

Transportation Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5917
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISION ZERO
Title: COUNCIL.
Vote Date: 3/10/2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 1/30/2023
File No.: 304

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Transportation Committee

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REASONS FOR BILL:

Connecticut is currently enduring an on-going increase in transportation-related fatalities by various modes. To help combat and hopefully bring an end to deaths brought on by transportation-related fatalities, the Vision Zero Council was created. The council has brought attention to a few correlations of specific incidences such as wearing a helmet when riding a motorcycle as well as consuming an alcoholic beverage while driving. Therefore, the council has some recommendations that could help prevent any further deaths.

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE

The language clarifies that the open container provision refers to to-go containers and resealed wine bottles; requires the DOT to reward participating local and regional education boards with "Vision Zero" program distinctions; clarifies language surrounding automated traffic enforcement safety devices.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation:

Commissioner Eucalitto supports this bill along with a few proposals including clarification on CTDOT's authority to acquire land for multi-use trails, which will allow for extended non-vehicular connectivity throughout our state; this is Section 4 of HB 5917. To enact a helmet law for all motorcycle riders; this is included in Section 3 of HB 5917. To enact an open container law; this is included in Section 1 of HB 5917. This section would prohibit open alcohol beverage containers in the passenger compartment of motor vehicles to meet national standards.

Colleen Murphy, Executive Director, Connecticut Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission

Supports this bill, which seeks to implement the recommendations of the Vision Zero Council and allows municipalities to authorize the use of automated traffic safety enforcement devices, but they have concerns with section 18 of the proposal, which limits the disclosure of aggregate information and other data for "research purposes" only. It is stated that the Commission believes that this language is vague, subject to varying interpretations, and may be applied to preclude the disclosure of important information to the public. It is recommended the Committee amends section 18 to exclude the language limiting disclosure for "research purposes" or clearly defining what constitutes a "research purpose" and identifying who may authorize disclosure.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Rep. Tammy Exum, Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, Rep. Kate Farrar, Rep. Bobby Gibson, Sen. Derek Slap, West Hartford Legislative Delegation, Connecticut General Assembly:

Supports this bill as it is a response to the high number of traffic accidents and fatalities involving pedestrians and motor vehicles. It is noted that West Hartford has seen 15 pedestrians and 7 bike riders struck by motor vehicles in 2022, and there were approximately 70 pedestrian fatalities in Connecticut in the same year. It is stated that this bill would require the Department of Transportation to study, design and implement traffic and pedestrian safety measures that include the latest technology, such as flashing signs and signals, elevated and three-dimensional crosswalks, and automated traffic enforcement safety devices. It is also stated that West Hartford is undertaking initiatives to improve traffic and pedestrian safety, such as undergoing an infrastructure master plan project and convening a task force to implement a "Vision Zero" action plan. They are pleased that the proposed bill seeks to adopt Vision Zero Education for grades 6-12 and stresses the importance of practicing safe driving habits and learning pedestrian safety skills.

Rep. Ron Napoli, Rep. Michael DiGiovancarlo, Rep. Larry Butler, Rep. Geraldo Reyes, Waterbury Legislative Delegation, Connecticut General Assembly:

Supports this bill particularly sections 16 to 20 allowing municipalities to implement red-light cameras. It is stated that the presence of red-light cameras will help deter drivers from running red lights and assist local police departments with enforcement. It is also stated that a well-designed program will offset its own cost in the short term and lower fatalities in the long term, citing studies by the IIHS showing that two-thirds of people support the use of red-light cameras. It is noted that many other states, including New York and Rhode Island, use similar technology. They hope that the proposed legislation will further protect citizens and pedestrians and address increasing danger on Connecticut roads.

