



# City of New London

## Office of the Mayor

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### STATEMENT

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

I am the Mayor of New London submitting written testimony in support of: **HOUSE BILL NUMBER 5423 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF PASSENGER TRAIN AND GROUND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN EASTERN CONNECTICUT.**

The City of New London strongly supports the expansion of passenger rail service in New London and eastern Connecticut. Last year we had requested the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) to undertake a study to expanding passenger rail service for our region. The potential for extending and connecting existing rail lines would significantly benefit the City of New London, our region and public transportation in Connecticut. This proposal would provide support for our existing industrial base, and be attractive for new businesses and employees. Expanding commuter rail is of particular importance to the City of New London and Groton as Electric Boat's expansion plans already under way are expected to bring twelve thousand additional employees over the next twenty years, increasing traffic on an already congested road system and exacerbating existing parking challenges.

Expanded commuter rail service supports transit-oriented development, reduces highway traffic congestion, reduces carbon emissions – (38% of Green House Gas emissions are from the transportation sector in CT), furthers the state's overall policy goals for economic development, and protects the quality of our environment.

The feasibility and operational study required in the bill would include two 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 the larger regional commuter rail system that would, in time, connect and enhance rail service between New York, Providence and Boston. It would link the commuter rail systems in southern New England. 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 is also listed in the Connecticut Transportation Plan of 2016.

The second part of the proposal is establishing a new *CT Rail* commuter passenger train service using the existing Providence and Worcester Railroad (P&W), now the Genessee and Wyoming Railroad tracks that run along the east bank of the Thames River. This new proposed branch line to be known as the Norwich Branch Line would connect, door-to-door, Pfizer, Electric Boat and the U.S. Navy Submarine Base with passenger train service. The P&W tracks extend further to Norwich and north to Massachusetts making future expansion of commuter service in eastern Connecticut

possible. Existing track infrastructure of the P&W system (running north and south) already runs parallel to the Amtrak rails (running east and west) in Groton. A new Groton Center Train Station would then make transfers of passengers between the two train systems possible.

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

This proposal will improve the movement of people from home to work and play with the benefits of reducing highway traffic congestion, carbon pollution, commuting times, and highway maintenance costs. These outcomes would greatly contribute to the continued growth and success of eastern Connecticut as a major industrial and tourism center in Connecticut and supports the CT2030 Transportation Plan.

An expansion of a well-planned modern passenger train service on existing tracks will reduce our carbon footprint here in New London and will help mitigate climate change for all.

The City of New London urges support and passage of H.B No. 5423 and starting this study by CDOT for the expansion of commuter rail service for New London and eastern Connecticut.

Please let me know if you need further information.

Respectfully,

Michael E. Passero, Mayor



City of New London

Cc:

Governor Lamont

Joseph Gulletti, Commissioner, CTDOT

Garrett Eucalitto, Deputy Commissioner, CT DOT

Bob Ross, Executive Director, State of Connecticut, Office of Military Affairs

Kim Lesay, Bureau Chief, CTDOT, Bureau of Policy and Planning

Richard W. Andreski, Bureau Chief, CTDOT Public Transportation

Richard Jankovich, Rail Administrator, CTDOT, Bureau of Public Transportation Office of Rail

Kevin Graney, President, General Dynamics Electric Boat

Captain Todd Moore, Commanding Officer, Naval Submarine Base, New London

John Burkhardt, Sr VP Global Head, Drug Safety R & D, Groton Site Director, Pfizer

John Burt, Groton Town Manager

Mayor Patrice Granatosky, Town of Groton

Mayor Keith Hedrick, City of Groton

First Selectman Danielle Chesebrough, Town of Stonington

Mayor Peter Nystrom, City of Norwich

James Butler, Executive Director, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Government