated to stretcher transportation. We can ensure the safety of that person being transported by stretcher.

In addition, just like any other ambulance company, once we buy and receive that stretcher ambulance, stretcher van, then we would be trained by that manufacturer and a train to trainer process would be implemented just like any other ambulance company or fire department currently utilizes.

New York, again, has livery regulations for stretcher vans. I have a copy of it here I can provide you. There’s four pages outlining stretcher
van transportation within their Medicaid program. Again, it doesn’t take an act of congress.

Tax revenue, privately paid livery transportation will generate approximately $2.7 million dollars biannually. And I apologize, my figures as a savings to the State of Connecticut are $3.4 to $13.3 million biannually. The $13.3 million dollars biannually is from the 2011 OLR report. By listening to the testimony of AMR, I didn’t realize that their ambulance rate was so high with Medicaid. So, the difference, the 50 percent difference would probably be double, so it’s probably a minimum of $6.8 million dollars biannually.

Secondly, I’d like to just mention our support to House Bill 5157, concerning inspections of transportation network, company vehicles. Currently all the for-hire transportation vehicles in the State of Connecticut, taxis, service buses, livery vehicles, student transportation vehicles require an inspection by Motor Vehicle. Bill 17-140 permits TNC’s to self-report that their vehicles are sound and in good working condition. By putting them to a DMV inspection at $20, inconvenience to the person with the vehicle, they can assure passenger safety and then much like taxi cabs, also an on-demand service, biannually subject themselves to a $20 inspection to a licensed garage.

I’ll be happy to take any questions.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Miller. Appreciate the support on your testimony. So, a couple of things, you heard, as we’re talking about Senate bill -- you’ve heard the back and forth some of the arguments for and against. So, this is all about, I shouldn’t say all about. A lot of it is
about Medicare, Medicaid reimbursement. You’re saying it’s being done in other states. Here it’s not being done because it’s not allowed to at the moment, but if it were to pass, you would be looking for Medicare or Medicaid reimbursements, if stretcher vans were to become legal?

JOE MILLER: To be quite honest with you, the company that I work for, we are not involved in a Medicaid Veyo program. We don’t do Medicaid work.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, if --

JOE MILLER: Other companies may, and it would result in that savings to the State of Connecticut.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, if you were to have your stretcher van, you would be charging just to the person, it would be out-of-pocket, I assume?

JOE MILLER: Out of pocket. It would save small businesses money in that worker comp’s costs, if you have somebody gets injured at work, temporary disability, they can’t sit up because of an injury to a hip, they don’t need to have intravenous or any other care while they’re being transported, they just have to get to therapy or to an appointment, they just can’t sit up. We would be able to transport them for that temporary disability. So, that would save small businesses money through their workmen comp’s costs.

If you, if you fell at home and you just, you couldn’t sit up and we had to transport you by stretcher, it would save your private health insurance money by offering another alternative, a lower cost mode of transportation.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, we’ve heard more than one, that it’s been stated that if someone is in a stretcher situation, and by default or by definition, that indicates that they have medical needs, you’re, you’re suggesting that that’s not always the case, is that correct?

JOE MILLER: Unfortunately, I can tell you from the phone call I received while waiting in the gallery that my father in Pennsylvania is being transported home from the hospital. And he’s being transported by a stretcher van because he cannot sit up due to his condition, but he does not need any medical assistance.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And if your father were, and my condolences to --

JOE MILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- your father. I know what that’s like going through that myself and it’s not fun, but my condolences there.

But if your father were to get hurt in the transport to wherever his destination is, who then would be responsible if his insurance would not then be covered because of that particular incident?

JOE MILLER: It would be the liability is of the, of the carrier. We carry, by state regulation, $1.5 million dollars and we carry other umbrella policies that are, you know, that we want to as a business. But at minimum we have to have $1.5 million dollars as a livery carrier, should somebody get hurt on one of our vehicles. Today, we, we, we’re located in Stratford, Waterbury and Waterford. We transport hundreds of passengers a day in wheelchairs. A lot of them advanced age, frail. And so we’re aware of
the exposure. We carry that insurance, and should something occur on one of our vehicles, we’re insured for that. We have to post that bond.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, if that were to occur, the person and the person who was injured or the family of the person who’s injured, if they needed to or wanted to, they would take, and they wanted to take you to court, that would be through the civil courts, right?

JOE MILLER: Yes, sir.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): You’re saying that $1.5 million would be sufficient to cover whatever the damages may be?

JOE MILLER: $1.5 million is the, what’s required by DOT. As a business, we have decided, we carry additional umbrella policies. But $1.5 is the minimum.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. So, that’s important. So, you carry more than what is the minimum mandated level?

JOE MILLER: Yes, because of different transportation models. We transport people in other models, so we carry different umbrellas.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. I’m sure there are other questions. It’s getting to the end of the day, so I’ll let other members ask if they haven’t. And I’m sure we’ll be in touch with you as this progresses.

JOE MILLER: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Any other questions? Yes, Representative Devlin, please.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here to testify. I have missed some of the testimony today and I have heard others on this bill, I think mostly against. But can you tell me, it sounds like somebody earlier had said there’s virtually no instance where there’s somebody who doesn’t have a medical issue that would use the type of service that you’re talking about, yet you’re telling me or you’re telling us that, in fact, there’s quite a number of instances. Can we can get our arm, our arms around like what’s the population?

JOE MILLER: Well, we get requests for, for private pay, for lack of a better term, to move somebody from a, we get requests from a person’s permanent home to their vacation home. They’re going to the lake for the week. So, it’s a, you know, a trip up and a trip back. We get that request, we can’t do it because, you know, they’re confined to a stretcher, they just want to go to their vacation home.

There’s a lot of other private, what they call private pay work, but that would be through assisted living facilities. If that person does not need medical assistance while being transported. So, you could see an ambulance lined up outside of assisted living and then you could see one of our livery vehicles behind it. They’re taking a patient, we’re taking a passenger. So, we get requests all the time from assisted living, medical facilities. But right now, we have to turn that work down because we don’t meet the definition.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, it seems from what I can see that most of the opposition hinges on patient
safety, yet what you’re saying is that you transport individuals only who have no medical needs?

JOE MILLER: Correct. We are not an ambulance company. We are not a provider of medical services. We are a livery transportation company. All the ambulance companies, a number of the ambulance companies, I shouldn’t say all, have as an aside, they do wheelchair, they do car work. They take fragile people that are in wheelchairs to appointments or wherever else they want to go, without an EMT in that chair car. If it was medical assistance needed, it would be an ambulance trip. We transport the same type of people that do not need medical assistance, they are passengers.

So, this is just, this would be a passenger that for temporary or permanent disability cannot sit up. Right now, if you would buy a brand new wheelchair van, Representative Abercrombie alluded to this, that there’s no room for seating for that attendant that is also named in this bill, which we agree with. You need two people to move, to move a stretcher. We will not argue that we shouldn’t have a second attendant. We’re, we’re all in favor of that. But the makeup of the vehicle, you have the driver’s chair. You don’t have a passenger’s seat because that’s the stairwell where you get in. And there’s a wheelchair lift to the side.

The older wheelchair vans used to have four seats that would come up. So, you could have ambulatory, 8 passengers, and then as you added wheelchairs, those seats would come up. Now, the new wheelchair vans that come out, they have a lift and they have a track system. So, now you take out those individual seats. So, you look at your schedule for the day,
do I have wheelchair work, do I have stretcher work? Your rack is already mounted against the wall that you fasten your wheelchair to and now you’re, you’re, you configure your van. There’s enough room in that van at the head of the stretcher to have that second attendant seated to monitor the, to ensure that that person is secured properly and safely within that stretcher.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Thank you for explaining that --

JOE MILLER: You’re welcome.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- to me. And I think that will do it for my questions at this point. Thank you.

JOE MILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. One final question. So, we’re, you’re using the term passenger, where most of them use the term, patient. So, I guess that’s the key, right?

JOE MILLER: Absolutely.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, who determines who’s a patient and who’s a passenger?

JOE MILLER: Well, like we do currently and like the ambulance companies do with their chair car transportation, what do you need? Is there somebody coming with you, an assistant or attendant? Then once we find out, well, yeah, I’m bringing this medical device, we don’t, we don’t take them in our chair car. We would do the same with the stretcher. This goes back to former Senator Gerratana, Senate Bill 345, her Amendment A required that a physician’s note be forwarded to the livery company
saying that, yes, that stretcher van transportation is a proper method is a method of transportation for this person, that they do not need medical care.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): And if that language were to appear again, you’re okay with that?

JOE MILLER: Absolutely, sir. There’s three, there’s three components to this, the Medicaid component, the private pay, and the tax revenue to the State of Connecticut.

We look at it that the tax revenue to the State of Connecticut is, is a little bonus. But actually trying to get passengers into a mode of transportation that they can afford seems to be more than reasonable.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): One last question. So, if this were to occur again, the person who’s requesting your service, is there anything when they order this service, is there any contracts that have to be signed, is there a waiver that they would have to be, have their rights read? I mean, does the person, would the person be completely aware of what their circumstances is and is not for whatever the reason may be, what their, what their, whether they have the proper protections in place if something were to go wrong?

JOE MILLER: Well, that would be, well, one, the fact that we’re, we’re on the road and marked in that and we have the proper insurance in place to protect the, the passenger. Second, that was sort of, that was addressed with Senator Gerratana’s amendment with the, the doctor’s note, the physician, attending physician’s note being forwarded that this was appropriate and that all
that was understood. If they show, if they showed up to, at, at, how we show up at the house, and we go in to help them, assist, you know, they’re bringing them out to the stretcher van and they, it’s obvious that they’re under constant medical care or assistance, Waterford facility, we would call our good friends at American Ambulance, our Stratford facility would call AMR and our Waterbury facility would call AETNA.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. I’m sure more questions will come to mind. But we need to keep moving, so. Thank you. I appreciate the testimony. We will continue this conversation as it is necessary. So, appreciate the testimony.

JOE MILLER: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up, Mr. Doug Low, then followed by Robert Mara.

DOUG LOW: Well, thank you, thank you, Chairman Leone and the rest of the committee. My name is Doug Low, I’m here to speak to you today and appreciate the opportunity for, regarding Senate Bill 710, concerning larger trucks in Connecticut under limited situation, 100,000 pound trucks.

You have my written testimony, so I’ll just summarize a few points. As it stands right now, it’s a fairly limited bill, but sometimes things get added on. We’re aware that other bills are about to come before committee looking at a more general application of 100,000 pound trucks. And as a scope, both geographically and commodity wise of 100,000 pound trucks is widened. It leads to a couple of concerns both for me as, Doug Low and in the railroad business, I’m assigned by my employer
Genesee & Wyoming Company. The three of the freight railroads that service Connecticut, the Providence & Worcester, New England Central, Connecticut Southern. Together we are part of the Connecticut Railroad Association and which is the all freight railroads which are all Class 2 or small railroads serving Connecticut. It’s already been a difficult market over the last 40 years. The big railroads have pulled out, the little railroads have come in.