Luke Bronin, Mayor, City of Hartford

Supports this bill because it includes provisions to increase traffic safety, specifically it empowers municipalities to install and operate red light cameras at key intersections near schools and where a history of motor vehicle accidents can be shown. It is noted the benefits of such initiatives in enforcing traffic laws and discouraging reckless driving. It is stated that they support section 7 of the bill, which calls for every municipality in Connecticut to adopt a Complete Streets prioritization plan to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit rides and Hartford has already completed such a plan.

Shari Cantor, Mayor of West Hartford

While the mayor supports the funding of the entire bill, she highlighted the following four key provisions that she said should be fully funded in the upcoming budget and implemented without delay: Section 6, Section 7, Section 15, and Section 17. Also citing that traffic deaths increased by 25% in 2022.

Caroline Simmons, Mayor, City of Stamford

Supports this bill implementing the Vision Zero Council recommendations state-wide and notes the troubling rise in pedestrian accidents and fatalities across the country, and in Connecticut. Recently, a tragic incident occurred in Stamford where two pedestrians were killed by an intoxicated driver on one of the city's main roads. It is stated that the bill is essential to prioritize pedestrian and transportation safety, and to work towards implementing equitable, safe planning and community-based solutions to achieve the goal of zero transportation-related fatalities across the state. It is also stated that the City of Stamford has established a Vision Zero initiative and is piloting projects to improve pedestrian safety but also highlights the need for additional support and partnership from the Department of Transportation and other statewide stakeholders.

Justin Elicker, Mayor, City of New Haven

Mr. Elicker Mayor of New Haven writes in support of the bill. Implementing the recommendations of the Vision Zero Council will positively improve safety and enhance mobility across New Haven. By enabling legislation at the state level, the city will be able to move forward with new initiatives, such as Idaho Stop, speed enforcement and red-light running cameras. The new techniques will reinforce traffic control and will improve the overall safety of our roads.

Neil M. O'Leary, Mayor and Fernando Spagnolo Jr., Chief of Police, City of Waterbury:

Supports this bill, in particular the inclusion of Section 17 and other applicable sections which, if passed, will allow municipalities to create ordinances to implement Automated Traffic Light

Enforcement. It is stated that the City of Waterbury has seen a significant increase in traffic fatalities and accidents, with a 122.22% increase in fatal crashes over the past year. It is noted that the factors for these crashes are speed, aggressive driving, distracted driving, and pedestrian awareness, and there continues to be an increase in traffic accidents. It is stated that they have identified top 10 roads where crashes occur in Waterbury, and the administration is willing and able to start as a pilot location for automated traffic light enforcement if chosen. It is further stated that automated traffic enforcement will help to hold violators accountable for their actions and reduce traffic accidents.

Karl Jacobson, Police Chief, New Haven Police Department

Offered testimony in support of this bill because this bill can help to improve public safety, reduce administrative burdens, and respond to the concerns of chiefs who are grappling daily with staffing and resource challenges.

Chris and Liz D'Antonio, Connecticut Residents:

Supports this bill as it aims to prevent traffic fatalities and serious injuries, particularly for vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. It is stated that while the bill is imperfect, it includes common-sense measures such as more driver education, which can reinforce safe driving and ensure all drivers understand the rules of the road. It is also stated that legalization of automated traffic enforcement is another important provision, so long as protections are in place to balance the necessity of this equitable and highly effective enforcement tool with personal privacy and safeguards against municipal abuse.

Paula Bacolini, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill because as a senior citizen, they are worried about traffic violence, especially when crossing the street. It is stated they are concerned about the increasing number of pedestrian and cyclist deaths and injuries in the state over the past year.

Moira Birmingham, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill because installing speed and red-light cameras will help with traffic control and reduce high-speed police chases. It is stated that privacy rights should not be a concern for behavior on public streets. It is also stated they support every city to creating a Complete Streets plan to encourage municipalities to plan for pedestrians and non-motorized or minimally motorized vehicles. It is further stated they support legalizing the "Idaho stop" for bicyclists and prohibiting drivers from turning right on red to improve intersection safety.

