



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

February 19, 2021

**Testimony in Support of P.H.B. No. 5423: AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF
PASSENGER TRAIN AND GROUND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN EASTERN
CONNECTICUT
Transportation Committee**

Representative Lemar, Senator Cassano, Representative Simms, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, we are writing to ask you to support H.B. 5423: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Passenger Train and Ground Transportation Services in Eastern Connecticut.

H.B. 5423 provides an opportunity for the State of Connecticut to expand travel options to Rhode Island and Massachusetts, relieve traffic congestion on our roads and highways, expand economic development along the train lines, and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and pollutants to improve air quality.

Southeastern Connecticut has for decades relied on I-95 to connect our corner of the state to Rhode Island and Connecticut's other major highways. Over the years, as our population has grown, we have been faced with the constant need to address the capacity and infrastructure of our highways and the Gold Star Bridge. By extending Shore Line East, beginning a Norwich Line, and adding new stations in Groton and Stonington Borough, we will reduce the strain on our existing infrastructure, saving money in the long run and reducing traffic congestion on our roads. Fewer cars on the road and a new option for commuter travel allows workers, especially first responders, healthcare workers, and essential workers, to be able to reach their destinations in a timely and reliable manner.

Improving train service in southeastern and eventually eastern CT will provide residents and out-of-state visitors and workers with more options to commute, potentially attracting more visitors to a part of the state that relies heavily on tourism. In the long term, this project will require specialized workers to conduct and manage these sites, supporting job creation in the region, and the potential increase in tourism will benefit small businesses that are currently only accessible by car, bike, or foot. Any improvement to intra- and interstate travel provides new opportunity to residents and visitors alike, increases the likelihood that visitors will choose to spend money in Connecticut, and strengthens our state's economy.

The expansion of rail services is also a reliable way for Connecticut to meet our climate goals and take a major step toward a future of low-carbon emissions and clean air. Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, making up 28%



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of carbon dioxide and its equivalent emissions which contribute to climate change,¹ and 55% of all nitrogen oxide emissions which contribute to poor air quality.² Innovation in this sector of our economy is one of the most productive ways for us to slow climate change and reduce pollution.

While trains have a varying amount of environmental impact depending on their fuel and passenger usage, electric M8 locomotives are already being used successfully on the New Haven Line and are being tested on Shore Line East. The potential for usage of M8 railcars on the future line from New London to Rhode Island and Norwich should be a key part of the study ordered by this bill. Not only are these railcars more environmentally-friendly than their diesel-powered alternatives, they are quieter, safer, more comfortable, and can accommodate the addition of single cars to adapt to increases in ridership. From 2012 to 2016, ridership growth of the M8 trains on the New Haven Line was "at or above the high end of expectations,"³ resulting in orders for additional railcars, and demonstrating the potential of efficient, environmentally-friendly public transit. Connecticut has been at the forefront of U.S. innovation for rail service with the introduction of these electric railcars and conducting this study to potentially expand service to Rhode Island and eventually Massachusetts would demonstrate our state's leadership in this area.

Even if it were determined that electric railcars were not feasible for these new lines, reducing the number of cars on the road is always a positive development. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2010, heavy rail produces 76% less in greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than the average single occupancy vehicle, and that difference increases when more passengers ride a single train. When factoring in the emissions cost of constructing the infrastructure required of rail travel, both heavy and light rail still dramatically outperform passenger vehicles.⁴ Amtrak, which operates both diesel and electric trains, is "47% more energy efficient than traveling by car," and has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% since 2010, the equivalent of removing more than 51,000 passenger vehicles from the roads, according to the U.S. Department of Energy in 2019.⁵ Connecting existing train lines is also environmentally beneficial, as it reduces the need for people to switch to other modes of travel to make the connection themselves.

While the fuel economy of passenger vehicles and the amount of pollutants in fuel have been dramatically improved over the past several decades thanks to innovation and stricter emissions

¹ Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

² Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/smog-soot-and-local-air-pollution>

³ Connecticut Department of Transportation. <https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/News-from-the-Connecticut-Department-of-Transportation/2016/MTA-Metro-North-Railroad-to-Receive-Up-to-94-Additional-M8-Cars-for-the-New-Haven-Line>

⁴ United States Department of Transportation. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>

⁵ United States Department of Energy, Amtrak. <https://www.amtrak.com/travel-green>



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regulations, and electric vehicles are becoming more accessible, we have a long way to go before they are the norm. Our reliance on cars has contributed to poor air quality and led to widening streets and highways, stressed infrastructure, and stressed travelers sitting in traffic. By considering the extension of Shore Line East to Rhode Island and north to Massachusetts, Connecticut has the opportunity to demonstrate our leadership in transportation innovation and to provide new routes for economic development and environmental sustainability.

We encourage you all to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Christine Conley in black ink.

Representative Christine Conley
40th District

Handwritten signature of Brian Smith in black ink.

Representative Brian Smith
48th District

Handwritten signature of Kevin Ryan in black ink.

Representative Kevin Ryan
139th District

Handwritten signature of Joe de la Cruz in black ink.

Representative Joe de la Cruz
41st District

Handwritten signature of Anthony Nolan in black ink.

Representative Anthony Nolan
39th District

Handwritten signature of Cathy Osten in black ink.

Senator Cathy Osten
19th District