We’re providing most of our business within Connecticut from two or local within the state. There is no freight that travels through Connecticut to other places that really amounts to anything that supports the rail network, we live here.

I am a local resident, I’m a taxpayer, I’m a driver in Connecticut. So, I have an interest in bigger trucks for personal reasons. The, this bill is poised to take Connecticut transportation policy in a direction contrary to the state’s interest. And I say that for two reasons; one, we already know there’s an issue with regard to the money generated by motor vehicles were relative to the cost that’s needed to maintain the state’s highway network or bridges and roads. And heavier vehicles can only exacerbate that situation. It won’t get any better.

The second thing is, heavier capacity on the roads does lead, it undercuts the ability of the freight railroad network in Connecticut, as limited as it is, it handles over 3 million tons of cargo a year that’s to or from Connecticut businesses and sometimes even entirely within the state.

At some point, by an increased cargo capacity limit in the road, means that there’s less cargo inevitably, some cargo will shift from rail to
truck. That will make it increasingly difficult to maintain the viability of the network as it existed day for freight, we are all in Connecticut. It also makes further investment, we’re already as an industry upgrading our infrastructure in Connecticut. We’re upgrading the rail line that serves the Port of New London, tying into the network, the North American Network through Massachusetts. That investment or subsequent investments become less attractive. It’s already a field of dreams.

We’re, we know we have to be modern as opposed to being what Connecticut is today, which is an increasingly isolated exception to the North American Railroad network. Industries die and go away. It’s difficult to locate new capital, new jobs, new tax base from a rail-based company such as are relatively common. Well, I won’t say, common. But some of the manufacturers in, in Connecticut that need that heavy cargo handling capability, if it’s not a modern network. And shipping here is an exception. So, we need that continued investment and it’s hard for us to continue to justify that if it’s being undercut by transportation policy.

I, really the rest of this, thank you for your time. If there’s anything I can answer for you, I’d be glad to try and do it.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. I do have one or two questions. So, this is an interesting topic for us that’s been brought forth in front of the committee. You’ve kind of mentioned two things, one being the infrastructure capabilities to handle additional weight loads. But then you also talked about the stability of a different industry, the
rail industry. And if this were to pass, it would offload some of your capabilities. So, then that would be a detriment.

But my understand is, is that surrounding states have a higher limit than what we do here in Connecticut. So, as from a business perspective, it’s hampering some of the current trucking business, not the rail, but the business for the truckers that handle this stuff. It’s, they have to either stop at the border and either not cross or get a special permit in order to continue that has certain stipulations and that has to be done up front.

So, the question is, do we try and address a business need to be current with what some of the neighboring states are doing, which I understand is part of the federal regulation. So, we have to look at the federal regs on where this stands. And at the same time, make sure that our current infrastructure, our roads and critically our bridges could handle the weight if the weight were to increase.

So, we don’t have that answer yet as we’re trying to dive into this and collect some data. But that’s kind of where we are as talking about this. We sort of have a dilemma here. We have to make sure our infrastructure can handle it. We want to take into consideration the business needs. But at the same time, we wouldn’t want to hurt the rail infrastructure because the rail infrastructure is key to not just Connecticut but the whole New England region.
So, that’s kind of where we are. It’s more of a statement than a question, unless you want to add something more to it.

DOUG LOW: Well, it’s certainly a balance. And freight railroad alone doesn’t meet all the needs of transport. That 2x4 that you might have brought home this weekend, probably traveled 98 percent of the way here on a railroad car. Then it went to a distribution center, to the big box store, and it came home in your, in the back of your station wagon.

So, it’s a, it’s an integrated network. I will, I did mention most of the cargo that moves in and out of Connecticut does come through, through Massachusetts and there’s a container traffic certainly that comes from the Port of New York and comes up 95 through Fairfield County. We play in that as an industry by kind of a roundabout way from the ports on the Jersey side, through Albany, over Springfield and Worcester and then it’s trucked down. So, no matter what happens, that cargo, the consumer, it’s largely consumer items that are manufactured overseas, moved by truck.

But the heavy stuff, which we live and die on and that supports us right now and the rail industry in Connecticut and those customers that depend on it, 100,000 pound trucks, it starts to make it attractive to maybe look at just emptying the rail car in Massachusetts and putting more of that traffic on to trucks for moving into Connecticut. So, and what we could do is replace an existing highway frieze rail system with a highway centric system. And I don’t think that is what you intended to do.
Maybe I, maybe I’m seeing an Indian behind every tree here, I hope that’s, don’t mean that in a derogative way. I’m just looking at potential for unintended consequences, so.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. I appreciate that testimony. Yes, Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming here to testify and I’m sure you’ve been here all day waiting to share your views with us and I appreciate that very much.

DOUG LOW: But it wasn’t snowing in here, so.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): You know, sometimes we do pass legislation that has unintended consequences. Many times legislation comes before us for a particular issue or to resolve a particular problem and this is one of those cases.

The way that the bill currently reads, is while it does say 100,000 pounds, it’s for distances to not exceed one-half of a mile and not to cross any state or local bridges.

So, based on the distance limitation, does that still pose the same type of concern? And I totally support moving heavy loads off our roads and as much as we could use freight rail all the better. But based on a half a mile distance and the limitation on bridges, do you have the same concern?

DOUG LOW: Well, understood. As I’ve mentioned in the beginning that as it’s current. The current language does not offer a, that doesn’t appear to be a concern, although why it wouldn’t be handled by local permitting, I don’t really understand, but it’s not material.
However, we are aware that there’s at least one other bill that has language that hasn’t yet come before the committee, which may be building on this or combined with this and we wanted to get rolling out ahead of the things.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Understand --

DOUG LOW: So, be proactive.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- I got it. Thank you.

DOUG LOW: Okay. Thank you, Senator and Representative Devlin.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. It looks like I and Representative are the last ones here for the moment, but we appreciate your testimony.

And for all the members in the audience, we, even though it’s just the two of us at the moment, your testimony will be heard and shared. There are members in other committees, and we will make sure they get all the info. So, don’t lose heart if you don’t see everybody here. And as proof, we have our Senator Haskell walking in to prove the point.

DOUG LOW: I had no doubt, Chairman.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up is Robert Mara, followed by Gene Cronin.

ROBERT MARA: Thank you very much, Senator Leone, Representative Devlin. Thank you for having me here. My testimony is on file, I sent it ahead of time. My name is Bob Mara, I’m an EMT with AETNA Ambulance. I’m also a supervisor with the Ambulance.

I’m here to testify in strong opposition to Senate Bill 66, AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONEMERGENCY
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
10:30 A.M.
PUBLIC HEARING

TRANSPORTATION OF ELDERLY PERSONS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CONFINED TO A STRETcher.

First and foremost, let me tell you little bit about me. I’ve been an EMT since 1996, working as both a volunteer and commercial ambulance service. In that capacity, I’ve made hundreds of ambulance transports via stretcher. I’m also finishing up my master’s in business administration with emergency medicine management.

My primary concern with this legislation is that enabling stretcher vans in the State of Connecticut would jeopardize patient safety. So, that’s what I’m gonna talk about a little bit more. We all have fiscal responsibility. But at the end of the day, we need to talk about patient safety. And to qualify Representative Devlin’s question before, anybody can be a patient. If you are on a stretcher and if you’re anybody in this room, at some point in time, you’re going to need a trained medical personnel in order to take care of you.

My concern is that all EMT’s must successfully complete a Department of Public Health-approved Emergency Medical and that’s about 150 hours. It involves written exam, protocols, practicals. And then every two years has to be updated again by the state. Actually, now it’s going national. So, national also has to be involved. So, when we’re talking about the care in the back of any vehicle, there’s a certain certification level that has to be attained and that’s approved, and it’s also approved by the hospitals. You have to have hospital backing in order to be the equivalent of an EMT. So, I don’t care if you’ve got all this training, unless a hospital medical director approves you to be able to
care for a patient in the back of that vehicle, no matter what the compartment, you are not allowed to do it, you’re working out of your scope.

So, that’s kind of a key, a key point I’d like to talk about. The, the other thing is that the task of EMS care is the physically handling, moving and care of out of hospital patients. EMS personnel are required to safely handle a stretcher with or without a patient, a minimum of nine times, per direction. I’d go through the list, but there’s nine, nine physical movements that have to be done with two people trained with a stretcher. That, that can be over any, any kind of ground, any weather. Today was just a horrible day for EMS to be out there moving patients around to, to whatever appointment.

So, all EMS personnel in our state are trained and tested on proper, proper lifting methods during entry level courses. And both our companies actually have a dedicated training room where all medical personnel are tested annually, and both have to do a written and practical exam.

We also have to talk about our growing population, and I’m not meaning volume, I’m talking about the size. We are seeing an increase right now of more and more bariatric patients, more and more patients that require four people to move them over rough terrain as well. So, the, the liability of stretcher tips and that sort of stuff. It all comes back to patient safety and that’s what I really, really need to focus on on here.

The other thing is it’s not uncommon to a routine transport to have, to redirect an ambulance to a, a, emergency department. So, if we, if we transporting
a dialysis patient or somebody going to the doctor and the patient’s status changes like seizures or chest pains or even just anxiety, trained personnel ensure that all patients during their most vulnerable state receive medical care without delay. Without expertly trained personnel such as monitoring vitals, patient care is ultimately compromised.

We must remember these patients are not healthy, that’s the reason why they’re going to a doctor. That’s the reason why they’re going to, to these events.

I’m sure everyone on this committee understands the complicated reimbursement rules for medical transport in our state. This is due to the fact that Medicare only recognizes ambulance transports for such patients and offering stretcher van transportations could shift it to our Medicaid program.

We should entrust the wellbeing of our citizens with medical professionals, who have the appropriate training that the state provides and continue education to assist some of our most vulnerable in that state.

I’d like to thank you for your time and any questions that you may have.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you for the testimony. It’s very much appreciated. I only have one or two questions and I don’t want to be too repetitive. And you talked a lot about the safety and the medical needs, and especially when EMT’s are involved, getting to and from hospitals, which is all very much on point.
I guess my question is, can someone be in a stretcher situation and not be considered a patient, if I want to use the other term that was mentioned, be a passenger, where all their medical needs have been addressed at least for the moment, they’re home, they’re safe, their medical issues have been taken care of, there’s nothing on the immediate horizon and then other instances come up where they want to just get somewhere, you know, and an ambulance is not necessarily the first call they want to make; does that person have the right to ask for a stretcher van and not a non-ambulatory or an ambulatory type service if there’s no medical need at that particular moment in time?