Dr. Kevin Borrup, Executive Director of the Injury Prevention Center, Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC):

Supports this bill supports this bill as it aims to reduce unintentional injury and violence against residents and children in Connecticut. It is stated that the bill includes provisions such as requiring motorcycle helmet use, bolstering driver education, and new restrictions on impaired driving. Various sections of the bill are highlighted that CCMC supports, including prohibiting passenger alcohol consumption in vehicles, implementing universal helmet use when riding a motorcycle, creating infrastructure designed to reduce risk for pedestrians and bicyclists, involving public sector staff and community-based leaders in achieving Vision Zero, using motorist safety videos during license renewal, creating media campaigns to address drug-related driving issues, and encouraging seatbelt use among vulnerable communities. It is stated overall, this bill seeks to address the social determinants of health, recognizing that only 10% of a child's overall health is determined by access to quality healthcare.

Anastasia Brewczynski, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill because it implements the recommendations of the Vision Zero Council to address the increase in traffic violence in Connecticut. It is suggested the Committee should add provisions to direct every city to create a Complete Streets plan, create a "Vision Zero" program for schools, require drivers to watch a video on traffic laws, legalize the "Idaho Stop", prohibit drivers from turning right on red, updating open container laws, implementing automated enforcement for speeding and red lights, and tying monetary fines to income. They also suggest speed cameras issue tickets based on the legal maximum speed limit and technological buffer needed for accuracy.

Thomas Broderick, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill because it is an incredible opportunity to makes roads safer for everyone and that the current status quo of roads is killing and injuring thousands every year. It is stated they support provisions such as automated traffic enforcement, lowering car speeds, eliminating Connecticut's open container law, allowing "Idaho Stops" while banning right turns on red, and implementing "Complete Streets" and bike lane portions of the bill.

Kenneth Cain, Lieutenant Colonel, Connecticut State Police (CSP):

Support of this bill in implanting the Vision Zero Council's mission to eliminate transportation-related deaths. It is stated that the CSP have been a part of the council since its creation and have worked with partner agencies to improve transportation safety. It is expressed their support for the council's proposed initiatives, including the creation of a law requiring helmets for motorcycle operators and passengers, a pilot program to test automated work zone speed enforcement, and the formalization of a Fatal Collision Reduction Team. It is also stated that the team would consist of municipal police officers and State Troopers who would conduct high visibility enforcement in data-driven locations where fatalities are predominant. It is noted that traffic fatalities in Connecticut are on the rise, and the proposed initiatives present actionable strategies to reduce fatalities and increase roadway safety.

Adam Callaghan, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill as they reside in New Haven without a car and experience the negative impacts of Connecticut's car-dominant policies, such as air and noise pollution and the prioritization of private car use over public transit. It is stated that the bill makes good strides toward addressing the critical and inequitable impact of traffic violence but suggests a few improvements to make it more effective and equitable. Recommended improvements included updating open container laws to reflect the priority of road safety for all users, implementing automated enforcement for speed and red lights, clarifying the procedure if a fine goes unpaid, tying monetary fines to income, issuing tickets based on the legal speed limit and ensuring accuracy, requiring drivers to watch a video on current traffic laws and retesting license holders at regular intervals, legalizing the Idaho Stop and prohibiting turns on red lights, creating a Complete Streets plan for every city, and creating a Vision Zero program for schools.

Karl Jacobson, Chief of the New Haven Police Department

Supports the bill stating that if passed, the automated traffic enforcement provision of this bill will aid in the reduction of traffic accidents, help to improve the safety of our roadways for all drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists while also reducing the administrative role of the police.

