



Representative Lamar, Senator Cassano and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Jim Gildea, and I am the Chairman of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council. I am offering written testimony IN SUPPORT OF:

HOUSE BILL NUMBER 5423

AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF PASSENGER TRAIN AND GROUND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN EASTERN CONNECTICUT.

In my opinion ***House Bill 5423*** would significantly benefit the region and public transportation in Connecticut. It would promote transit-oriented development, reduce highway traffic congestion, reduce carbon emissions, and further the state's overall policy goals for economic development. In addition, it would provide support for our industrial base and retain our workforce. Expanding commuter rail is particular importance to the Town of Groton, City of Groton and the City of New London as Electric Boat's expansion plans already under way will translate into between six and twelve thousand additional employees over the next twenty years, increasing traffic in an already congested road system and exacerbating existing parking challenges.

The expansion of passenger rail service in Eastern Connecticut could potentially involve 2 different components.

The first proposes extending Shore Line East (SLE) passenger service from New London to Groton Center, Mystic and Westerly, Rhode Island as a part of a larger regional commuter rail system that would connect and enhance service between New York, Providence and Boston. Extension of SLE passenger service is one of the Southeast Connecticut Council of Government's (SCCOG) FY 2019 - 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan's regional priorities and has been talked about for over a decade at CDOT.

The second part of the proposal is establishing a new *CT Rail* commuter shuttle service using existing Providence and Worcester Railroad (P&W) (now the Genessee and Wyoming Railroad) tracks that run along the east bank of the Thames River connecting Pfizer, Electric Boat and the U.S. Navy Submarine Base. The P&W tracks extend further to Norwich and north to Massachusetts making possible future expansion of commuter service in Connecticut. Existing infrastructure allows P&W freight trains to access Amtrak tracks east and west. In Groton there are three existing parallel tracks that would make transfers of passengers between trains possible at a new Groton Center Station.

Eighty percent of Electric Boat 's employees live outside of Groton and New London, and almost all commute by automobile. While the anticipated addition of thousands of new hires bodes well for economic growth, unless it is accompanied by modern commuter rail and local smart transit-oriented development (TOD) plans, it will increase traffic congestion, have a negative environmental impact and reduce its economic benefit.

This proposal would significantly improve the movement of people from home to work (and play) with the benefits of reducing - rather than increasing - traffic congestion, carbon pollution, commuting time and highway maintenance costs. These outcomes are a major goal of TOD and would greatly contribute to the continued growth and success of southeastern Connecticut as a major industrial and tourism center in Connecticut.

The Rail Council urges passage of House Bill 5423 and the expansion of commuter rail service for southeastern Connecticut.