And I understand that if you’re in that situation, there’s always medical potential for something to go awry, but if nothing’s going wrong and they just want to get somewhere, why couldn’t they then use a different service?

ROBERT MARA: Well, as noted before with, and I don’t have the data on it. But as one of my previous mentioned, we, we as part of community service do, do move people that don’t require stretcher, free of charge in certain circumstances. To answer your question, there are the services that they could be using. They could be using livery, they could be using wheelchair. If they’re on a stretcher, if they’re on a stretcher, there’s, there’s a reason they’re on that stretcher.

The patient has to be moved somehow from point A to point B and how do we want to do that? Do we want somebody that is trained to do that? EMT’s are trained every single day to do the same task over and over and over and over again. And we do it.
through mostly memory. And, and that’s something you just can’t teach. That’s something that takes time and it’s, it’s watched, watched very closely by the State of Connecticut to make sure that this is done appropriately.

So, I think it comes down to how, how much do you want to place trust into somebody that you’re not sure that’s trained enough to handle that particular patient, should something go wrong.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Appreciate the testimony. Representative.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you. Actually, you addressed my question. I just want to say thank you for staying here and thank you for the work that you do. We are all --

ROBERT MARA: Thank you.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- grateful for your chosen profession, so thank you for that. You did address my question. Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you very much.

ROBERT MARA: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next up, Jean Cronin, followed by, I’m not gonna get this right, Chris Algoo, and correct me when you come up.

JEAN CRONIN: Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Representative Devlin and Senator Will Haskell. Thank you all for staying and listening. My name is Jean Cronin, I’m the Legislative Representative for the Connecticut School Transportation Association, more commonly known as COSTA. We’re a trade group of the operators of school buses and school
transportation vehicles representing 10,000 school buses and transporting nearly 500,000 children to and from school each day.

I’m here today to offer testimony on the practical implications of House Bill 6959, which is a bill that would require all new Connecticut school buses to be equipped with seat belts. As drafted, the bill does not have an effective date of when this requirement would take effect, nor does it specify the type of seat belts that would be used. COSTA has several concerns about this bill and would like to describe this to you.

First, there’s a great deal of difference between a lap belt and a 3-point shoulder harness belt. Lap belts merely hold the passenger in place, and in an accident or a crash, the body of the passenger would snap forward. Whereby the 3-point belt holds the passenger securely against the seat.

So, we would suggest, if you’re going to move forward with this, to please use 3-point lap shoulder belts. It’s now the industry standard.

Also, the cost of mandatory seat belts should be a considerable factor. The cost of a new business is approximately $80,000 to $85,000. To put lap belts on this vehicle would add another $1,000 and to factory install the 3-point lap belts would add an additional $9 to $10,000, which would increase the cost of a new vehicle by 9 to 10 percent.

We appreciate the fact that you are not requiring retrofit of existing buses, that is very difficult and very costly. We would question who would be responsible for making sure that the children actually wear the seat belts. You know, the driver
drives the bus. There is actually a statute that prevents the driver from leaving his or her seat without turning off the bus and taking the key. So, the driver can’t be helping people put their bus on, their seat belts on rather.

So, any mandate to wear the seat belt would need to be placed on the student without assistance from the driver. Who’s responsibility is it going to be to train the students on the proper belt usage. We would place that training responsibility back on the boards of education and mandate that the state and the State Department of Motor Vehicles to create that mandate.

There’s also several practical and safety issues that we have with this legislation. First of all, the average length of a school bus contract is five years. And the reason it is so long is because it amortizes the cost of the buses. Usually the buses are not replaced all in the first year, but over the course of five years so that 20 percent of them are replaced each year. And the average lifespan of a bus is about 10 years.

So, it may be many years before the buses all have seat belts, even if this legislation were to pass this year. Also, can a bus be safely evacuated in an emergency. There was a situation a number of years ago in Danbury. Danbury is one of the seven towns that mandate seat belts right now. The, leaving the high school, one of the buses was hit by a dump truck, it tipped over sideways. The students were actually suspended from their seatbelts hanging from the inside of the bus. They could not get down with the pressure of their bodies on the seat belts,
they could not undo those buckles, and these are high school kids.

So, with the driver and good Samaritans, I’m sorry, I’ll try to summarize. It’s difficult to get down. We worry about the liability of what would happen if students don’t wear a seat belt and an accident should occur, they get injured. We would like school business drivers, business companies and boards of eds to be exempt from criminal and civil liability. There’s also the ongoing cost to maintain the seatbelts and the most important issue of all, right now, municipalities have the authority to require seat belts on their school buses. They can do it right now. In fact, as I mentioned, there are seven towns, Bethel, Cromwell, Danbury, Stamford, Wilton and then last night I found out about Simsbury and Greenwich. So, that can happen right now. You don’t really need legislation.

Also, the state has the technical schools, that would be an added cost to the state because the state owns those buses, so you’d have to put those on your own buses.

You as a legislature tried in 2010 to defray the cost of seat belts. You actually passed a law that would set up a seat belt account fund. It was funded by $50 from the suspended driver licenses return fee. And it was to be run by the Department of Motor Vehicles and then it would reimburse the town for up to 50 percent of the sales tax for the school buses. The money was never utilized. There’s a problem with the wording of the way that program was set up. The money sat in the account. The state has taken it multiple times, including, I
think, $2 million dollars the last year of the year before.

So, we just ask you to keep in mind that school, the state took away the school transportation funding back in 2016, so you contribute no dollars to the municipalities right now for their school transportation, it’s all funded by themselves.

So, we’d ask you to please be mindful of, of mandates, costs, et cetera, there will be other people speaking behind me about the costs, as you look to move forward with this bill.

And then just quickly, two other things. Senator Leone, you had a bill on video inside of, excuse me, Senate Bill 424, video cameras installed inside school buses for special ed students. We can do that now. There was a law passed in 2016 that allowed school bus or rather boards of eds to do that, so many of the school buses with those children have cameras on them now. So, that is currently being done.

So, thank you, and I’d be happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. A couple of things. Don’t go away. So, you laid out a very, some good statistics on why this great concept that everyone loves doesn’t somehow get passed without having seat belts in buses. It seems like that would be an easy thing. Because I’ve gotten that request many times. But then when we get into all the details and the liabilities and the costs and the safeties and the driver can’t leave their, their, the driver’s seat, it becomes quickly complicated; so, I appreciate that.
And you’re right, some of the monies were swept because it was being underutilized. I wasn’t aware the wording wasn’t correct, so we can maybe take a look at that going forward. And some towns are doing it and others are not. So, I guess the question is, do we need to push other towns to be a little bit more proactive. So, that’s one question.

Number two, you did mention about the bill for the special ed, that was brought to my attention by someone where they had an incident and the cameras were not in there. I’m not sure it was in a school bus. But there are other vehicles that do transport special ed kids. And so, I think it is to address that as well. So, maybe we can work together on that.

And then final thing, I would like to give you the opportunity within 30 seconds or less, give you the opportunity to talk about the background checks for bus drivers.

JEAN CRONIN: Oh, God --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I know that has been --

JEAN CRONIN: -- if we had two hours.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): No, no, you do not have two hours.

JEAN CRONIN: Okay.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I just want to give you a quick attempt to just address it. I know there’s something we have tried to work through. We still have more to do. But I just want to give you the opportunity to make a public comment on that.
JEAN CRONIN: Sure, on, on the background checks we’ve been working on it for, I guess, about nine years. There’s a huge backlog at the department, DESPP. We have worked very closely with DMV over the years, so they have really streamlined their portion of our bus driver application process. But it’s the background check that is the backlog.

DESPP has a very antiquated computer system for fingerprints. It was supposed to be replaced two years ago. They had a problem with the vendor. They just signed a contract, I think, right after Christmas. I’ve already spoken to Commissioner Rovella, the new DESPP Commissioner about it. It’s on his radar. They know, they’ve hired extra people to help move those fingerprint card stacks and get them inputted into the system. So, we’re hoping that something moves there, it’s moving faster.

I know when it is a tough time for school bus drivers in the summer when we’re trying to get everybody licensed, they do put special attention on the bus drivers to get them in quickly. But then it goes back to, it’s about a 14 to 16 week process to get a driver approved.

On your question about the towns, how can we get other towns? Just in the last two years, since I last spoke on the school bus bill, two other towns have required seat belts that would be Simsbury and Greenwich. So, I think as, you know, I think it has to come from the locals as the parents put pressure on the boards of ed. If they can, you know, allocate funding in their board of ed budgets for the school buses, et cetera. It’s something that can be done and then we can look at fixing the language of that program if, you know, if they keep
the money in there because it does accumulate quite a bit of money to see if we can help defray those costs as well.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Jean. I appreciate all that great information. Any questions from members? Okay. Thank you.

JEAN CRONIN: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): We will be speaking further along. Next up, Mr. Algoo, Chris Algoo, is that correct? He left, okay. John Hall. Chris Herb. There you go. I think you just said that so you can come on up.

CHRIS HERB: -- many, many years. So, that was one thing I wanted to talk about. The other thing is that banning zone pricing, and again, I don’t want to get caught up in terminology because what we believe the bill does is it takes away price flexibility, it takes away the ability to meet competition. For instance, if I own a gas station in Endfield, on the border where Massachusetts has a gas tax that’s 14 to 16 cents less a gallon, wholesalers are able to lower that price to meet the competition of the disadvantage that, that current tax policy puts those dealers in. If I’m operating actual big box retailer who sells it below cost, they’re selling gas below the cost that they pay for it so that they can sell more peanut butter inside the store, where there’s higher margins. We are able to help local family-owned retailers meet that competition.

So, I would, you know, in summary, I know that that was my time that there have been two studies, a Federal Trade Commission study that was initiated by
a, the Chair of the General Law Committee a number of years ago that said that banning zone pricing or trying to equalize the wholesale price, the price of gasoline would have an upward affect on the price to consumers and the Quinnipiac study said very much the same thing that was done locally here in Connecticut with Connecticut data.

So, I would be very cautious about trying to figure out ways to regulate gasoline prices. The state already does that in the electricity market, and we pay the highest in the country. I just want you to keep that in mind.

The final thing I would say is, is that, if you’re an attorney who went to UConn that is, that is in the bar and practices in Connecticut, I can guarantee you that they charge different prices in Stamford for their services than they do in Naugatuck. Keep in mind that this is not the only product that has different prices in different places for different reasons. And this bill, I think, is dangerous to try and interfere with that marketplace.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Chris. I appreciate your testimony. I don’t think anyone’s trying to get into the free market aspect of this. I think the genesis of the bill was about the consumer experience at the pump, right, and the price.

So, you talked about the owner versus the lessee, which I can understand the difference there. But I’ll just speak from my own personal experience. In Fairfield County, there’s got to be a bunch of owners as well as there’s got to be a bunch of lessees, but to the county aspect, the prices are
much higher than when you cross over into New Haven County as a whole.

So, it’s not about trying to interfere with the, how different markets need to charge to cover their cost, but how is it that one is just so different, when you’re saying, I would think the owner in the New Haven area should be able to negotiate just as, just as well as an owner in Fairfield County. Maybe the figures would be off to a certain extent, but not on a consistent level, day in, day out, week out, year in, year out, to the tune of a quarter to 30 cents more.

So, just from a consumer perspective, that’s where I think the genesis of this bill is coming, it’s not to get into how the business operates and to discover things that we don’t need to know about, it’s how do we understand why there is that difference?

CHRIS HERB: Sure, and I would say that Fairfield County, in particular, the risk part that I focused on with the open deals and lessee deals was to address a question and that is one component of it. Fairfield County has a particular issue in terms of competition and the higher and more lucrative use of their properties. Gasoline stations on quarter-acre plots in Fairfield County can be upwards of $7 million dollars compared to much larger spots in other parts of the state that sell for a fraction of that, not even a million dollars.

So, I will make the argument that if there are, people who own retail establishments in Fairfield County fetch higher margins or they sell their property to RBS, where they build a 20-story
building that, that they can make a lot more money on.

So, I think that part of the function of the lack of competition that exists in Fairfield County, in addition to the ability to be able to sell that property for another use and make more money off the sale is why you see higher prices.

The people who own those properties weren’t investing in them, are maximizing their profitability based on the lack of competition that exists. If you threw a Stop and Shop, a BJ’s and a Costco in proximity to some, to those sites that you’re talking about are 25 cents or 30 cents more, you would see that price come down. That just doesn’t exist in the way that it does in other parts of the state.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, you’re saying we should get more big box stores down in our area?

CHRIS HERB: Oh, please, that’s not -- we don’t want to -- my members wouldn’t want to see that happen. But I will say that, that because of the expense of how expensive property is and how hard it is to develop a modern gas station, you know, what you see with these larger, these larger gasoline stations that have food service and things like that, that doesn’t typically exist in Fairfield County either, at least in, in, in the places where the gasoline stations develop these quarter, quarter acre plots. We need three acres, five acres to develop a station now. And I think, so it’s hard. Now, who, are we going to knock down 15 story buildings to buy gasoline stations? If I could get 50 cents a gallon more, maybe they would, but I don’t know that. I just know that right now the way that the market is
developed down there, especially over the last two decades that I’ve been an observer of it, is we’ve seen less gas stations. We’ve seen them sell to large banks so that they could build multi-story buildings.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, again, it’s keeping local, I guess, since you have better knowledge than I do. Are you saying that there’s not as many owners as there used to be, which then undercuts their ability to negotiate a better price and that there’s more of these lessees that have to take a difference between the ownership model or the lessee model, where they don’t own the land, just the service?

CHRIS HERB: Sure. I would say that, you know, I don’t know exactly what the number, the ratio is between owners and lessees. Like I said, in particular to the issue that you raised in Fairfield County, it’s more of that, that competition density issue, not more the trade, the manner in which the station is operated where there’s a lessee or an owned station by an open dealer. But I do know that in places where both of those classes of trade exist, lessee dealers tend to charge more because they have, they are in a, they have no risk in terms of environmental releases and things that the property owner has.

In Fairfield County, I would say that property owners have sold those properties. So, and they’re being done, something else is being done with them. Like I said, RBS is an example of one that we know where a gas station sold to a large fiduciary.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Well, I would say as we move along, there’s some proponents of this bill that you
might want to reach out and speak with or educate or whatever the case may be, so that we get a better understanding as we move forward. So, I appreciate your testimony.

Let me pass it over. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I just wanted to clarify one thing from what you were saying. Are you suggesting that zone pricing does not exist?

CHRIS HERB: There, of all of the distributors, like I said, we own, operate and distribute gasoline to a thousand gas stations in Connecticut. We have talked about this issue for two decades and no one in our organization has, has said that they have, there are maps that they price differently, they charge different prices to different retailers for many different reasons. It’s a function of labor costs, property taxes. Like the risks that they may have to take. Some of these deals, if a dealer can’t afford to replace and wants to rehab a convenience store, replace their pumps, the state law requires you to remove your tanks every 30 years. A lot of retailers can’t afford to do that, that’s what we end up doing is building the price of the loan to do that work into the price of wholesale price of gasoline, that’s another reason that we’re concerned about the bill is because if you take that ability away, we wouldn’t be able to have different prices for those reasons.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): I understand flexibility, but I just want to understand. So, what you’re saying is there is no zone pricing that does not exist?

CHRIS HERB: I have never seen it, no.
REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. So, distributors don’t set that, there’s not like 50 different areas established and it’s just by magic that when I cross to Milford that I pay 25 cents more a gallon?

CHRIS HERB: When you cross into Milford, Stop and Shop, the same Stop and Shop on Fairfield County that markets in New Haven County sells milk at a different price. And we bought the milk on the same day at the same brand from the same retailer with different prices. Prices are different in different places for different reasons. And in, in, in those, in those, I’m not gonna pretend I know every last one of them, I know the big ones, labor, tax, property taxes, insurance that vary from place to place. We don’t have minimum wage workers in Fairfield County. We have a lot of them in Naugatuck and Waterbury and New London. That, that has to be passed on somewhere when you have higher labor costs. So, that’s why you may be, labor costs --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Actually, we do, but and I appreciate that. I just wanted to have clarification on, are you saying zone pricing does not exist?

CHRIS HERB: I’m saying that I am unaware of any of our members, thousand gas stations that they sell to that zone pricing is occurring.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): All right. Thank you.

CHRIS HERB: It was a practice that we knew formally was being or we were told it was formally being applied by refiners, but I have not seen, I have not seen that happen, and they vacated the market years ago. That’s why the dealers stopped coming here
testifying in support of these bills because the refiners do not, are not participating in this marketplace.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Representative. Next up, Senator Haskell, then followed by Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much for your testimony today. There seems to be a big of cognitive dissidence here. And just forgive me if I’m missing something or not understanding, but I read from your testimony that you’re testifying in opposition to S.B. 419, AN ACT PROHIBITING GASOLINE ZONE PRICING. But also telling us that gasoline zone pricing doesn’t exist. So, if it’s not in practice at the moment, why would you be opposed to us banning it?

CHRIS HERB: As I stated in my opening remarks is that the language in the bill is vague. I can’t, if you, if you outlawed the thing called zone pricing today, it depends on what the language of the bill says. And the language of the bill, we interpret it to mean, you can’t have different wholesale prices in different places for different reasons.

The zone pricing language that’s being used, I don’t think is being out of context in the bill. I don’t think that the bill is getting to, to having a map with zones that are being implemented. That pricing strategy, I am unaware of it. So, I think that what, I think we’re talking about two different things. We’re using the word, zone pricing, and then we have a language in a bill that does
something different than what is being described by legislators, questions about what zone pricing is.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Okay. It seems also from your testimony that your recommendation for those of us who do represent Fairfield County, who represent people who are frustrated that they’re paying 50 cents more a gallon, sometimes 60 cents more a gallon as it was today when I just looked up the prices.

All right. Your recommendation is that we simply open more gas stations, is that correct?

CHRIS HERB: I think that if the, number one, the one thing you can do is that we’ve had the highest gasoline tax in New England and we would welcome you taking control of the tools that are really before you that could lower prices and that’s gas, let’s start with gasoline taxes.

The second thing is, is that if there was, if property, if property could be developed to build more gas stations in Fairfield County, I can guarantee you, the price of gasoline would go down. If BJ’s and Costco’s were able to buy multi-acre sites in proximity to retail establishments that are already there, I can guarantee you. So, the answer is yes, if you could do something about making property more affordable in Fairfield County, so that gasoline stations could be developed, prices would come down because of competition.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Sure. But here’s the problem. I read the Federal Trade Commission study that you reference in your testimony, and I’m quoting here, it says that zone pricing targets entrance without having to lower prices through a
broader market area. In other words, zone pricing creates an economic environment in which it’s harder for small-scale retailers to enter the market. It’s harder to open up a gas station in Fairfield County in other words because of zone pricing.

CHRIS HERB: If zone pricing was being implemented, that may be correct. But I’m not aware of it. I’m telling you right now, I represent 25 family-owned businesses that are telling me, and they would tell you, one of them did, all of them came here today from East Hartford and said, we, he sells to dozens of retailers. There is no price map or price strategy that is being implemented that’s called zone pricing or resembles anything that’s being described as zone pricing.

Again, that’s why I think that when your original question about why are we against zone pricing because that’s what you named the bill. The bill is just disconnected from what zone pricing actually is known to be in the marketplace versus what the bill is trying to do.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Well, I thank you for your testimony. I look forward to an ongoing conversation. And really what I look forward to is some clarity as to Representative Devlin’s question, which I thought was well phrased, that there does seem to, if you drive from Westport to Hartford every single day, you seem to cross magic lines and all of a sudden, the prices drop. And whether we’re calling it gasoline zone pricing or something else, I’m eager to figure out why there are practices in the industry that do seem to inhibit competition and that do prevent those retailers in my area from having access to those lower rates.
CHRIS HERB: I would just say that those same magical lines, I have a 1,500 square foot split level in Naugatuck, that same, on a quarter acre, that same 1,500 foot, square foot split level in Greenwich is thousands and thousands of dollars more. I, I think if we’re trying to arrive at a solution on why prices are so different from place to place, they apply to all consumer products and services. Those magic lines are drawn on virtually everything you buy from your district to where I live.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): But they’re created by a free market process as opposed to large scale distributors such as the Mobile Oil executive, who testified before this committee, actually before the General Law Committee in 1997, saying that they do use gas zone pricing to establish noncompetitive rates between retailers in specific area.

CHRIS HERB: And they don’t, and they’re not, and they’re not market, they’re not selling to retailers in Connecticut where they vacate a marketplace. They, they’ve sold their properties. We fly their flags. Those products are being sold through distributors in my class of trade now.

You know, I’m not here to defend the refiner’s previous testimony. We don’t represent them. We don’t represent anyone who works in that, has interest in Abu Dhabi. We have, we represent people who have gasoline distributorships in Waterbury and East Hartford, and we fly those flags because we purchase gasoline from them. But they are not implementing the majors like Mobile are no longer doing that. They left Connecticut years ago. And like you said, that’s why those dealers don’t show
up any more. When, when, when Senator Leone was new to the General Law Committee, we took on this issue. And dealers showed up saying that they felt that they were being, the pricing system was unfair to them. They stopped showing up to these hearings because they don’t, they don’t know longer feel that. It’s just not happening; the zone pricing mechanism is no longer in place that we’re aware of.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you for your testimony today.

CHRIS HERB: Thank you.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): And thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And Christian, thank you very much for coming in and offering your viewpoints because the work you have done with SEMA is very well recognized.

Let me begin, this has been an interesting education here where through the 10 years that I’ve been family with zone pricing, going all the way back to former Representative Shapiro, there was always the presumption that there was a map. And as recently as last year, when we called the distributors, we were said, yeah, there’s a map, but you know what, it’s proprietary, you can’t have it.

What I’m hearing from you and others is the fact that no such map exists and that the market force lines and market forces dictate these kind of pricing. So, I would go back again to say, perhaps this bill isn’t necessary and, indeed, we could allow our dealers all through the state to be more
engaged and interact and challenge the distributors for the proper pricing.

With that being said, you also represent through your association oil delivery companies. Very important part, we’ve been very appreciative of the great work in family-owned businesses that you do, the price of oil for your members that deliver throughout the state, is there a transparency, is there a market difference from said Fairfield to Milford? If there is, what would cause that and if there isn’t, why would you think market transparency and that open marketplace of being able to collect and get oil from distributors for your oil-based companies that you represent so well, why is that pricing reflected in the marketplace and elastic and transparent? Because there seems to be a market contrast between one big sector that you represent in regards to, you know, oil delivery businesses, to homes and a competitive marketplace where people know what everybody else is paying and you compete very, very hard to keep your customers and to be pricing sensitive to now representing another sector that says, well, you know, these market pricing are significantly built into the market. Where’s the transparency? You represent two ends of it. Could you elaborate?

CHRIS HERB: I appreciate the question. And, yes, we do represent 600 home heating on propane dealers. So, I would say that if you look at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protections, heating all price survey, they do a statewide survey and they do it by counties. You will see that prices tend to be higher in Fairfield County.
So, I would argue that it is consistent that petroleum products are sold for more in Fairfield County. I think for some different reasons than we described in the gasoline side. But it is a very transparent pricing that is occurring. It is not difficult to find the base price of petroleum, whether it’s gasoline or heating oil, that is, that happens at the New York Mercantile Exchange. So, we can see that. Anyone here can take a look at that.

And then, then if you take the price that you pay for home heating oil or the price you pay for gasoline and you back out the petroleum gross earnings tax, the state excise tax, the federal excise tax, transportation, which is a little slippery, but it’s anywhere from three to five cents, you take out credit card fees, three to six percent. Then you can sort of figure out what the margin is in there, so that’s between wholesale and retail.

So, it’s not hard to figure this out. We, we don’t, as a trade association, collect pricing information, but the state does, and the federal government does. So, there is a way to arrive at where those numbers are. So, I would argue that it is transparent. It is assessible and it exists in both, in both the home heating oil and propane side of the business and the gasoline side of the business.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH): I’m familiar with the propane side and the oil delivery side. And you’re right, the transparency is built into the marketplace. And there is market liquidity and market reaction. I’m looking for that same type of transparency, that same type of openness in the gasoline marketplace and to the purpose of this bill, we can get
splitting hairs in regards, you know, the zone pricing and what the vague language is. This is why we’re having this public hearing to be able to finetune and do what is fit and appropriate as the committee leadership deems. But let’s not get caught up on the numbers. I’m looking for, as many of the people have said that may be opposing this bill, that I’m looking for market transparency and consumer competitiveness. You have to do that in your oil and propane business. And there is tremendous transparency and a tremendous marketplace reaction because that individual can go shop somewhere else.

The fact is, I don’t see that same level of transparency, that same level of market sensitivity as evident by the gasoline. And unless you tell me otherwise, and we learn furthermore, and maybe this bill could work toward that effect with committee leadership.

But I appreciate your viewpoint and it’s really important. You represent two different points of views in regards to the market competitiveness; one that is truly reflectant of the need to adapt to the marketplace and one that may be, still may be stuck in the old ways in regards to really not transparency and openness and accountability.

So, I welcome further discussion on this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Senator. Well, thank you, Chris. You’ve been a great resource for us here. Just when you think we know it all, we need more educating. So, I appreciate the effort. And thanks to your, all your members for providing the liquid fuel that we all need. Thanks.
CHRIS HERB: Thanks for this opportunity.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): David Green, followed by Elizabeth Emery.

DAVID GREEN: My name is David Green. I want to give my regards to Cody Clark and Ms. Conley, who --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Sure.

DAVID GREEN: -- I just found out Friday I was going to be appearing. I’m going to be bringing up probably two of the most important topics you had here.

Everyone’s been praising how great Lyft and Uber is. Problem is, Uber and Lyft, if you work for them, you’re using regular plates and most insurance companies will not give an owner who drives for Uber or Lyft a private insurance policy. And actuary figures of, a normal drives 12,000 miles a year, with Uber you could be putting on 50,000. Plus with Uber, there’s no inspections for the cars, anyone can drive. And when they have their price increasing because of bad weather, people are going to stay up to 30 hours. So, it’s totally unfair.

And why should the other limos have to have limo insurance, have the cars regularly inspected; which brings up the point here?

You have a private car, your car’s inspected every two years and all they do is check pollution. No safety factors. So, it’s just totally out of it. I’ve been in the business since 1975, when I left teaching. I bought a yellow taxi medallion in the car, we had radios, which the TLC made us pull out, that’s where you got the idea of Uber. I, alone, my medallion, I’m in contact with my broker, so I know what’s going on? So, it’s just totally outrageous.
And then I want to get to the other second most important topic of all. Dominos Pizza, all the delivery places, these places do not have insurance. I went over to Panera, Panera Bread to ask about working, oh, as long as your car passed the inspection. So, I was curious, I went over to one of the insurance companies and I said, can I work for Dominos or something and they said, yes, we’ll issue a policy for $130 a month extra, but you can only drive part time. It’s like the wild, wild west out there. They’re delivering and no insurance. Once you, if, I drove, if you drive me to the airport, you charge me $10. We have an accident, cop speaks to me, oh, I tell him, he only charged me $10, your insurance is canceled because you’re not using your car for the way you pay your insurance. Your first question on the insurance policy is for what purpose do you use your car? So, all these people working for Dominos and everything have no insurance.

I had a pickup truck come into my association because I live where Ms. Connelly lived in [Inaudible -06:35:47], then I just saw yesterday twice, Domino Pizza cars coming in with Rhode Island plates. There’s no way, pardon my French and living hell that a company in, a car in Rhode Island is going to be insured to come work in here. I’m sorry, it’s funny cause I’ve been on the road since 7 o’clock. If I would have been driving my taxicab, I’d only be able to work 2 1/2 more hours. Because in New York City we used to have two drivers. One guy would keep the car all day Saturday and the other all day Sunday. That was changed because of accidents. You’re only allowed to work 12 hours. No one’s keeping track.
And then the, I’m sorry, I’m going around in circles. You get back to Uber. Go check with them. Do they bother to check to see who the primary insurance company is when the guy doesn’t work there? Because if they don’t, then anyone can work for Uber. And once the guy has the accident and after it’s checked out that the insurance company finds that the person has been working for Uber, they cancel, insurance is canceled on the spot. I hope people will ask some questions, please.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Green. So, I’m hearing two different things here. One is about Lyft and Uber and making sure that --

DAVID GREEN: This was called Friday, I was coming here so --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): That’s okay. That’s okay.

DAVID GREEN: -- before we didn’t have a chance to [Inaudible -06:36:59] stuff, we didn’t get together.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): It’s good to get some testimony so we can understand what’s going on. So, two different issues. You bring up the fact about Uber and Lyft, a Transportation Network Company, TNC’s, for abbreviation, about the fact on how they have insurance. So, while they’re driving, they --

DAVID GREEN: They have a balloon policy; which Uber covers them with.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Right.

DAVID GREEN: Once you’re off that, you have to use your own. I just want to add one other thing.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Wait, wait, let me, wait, let me finish. I will let you talk. So, the question
that I’m hearing is about making sure that if anyone wants to work for a TNC, right now they would, their current insurance, their private insurance only covers for private usage, not for commercial usage. Once they go on the clock with the TNC’s, there’s a policy in effect for that. But there seems to be a little disconnect as to who covers who and when. So, I’ll give you a chance to talk about that.

You brought up a whole different perspective on people working for other companies without proper insurance. So that’s different than a TNC. So, that’s another issue we could talk about after the fact. You’re testifying, I assume, on Bill 5157, concerning transportation networks?

DAVID GREEN: I didn’t even hear what the bill was gonna be.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): That’s okay.

DAVID GREEN: He wrote it, he wrote it up to me quickly.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, just focus on the, the insurance with the TNC’s for this particular line of questioning.

DAVID GREEN: Are we talking about, you’re talking about with the Uber and Lyft?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): The Ubers and Lyfts. As you mentioned, your issue was about the insurance coverage, so just give us an explanation so that we can be educated. We’re not gonna answer anything, but we’ll be able to figure it out.

DAVID GREEN: When you work for Uber, you use their app. Once the app is off, you have to use your own private insurance. Now, several insurance companies
will not issue you a policy if you work for Uber or Lyft, being under the concept that you could be putting on 50,000 miles, give or take, a year. Where a normal person drives 12,000 miles. So, they don’t want to do the coverage.

I just wanted to add one other thing. If you work for Lyft and Uber, and if you like the driver, there’s a good chance you’re gonna book that guy privately. Now, if you booked them privately, they have no insurance because they’re, when they work for Lyft or Uber, the app is on and they’re covered by their insurance. These companies are not gonna cover you if you’re hustling on the side and keeping the money for yourself.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, you’re suggesting that there are drivers out there, carting people around --

DAVID GREEN: Of course.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- not Uber, not Lyft, to not --

DAVID GREEN: I’m talking Uber or Lyft drivers will be hustling in the street by themselves. For example, at Foxwoods I pay poker occasionally. Every place has Uber pickup. I’ve been solicited several times by Uber drivers, do you need a lift? They have no insurance if I go with them because it wasn’t under the app. You’re gonna have a, I know when I work, I’m gonna give a very good example. I own a taxicab in New York, I have my broker. He told me how he flew into LaGuardia Airport, within minutes, eight different Uber drivers approach him and say, oh, if anyone asks, you’re my ride with Uber. And in Newark, they even risk getting
arrested. If you get caught soliciting, you’re in jail overnight.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): But if they enter the vehicle, they turn on the Uber app?

DAVID GREEN: No. Why would they? The only way they get the call is through Uber putting through the call, by you being in the zone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. And then this other issue about people working for Dominos or another party and not covered, insured. You’re saying these are drivers being hired by these companies --

DAVID GREEN: All of them. It’s mandatory --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- no insurance coverage?

DAVID GREEN: If you do delivery work, it’s mandatory that you have commercial plates. Otherwise, you’re not covering it. You want to go work for someone, you, you drive here to come to work, right? Now, you start working for a place and you’re doing delivery work, that’s totally against the policy.

And the other thing is, if you’re gonna do it the proper way, you’re gonna have to get every place that, a lot of places will not do delivery work because they don’t have the insurance and they’re afraid if the driver has an accident. You can add money to the state by getting everyone who does any type of delivery work that they have to have commercial plates on the car. And the other way with Lyft and Uber, they should have to have limo, regular limousine or livery plates on the car, so you can tell who they are.
I spoke to four different policemen. I said, do you ever pull the Uber, the Domino Pizza drivers over, they go, oh, all the time. I go, do you ever give them a ticket for having, not having the proper insurance? They look at me as oh, what’s the rule number? I’m sorry I’m sounding like a Philadelphia boy, but I also used to be a math teacher, so I have a little bit of education and I know the business inside out.

I could, if you want, I could write up for you the limo things and get it going. I know two years ago I was in Florida, I didn’t appear, but Joshua Limousine appeared. We had spoke, he wanted to do it. It’s like we’re in the wild, wild west and anyone can go work for any place and do delivery work and it won’t make a difference.

If they had the accident, the insurance companies are gonna cancel it. I mean, it, it reaches the point intelligence. In my condo association a woman’s license was suspended because she was drunk driving, okay. I said to the board, you cannot allow her to drive. There answer to me, oh, that’s a police matter, where it isn’t. We’re responsible because we knew about it, that’s what’s going on here.

I’m sorry to say, but right now Connecticut is the most backwards as far as allowing all this to go. I mean something be done, you can make more money, plus licensing, they would talk about limo licenses and everything. You can get everyone to have to have a license and do fingerprints. Do you think Uber bothers to do it? Plus here, here’s the best example of all, 20 people were killed in New York State several months ago. Everyone familiar with
that? The car was not properly inspected, was not authorized to be there and the driver was not supposed to be driving that car or working for any type of limo service.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Well, we don’t want that to happen here.

DAVID GREEN: But that’s what you’re setting yourself up for. You’re also, maybe also the law should be changed where when a car is inspected they check other things than just pollution. Car, I drove my cars, they were getting 250,000 miles.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Let me open it up for any other questions. Okay. Mr. Green, we thank you for your support. We’ll be in touch so that we can get some more feedback.

DAVID GREEN: You have my phone number, do I hope.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Make sure you drop it off with the Clerk, that’s fine.

DAVID GREEN: I mean, I’ve had already several radio stations that want my information to put it forward. I’ve waited to come here because I don’t want to put pie in anyone’s face.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): That’s okay. Thank you. Next up, Elizabeth Emery, is she here, yes.

ELIZABETH EMERY: Oh, I think it’s good evening. And --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Almost, but we’re almost here, thank you.

ELIZABETH EMERY: I don’t know, I’m not sure, I think it is. To the Transportation Chairs and the Committee members, I’m here speaking in favor of
testimony for the proposed Senate Bill No. 775, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT LOOP TRAIL.

I also do sit on my Council Planning and Zoning Committee and I can say that it certainly fits within our plan of conservation and development. I certainly cannot speak for the Planning and Zoning Commission. We certainly haven’t had time. I just found out about this on Saturday, but it certainly does fit within what the city would be interested in doing. And the city’s Complete Streets Committee, which I am Co-Chair of, is also very much in favor of seeing this bill pass.

A couple of people spoke earlier today and made a lot of really good points. So, I don’t want to go over everything that’s on my testimony. But I do want to point out, as Representative Lemar, you were talking about New Haven and I think New Haven is a really excellent example of using bicycling infrastructure. And I would like to see more communities in Connecticut be able to do that. The mileage here that we’re talking about in this bill is a short mileage, it’s about 20, 24 miles or so, connecting the Air Line Trail over to Cheshire and moving through a couple of communities.

What is unique about that is that the Middletown Portland area, Meriden are, you know, Portland’s not a city, but I know it’s debatable whether Middletown’s a city, but we’ll say it’s a city. Meriden is a city. That’s a large urban area. And while the trail does travel through a lot of communities, a lot of them are towns. It doesn’t have the density of population. It doesn’t have as much, how the best way to put it in terms of the
equity that needs to be built into our transportation option.

So, the trail would pass, the Loop Trail, the full piece, we’re not asking to fund that, most of that’s there. But it travels through Cheshire and Southington, Plainville, Farmington, Avon, Simsbury, Bloomfield.

Okay, you’ve got your big urban center areas with Hartford East, Hartford/Manchester, but then the other end of the Air Line Trail, you’re really getting out to urban areas.

People are driving to go to use the trails recreationally. And yes, they are using them for transportation. But my point is with this gap section here, you’re really, it is going to become a transportation hub, particularly connecting to the Meriden Rail Trail, so you really get that multi-modal piece that you want with people walking, with people biking, with people taking the train, with people taking the bus.

So, for a small investment for a short distance, which is attempting to close the gap, I think it’s well spent money in terms of transportation. And I just wanted to point out that when you increase travel mode by bicycle and walking, instead of the personal car on shorter, on your shorter trips, you significantly do reduce the greenhouse gas emissions, the roadway congestion, the parking woes. And studies will also tell you that once you put in the infrastructure, and I think that’s what we’re seeing happening in New Haven, is you’re getting, you know, under three to five miles in length, when the infrastructure is there, people are gonna bike and walk. And then you start to see some of those
significant improvements in people’s health and the health of the environment.

I also just wanted to point out, and I think my time is up. But I wanted to also point out, lots of economic opportunities were mentioned in a lot of areas. The DEEP, has a section on their website, the benefits of trails and greenways. And it’s a nice compendium of some studies that can be used as a resource too, as you’re doing some work.

And then the last thing that I would also like to point out is that this, this Senate Bill No. 775, it, with this, it supports achieving some of the stated goals of ConnDOT that, and, and purely within their recently established and published ConnDOT, the 2019 active transportation plan, and it also supports the Connecticut’s Complete Streets Law, that you know was enacted in 2019.

So, I think it’s a really great unique opportunity to do some of the trail work, even if, say, the East Coast Greenway, certainly I don’t think they’re opposed to this, but they’d like to see the East Coast Greenway finished first.

I would say that allowing for this gap to combine two urban areas into this bigger loop is really gonna help in transportation across the state and the urban areas.

So, I thank you very much for hearing me and I’m happy to take any questions, if you have some.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Are there any questions?

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Yes.
SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Absolutely. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here and spending, I’m sure you’ve been here for a long time, too. But we appreciate your passion and what you’ve shared with us.

I did have to step out for a bit, so I’m not sure if this is true or not, but I think, well, I have only heard testimony in support of this bill. And in concept, love it. We have a trail in my district that’s a huge recreational asset and it’s wonderful.

What would be the opposition? I mean, clearly we’re in a fiscal crisis, we’ve got issues and priorities and all of that. Take that aside, are there reasons to not do this or where there’s --

ELIZABETH EMERY: I mean, assuming that the land use that, you know, everybody agrees to the land use and sort of the linkage, how you make it happen. And in concept, that’s in place. I think it is about the funding, but it’s also with the state’s support of the DEEP and ConnDOT and a bill that helps to move this process along, it allows us to keep moving forward with putting together all the pieces that need to happen. And when you ask if there’s any opposition, I, it’s a pretty noncontroversial topic to a large extent trails, except for they cost money and some people who have real estate are nervous about that, but I think they’re beginning to see that it really does increase the value of real estate. It’s more that there’s other entities that want those monies and they want it spent in their communities.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure.
ELIZABETH EMERY: So, I’m trying to make the point that you might get, well, it’s a great idea, but we really need to finish this section first. And everybody wants to see all the trails finished, but I’m saying I think you have a unique opportunity here because of the urban areas. And we haven’t built out our trails as much in the urban areas. So, making those connections is really gonna lead not to just the recreational use of the trail, but really starting to use the trails and some of it would be built out on the roadway as well. But using it as a mode of transportation, so people really start to see.

I can get to my class on bike. I can get to work on bike. And these trails for many people make a really big difference in their perception of safety. Not always the reality of safety, but certainly their perception and they’re gonna get on their bike and ride if they can do it on the trail. And they’re not gonna do that on many of our roadways.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Sure. Great. Thank you. Thank you for --

ELIZABETH EMERY: Thank you very much.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): -- providing that perspective.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

ELIZABETH EMERY: Okay. Thank you. Have a good evening.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you for hanging to this late hour. Next up Steve Changaris, followed by Danielle Batchelder.
STEVE CHANGARIS: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Steve Changaris, I’m the Connecticut Chapter Manager for the National Waste and Recycling Association and we bring you greetings from the world of recycling and trash.

We’re here today on 710. Solid waste touches all of us in so many different ways, whether you put it out to curb, or you have a transfer station in town or whether your community pays the trash bill or if you have to work with your people at your office to set out the recyclables from the trash. So, it’s very much part of the fabric of life in Connecticut.

And the companies that I work with are involved in all phases of it and transportation is a big part of it. We’re asking today that the Senate Bill 710 be amended to include our trucks as well. The testimonies been presented to the committee. I just want to go over a couple of the key points in the testimony.

The one thing was the recent mirror shutdown. We’re asking for an increased truck weight limit because it would help, help with the economic efficiency of the movement of waste and also lower the carbon footprint. We hauled a lot of trucks out Hartford because of the, 200,000 tons a day went offline for some three months. So, and the backlog is still there and we’re trying to push that material out. The one thing about trash, we’re like a sewer system, the flow doesn’t stop, it just keeps coming.

So, and we were, we were struggling. We have access to rail. We have access to trucks. The heavier payloads on the trucks would have helped us move the material out of Hartford. You know, the other one
that’s, and that was sort of an immediate need that we would have had just in this immediate circumstance, past circumstance.

The other thing is that, you know, Connecticut is largely a self-sufficient state when it comes to managing its MSW, but there’s another section of the waste stream, notwithstanding the crisis at the Hartford plant. But the, there’s another part of the waste stream, the CND, the volume reduced waste stream, we sent about 900-million-tons a year. And then we also have all the recyclables, which is about another 800,000 tons of material. The markets for those materials and the disposal sites for those materials are out of state and the, very limited, they’re very restrictive weight limit keeps our operations from being as efficient as they can be.

And I’ve heard the testimony today about big trucks on the road and changes and we get that but, you know, the model that we’re envisioning is to try to be as economically efficient and safe to manage and move these materials.

So, the other piece of that ties into that, their harmonization. Some of the previous speakers spoke about that. A lot of our materials head into New York and west. Those states have a little bit more permissive truck weight permits. We’d like to try to harmonize our loads with those so that we could move the waste to those markets and those recyclables to those markets more efficiently, which is very important.

And the last one I want to touch on is the effect of the hours of service and the electric onboard recorders, which was mentioned earlier. We, the estimates that we’ve been, what we’ve heard from
our, you know, again, we have trucking companies. We too run CDL trucks and we have transfer stations and some of our guys run tractor trailers, but a lot of our facilities also hire third-party truckers. And in my trails of recent history, what I’ve heard experts say is that we’ve lost upwards of 40 percent of our driving capacity because of the electronic onboard recorders and new hours of service. All good safety stuff. But just think of it, if you had 10 tasks to do and you lost 40 percent of your ability to do those tasks, it’s just making everybody scramble that much harder. We all approve, we all approve and support the increased safety, but what we’re concerned about is trying to address the backlog. And the more payload, the more efficient we can be. We believe it could help address some of those problems.

So, those are the three or four things from the trash and recycling patch. We’d appreciate the consideration and, and to work with our regulators to harmonize our export of these materials to be more efficient and to do it in a safe and constructive way with a lot of state transportation oversight.

So, thank you very much for your attention today. Any questions, I’ll be glad to ask.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Yeah, a couple of questions, and I appreciate the testimony. And aside from the infrastructure question, problem that we have to address in terms of impact on our roadways and bridges, if this were to move forward. How many more or I should say, how many less rides would you be able to do in terms of efficiency, given the increased payload?
STEVE CHANGARIS: Yeah, I think that’s gonna be depending on the criteria and what we can do. If I might, could I, could I address the first part of that, the, the, that’s why we really think it’s important to sit with our regulators because some of this stuff we map very strict routes, the criteria that if we’re gonna, you know, ask for and get the higher weight limits, it would have to be very regulated. We’re not, we know about the infrastructure, we know about the roadways. We want to do it in as safe and efficient and less impactful manner as possible. So, we can do the planning on that with our regulators. The, one of my members up north said 1 out of 5 trucks, but I think it really depends on the weight limits. And I think in the discussions that we’ve had with the, with the, the various truck configurations with the axels and the load weight that they’re allowed to do with the federal highway formula, we don’t want a homerun here. We want a single. You know, we just want to be able to bump it up that 3 to 5,000 tons. And if we could do that, excuse me, that’s in Massachusetts. In Connecticut, I think we have to come up a little bit because you’re a lower rate. We have to come up to that 100,000. So, it’s in that range that we’re looking to do. And actually maybe up to a little bit like 102, somewhere in that range.

But we have to sit down, look at the load configurations, the axels and, and again, bring in the other state requirements and then try to work out the, you know, the exact permitting criteria that we can make it work.

And again, I think the trucking companies that I’ve spoke to, the members that are the third parties
that come into some of the transfer stations to move the material and to haul the recyclables, they’re looking at that kind of a range at maybe 3 to 5,000 pounds for payload. But that’s at a higher weight limit of the 99,000 pounds. I think the New York limit is 102.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): So, if we increase the weight limit you would, in theory, be having less trucks on the road --

STEVE CHANGARIS: Yeah.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): -- because you’re carting more, is that correct?

STEVE CHANGARIS: Right, exactly. And it would be more efficient and it’s, you know, it’s the whole dovetail effect. And I, again, these are transportation modes. Like one of my members said, Steve, you better be careful and go and make sure that you’re really prepared to tell them where the material goes. A lot of our waste materials goes to upstate New York and Pennsylvania and to Ohio. We send a lot of stuff out by train already.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Well, that was gonna be my follow up question. If you’re going so far and you have access to rail, rail would seem to me to be more efficient to go that distance because you could pack numerous rail cars with your product instead of sending out individual trucks.

So, why would you not try to be more efficient with the rails than you are with the trucks?

STEVE CHANGARIS: Again, as a trade association we favor all modalities, large truck, train, that kind of stuff. So, we’re, we’re neutral with that. But
in this case in the transportation segment, we, the, the, the message today is the relief on the truck weight legislation.

On the trains it’s the same kind of a thing. Even with the capacity problem that we had with the Hartford plant going down, you can’t get the trains in that quickly. Those, those train gondolas are very expensive pieces of equipment, huge inventories of rolling stock. You send trains out and they don’t come back quickly. So, trucking tends to be nimble. And I did a lot of work years ago on a federal preemption, and we worked with the DEEP and the department over there on this issue about unregulated transfer stations at rail sites. And the discussion there was, what I learned was that in a 250 mile radius, trucking pretty much is it.

In a 250 to 500 mile radius, trucking and trains are competitive depending. More than 500 miles, trains sort of win on the transportation part.

If you look at the region that, you know, a waste commodity or a recycling commodity, trucking is a huge part of the management of that. We want to use the facilities as close to us as possible in the management. So, that dictates a truck. And, you know, the other thing in, in, in transportation, we are, there are, there are forces in the industry today that are working very hard with the federal regulators and to try to move more MSW, which is trash by rail. We’ve got the CND part down pretty good because CND is very heavy and very amenable to rail. We have some more logistical problems to overcome with the management of MSW by rail. So, that’s why trucking is perhaps, you know, and again,
if you look at the regional disposal model, we’re probably more in that 250 to 500 frame.

So, you know, we, we, and again, we favor all modalities. You know, I’ve got a lot of different masters in the association, but we really do want to see, you know, the, the Connecticut rules to come into better conformity, harmonization with the region. Because it will help with the, with the efficiency of the movement of the materials in the region and cut down on trucks --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you.

STEVE CHANGARIS: -- which lowers the carbon footprint.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): I’ll leave it there. We’ll probably keep this discussion going. So, I appreciate your testimony because I know it’s late.

STEVE CHANGARIS: It’s been a long day. Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Next up Danielle Batchelder.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Do you want to correct that?

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Yes, please.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Clearly, I’m not Danielle. I am Dr. Terrell Hill. I am Danielle Betchelder’s colleague and this is what happens if you leave your office door open and people get double booked.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. I’m sorry, can you just repeat your name?
DR. TERRELL HILL: Dr. Terrell Hill, T-e-r-r-e-l-l, last name Hill. And I’m the Assistant Superintendent at Windsor Public Schools.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Got it.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Danielle and I work together.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay.

DR. TERRELL HILL: So, I’m here, again, I’d like to say first and foremost, thank you Chairman’s Lemar and Leone and committee members for allotting me this time to speak on behalf of Danielle for CASBO.

I know folks have spoken earlier and I just wanted to share some points without trying to repeat everything about House Bill 6959. And I’m speaking both as a professional educator for a long time and one who’s at the table when we’re discussing finances as well as a parent. I have older ones who are no longer in public school and I still have a 12-year-old who is on the school bus every single day.

So, I’d like to say first and foremost, school buses are extremely safe. I understand in so many capacities that when something happens, no one wants to lose one child, not one. It’s absolutely tragic.

However, with that being said, school buses are still much, much, much safer than the other modes of transportation to school, be that walking for students, riding bikes, many students skateboard, and even parents dropping off children in their own private vehicles.

School buses, unlike years ago when I rode school buses with the very short backs and the short seats, they’ve definitely improved the safety of the seats
for students. They have the higher backs and higher fronts and so the students are actually encapsulated. The terminology that’s used is the egg crate model. And even that reduces the impact that happens with school buses when they have accidents.

And again, I want us to remember that that’s what they are, they’re accidents. So, there’s so many things we can do and it’s, you know, we can say, we need this, we need that. And you can’t argue against saying, seat belt, I can’t sit here and say seat belts are bad, that’s not what I’m here to say.

What I am here to say is that adding the seat belts can add some other possible concerns. In particular, the way seat belts, if they’re not put on properly, as speaker, earlier Ms. Cronin stated that and if they’re not trained properly, students can put seat belts on improperly and during an accident they could potentially harm themselves internally.

The 3-point harness is another option. However, we need to think about the reality and functionality where students are going to school in the mornings, you have high school students on that bus, my size, you know, so not so little. And in, later on in the morning, you could have a kindergarten student on that bus. And we all know from our own private vehicles, that seat belts do not adjust from adult sizes to children sizes. So, that’s something that has to be considered.

And ultimately, when there is an accident, the NTSB and the National Highway Traffic Safety Bureau, when they study these accidents for the last 40 years, they’ve never conclusively said that if there were
seat belts, this would not have happened. And I shudder to think what happens when a student is in a seat belt, in a bus, and the worst possible position for that bus to be on its side or upside down, and that student’s panicking and cannot get out of that harness, whether it’s 3-point or a waste.

And then finally the cost, you know, ultimately this becomes an unfunded mandate yet again to districts and districts currently, we’re all struggling with finances.

In Windsor, in particular, this would be just over $700,000, you know, cost to the district to meet this. These are not little things that we’re talking about. Districts are all struggling. This is budget season. We are spending many nights cutting, you know, lots of things are left on the floor and this is just one more thing that I think would just stress districts when we already have extremely safe school buses.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Dr. Hill, it’s good to always hear a different perspective on this issue. Because as you mentioned, we’re not here to advocate that seat belts don’t help people. So, I thank you for putting in that terminology.

And yeah, we have to figure out what is the balancing act here and how can we make our children’s lives safer in buses, even though the buses are one of the safer modes of transportation to and from school.

So, I don’t want to get into all the same issues we talked about. I guess the one question I’ll ask you that was alluded to before about seat belts can
sometimes be a detriment in the sense that if the car’s, if the bus is tipped over, and they’re strapped in and they can’t get out and they might be panicking, or it might not be in properly. I guess the only, as I’m thinking through this, the only push back I would ask or maybe you can comment on is if a bus is flipping over and they are not seated, and that child is being tossed around and is that potentially something more to be concerned about than a person who is safe in the seat belt than only to have to worry about how to get out later. It’s like what is more critical, being able to be tossed around and then knowing you can escape once it’s stopped, if you’re not injured, or to be safely in the seat belt, it gets rolled, you’re not being tossed around, you’re not getting injured and then all you have to worry about is how to get out. As long as the bus is not going to explode, you have personnel that are on their way.

So, that would be the only reason why I might push back on that kind of scenario. But I, I think what you address is something that we do have to consider because it’s just not a cut and dry issue as much as some would like to make it as that and we have to hear all sides. So, I don’t know if you want to comment on that or not, you don’t have to. But I just wanted to make that as my own personal perspective.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Sure, Chairman Leone. As you said, and I want to stress again, this is not something you can argue, this is good, this is bad, not at all. I would say that’s probably, that scenario is probably the most extreme situation with a bus accident if we look at the last 40 years of school bus accidents. They’re, most typically,
they’re not accidents that result in buses rolling, they either are just hit and even the structure of a bus is designed to take impact very different from a vehicle, where most of the impact hits at the lower part of the frame between the wheel bases. So, they can take a much greater impact than our cars.

But you’re right, in a situation where bus is rolling and rolling, than that would be a scenario where I would assume, and I’m not an expert on that situation where seat belts would be better, but that’s, that extreme situation.


REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, listening to testimony on this issue today it’s been rather informative. And when I heard the proponent of the bill this morning it was all, you know, very compelling. But, so the state provides no money to your town for school business transportation, is that correct?

DR. TERRELL HILL: Correct.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, if this was to be imposed at the state level, that would result in an added cost of $700,000 to your town?

DR. TERRELL HILL: Yes.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): So, an unfunded mandate from the state. But should any community choose, like we’ve learned, right, communities have the option. So, it’s not necessarily just a financial issue, there may be situations where there’s more risk in a community and they feel like putting in seat belts is really important or maybe there’s areas that are
not as intense. I don’t know for sure. But the point is that local communities have the option to implement this, should they choose, which kind of is within their span of control of funding and everything else.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Correct, so that’s what the community would decide, if that’s, you know, the need is so great or the desire so great that they will figure out how we’re going to fund this thing as --

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Okay. Just wanted to make sure I had my facts straight after hearing different testimony today. I appreciate that very much and thank you for spending part of your day with us and waiting to share your thoughts on this bill. Thank you.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. So, just for a line of clarification, you would rather keep this as a local option, not a mandate from the state?

DR. TERRELL HILL: Yes, absolutely.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you very much, appreciate your testimony.

DR. TERRELL HILL: Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Next, Mr. Pedro Pagan, is he here? After Mr. Pagan, I should say, Steve Guveyan.

STEVE GUEYAN: Steve Guveyan. The other witness left.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Okay. All right. But when you got up, I’m assuming. All right, so, Mr. -- how do you say your last name?
STEVE GUVEYAN: Guveyan.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Guveyan, thank you. I don’t mean to, any disrespect there.

STEVE GUVEYAN: Thank you, Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, members of the committee. I’m Steve Guveyan from the Connecticut Petroleum Council. Our shop represents major oil companies, refineries. We’ve been through the zone pricing to date, so probably we’re good witnesses, a good witness for purposes of today. The term zone pricing, everybody uses it. I think the real meaning of it is uniform pricing. It referred to the price that a wholesaler would sell gasoline to, to a retailer.

So, our companies would be companies like Shell, back then Exxon and Mobile were different companies, Sunoco was a major oil company, all of that’s changed. But the group as a whole owned a good chunk of service stations in Connecticut, probably a third or a little bit more than a third. That has changed dramatically since we started this debate years ago. And those companies have sold off the stations. And the argument back then was that if you guys were not zone pricing, prices in Fairfield County would not be higher.

So, the companies went in individually to the General Law Committee, which was the committee of jurisdiction at that time and individually, not in a public forum like this, showed what their prices were. And they defended the prices, making the point that they are reflective of the market. The companies do not work with each other, they compete against each other and they’re subject to all of the antitrust rules, but the market there is higher. And the question came up, Senator Hwang’s question
of why is the market different, why are the prices here higher? And the answer, and it took us a while to get the breakout that we needed.

The population in Fairfield County, especially lower Fairfield County, you can either look at it like there are too many people or you can look at it like they’re not enough gas stations. But we did a breakout really for the entire state. And when you breakout Fairfield County, the number of people per station was, you know, way off from the statewide average. Way too many people, way too few stations.

So, you know, Washington Boulevard sold to the Mobile station there went where the Lexus dealership was, there was a Texaco stuck and you know the history. Some of those stations we did not want to sell as an industry or the companies that owned them did not want to sell them. They were required to. Where UBS was, that was taken by eminent domain. You can’t fault the city, I mean, there’s a lot more jobs coming in from UBS than one gas station. But that kind of thing has played out in different places around the state.

So, and it’s really been lower Fairfield County. So, when that happens, we have too many people for the number of stations that we have. And generally when that happens, you see higher prices. The zone pricing debate really came before when you have a guy who’s selling gasoline to let’s say a half a dozen stations. Five of them have regular competition. There are a couple of stations in the vicinity. So, there is a going rate at the wholesale price.

However, that last station has got not just a couple of gas stations, but a BJ’s and a super Stop and
Shop and various severe price competition. So, where zone pricing as it was called or differential pricing is probably a better term for it came into effect was, the wholesaler would charge that station with the tough competition a lower price in order to keep them in the business. So, whether it was the tough competition or the price that an earlier witness made about being close to the Massachusetts line, you know, wholesalers don’t want to just give up a few cents a gallon. But they do it if it means keeping that gas station in business because the alternative is the gas station closes and you leave out, lose all your business. So, that’s how it came to be. That’s why prices ended up in Fairfield County higher.

The major oil companies have since sold all their stations. So, the argument that if you guys in the major oil company world were not zone pricing and were not here, prices would be a lot lower, has historically proved to be false. We sold all our stations. Exxon and Mobile and Shell and Sunoco, they don’t own any stations here anymore, they sold them to other companies and yet the price structure has not changed. And the point is, that is just a reflection of the market.

In some parts of the state it is more competitive and in some parts of the state, it’s less competitive. More competitive in Windham County, less competitive in lower Fairfield County. And that’s been that way for a long time.

You may not be happy with the answer, but we try to give it to you as it is.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Yeah, my constituents aren’t happy, but I understand. Thank you for that
testimony. Maybe we can get some updated data that would be helpful for us.

STEVE GUVEYAN: Yes.

SENIOR LEONE (27TH): But I appreciate the testimony. We’ve gone around in circles on this. So, I don’t think we have to go over the same things. So, are there any other questions? Senator Martin.

SENIOR MARTIN (31ST): Not a question but thank you Mr. Guveyan.

STEVE GUVEYAN: Steve.

SENIOR MARTIN (31ST): Steve. It might be best if you take a few minutes and contact Senator Hwang and have this conversation with him. I think it would enlighten him quite a bit.

STEVE GUVEYAN: I’d be happy to do that. Thank you for the suggestion.

SENIOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Steve, appreciate the input. Okay. We’re getting close to the end. There’s a few more names. Mr. Mike Mercuriano, Mercuriano, is he here? No. Gannon Long? Mr. Kevin Sullivan? Mr. Mike Lemuel? You’re up, Mike. You may be, you’re the last one on our list. As you come up and get ready, if there’s anyone here after Mike, who hasn’t signed up and you wish to testify, please let the Clerk know and we’ll let you up next. But if not, sir, you have the floor.

MIKE LEMUEL: Thank you for recognizing me. Senator, I came in support of 775. However, I felt that there was a much more pressing matter here in Bill 66. I heard several times that there is no
need for nonemergency stretcher use. And I went to school with a person that had no limbs. Did not need any medical care with him while he was in school. I volunteer with Gaylord Hospital Sports Association and I see patients that participate in sports. They have already been cleared by their doctors to safely participate in sports. Some of those may choose that, you know, a stretcher transportation is best suited for them.

They talked about the cost it’ll be to us if this is not covered by Medicare. And I think the cost it’ll be if I have to employ an ambulance for stretcher care that I don’t need, for a medical assistant I don’t need.

Whether this cost for nonemergency transportation is being covered by Medicare, it’s still coming out of Connecticut taxpayers and that’s just as important. When we’re saving money for the nation, we’re saving money for ourselves.

Also, her testimony on the study of automated traffic enforcement, S.B. 422 and H.B. 5934, for the pedestrian safety at crosswalks, both of these specifically I have been involved with. I was struck by a school bus that had run a light and if I hadn’t seen a school bus number, I would not have been able to call them back to the scene to let them know that they had struck me.

If there had been a traffic signal to catch that, you know, red light running, they would not have been able to tell the police officer that I wasn’t there, I didn’t hit him, it would have been on a camera.
This last summer I was attempting to break the Guinness world record for single leg cycling here on Farmington Canal Trail. I was on my way back from the first loop and a vehicle was stopped at a crosswalk for another pedestrian. The pedestrian had just barely gone beyond their vehicle and they started to go through the crosswalk, not recognizing that I had entered into the crosswalk. We did not make contact because I swerved out of the way. But in doing so, I injured myself and I was not able to continue that day because of the pain.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Well, thank you for the testimony on all the bills that you’ve raised, all very important. And we all appreciate you not just hanging in here all this time, but putting some real, real world scenario to some of these issues. I think sometimes that’s overlooked. And we do appreciate that. And, and we take that to heart. So, thank you for taking the time to share with us your life experiences that were not always so positive. But it does directly correlate to some of the issues we’re grappling with. And so having your input does help us try and form an opinion here. So, I think it’s very much appreciated.

And I do appreciate your support on the S.B. 66, because we are grappling with that issue with the transport of someone that is not medically necessary for a stretcher vehicle.

So, we’ll make sure that some of the other members hear that testimony. And you get other folks giving you a call, if you’re up for it, on some of your input.
MIKE LEMUEL: Absolutely, I’ll provide my contact information.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Thank you. Let me open it up to any questions. Representative Devlin.

REP. DEVLIN (134TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you for being here and for sharing your testimony with us today. We listen to, as you know, you’ve been here all day and came up with a list of bills to talk about as a result of it. And not to say certain testimony is more compelling than others, but I will tell you, it is clear you spoke from your heart. The emotion that drove you to share your story will absolutely stay with us. It is the kind of testimony that your provided today that is the kind that we particularly draw on when we’re debating issues, whether it is furthering our committee, or should things advance to the floor.

I hope that you feel like your day here has been well spent, because it was incredibly impactful to have you speak with us.

MIKE LEMUEL: Thank you very much, Representative.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Any other questions? Well, if not, Mr. Lemuel, I think your testimony was a great closing point. So, thank you for the time. And with that, that will end our hearing, unless there’s anyone in the audience, oh --

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Yes, I just wanted to make a comment for the --

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): Yes, absolutely, Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST): Senator Miner wanted to be here to testify today, but he took ill and needed to
go home. So, but he will drop off his written testimony first thing in the morning.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH): We will make sure to add that into the record.

Before final closeout, is there any comments, other comments by members or is there anyone in the audience that would wish to testify that hasn’t? Great.

So, for members, just be on the lookout for messaging from the Clerk for the next meetings. And with that, the public hearing meeting will come to a close.

Thank you.