Sandeep Aysola, Director, Transportation, Traffic, and Parking Department, City of New Haven:

Supports this bill to implement the recommendations of the Vision Zero Council because these recommendations will improve safety and mobility in the community. Statistics from the UConn Connecticut Traffic Data Repository are supplied showing over 19,000 crashes in New Haven, including 635 bicyclist-related and 462 pedestrian-related crashes in less than three years. They emphasized the need for more aggressive interventions to address the disproportionate impact on vulnerable road users. It is stated that the City of New Haven has implemented various measures to improve traffic safety, including enhanced traffic safety units, traffic calming projects, and protected cycling facilities. It is also stated that with this new enabling legislation at the state level, the city plans to implement new initiatives such as the Idaho Stop, speed enforcement, and red-light running cameras to reinforce traffic controls and user patience.

Kirsten Bechtel MD, New Haven

Supports this bill saying that adopting these commonsense proposals from the Vision Zero Council will go a long way to addressing this epidemic. Some of these life-saving proposals include enacting a helmet law for all motorcycle riders will help to reduce the number of fatal head injuries that occur in motorcycle crashes. As an example, in 2017, if universal helmet laws were enacted in the US, an estimated 749 deaths from motorcycle crashes could have been prevented. Implementing automated traffic enforcement for speeding and red-light running is intended to enhance traditional traffic enforcement activities and remind drivers there is always a risk of “getting caught” running a red light or speeding. Red light and speed cameras have been shown to reduce crashes with bodily injury. Automated enforcement can address inequities present in traditional traffic enforcement, since cameras do not see race, nationality, gender, or other unique characteristics. Educating drivers, either through public health campaigns or driver retraining after an infraction, can do a lot to teach drivers about emerging traffic public health threats, such as driving under the influence of alcohol, opioids, marijuana and over the counter-medications.

Justin Elicker, Mayor of New Haven

Supports this bill stating that in no uncertain terms it will improve safety and enhance mobility across our community. With new enabling legislation at the state level, the city will be able to bring forward new initiatives such as the Idaho Stop, speed enforcement and red-light running cameras. These techniques are not just “tools in the box”, rather they will specifically reinforce traffic controls and user patience in a manner compatible with our overall traffic safety program.

Kevin Borrup, Executive Director, Connecticut Children’s IPC

In support of this proposed legislation saying that motorcycle helmet and seatbelt use, driver education, and sober driving saves lives and enhances safety for all who use our roadways.

Lawrence Bee, North Branford

Supports this bill stating that Connecticut has lost \$102.5m in federal funds because of our antiquated open container laws. It is time to update our laws to reflect our priority on road safety for all users, those who have lost their lives in wrong way driving crashes. The Connecticut Department of Transportation says in about 80% of these cases, the driver is impaired by alcohol or other substances.

Thomas Chapman, NTSB

The NTSB supports the bill and believes that the only acceptable number of deaths on our roads is zero, and it has been our charge since our founding to determine how to eliminate transportation fatalities. Universal motorcycle helmet laws and automated enforcement programs are proven countermeasures that will save lives on Connecticut's roads, and we applaud the efforts to implement these policies.

Aundré Bumgardner, Assistant Majority Speaker

Supports this bill and highlighted provisions including that passengers in motor vehicles may not have open containers of alcoholic beverages. That the DOT Commissioner may take or purchase land for bicycle lanes or multi-use trails in the same way that land can be taken for roadways. That the DOT Commissioner will study and make recommendations on the advisability of allowing bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield directives, treat red lights as stop signs, and prohibit right turn on red in Connecticut. Providing the option that individuals who agree to pay a fine for a traffic violation be required attend a motor vehicle operator safety course. Allowing municipalities to implement automated traffic enforcement for speeding and red light running.

Gloria Chen, New Haven

Supports this bill and says as a medical student at Yale, she crosses the frontage roads to school and the hospital daily and in the few years she's been there for multiple crashes have occurred some involving casualties. She says building concrete barriers for pedestrians to hide behind is not enough to reduce motor vehicle violence in our community. She believes sections 16-19 will contribute to a safer for Connecticut for all road users by enforcing speed limits for those blatantly and excessively exceeding speed restrictions.

Alan Blasenstein

Supports the bill adding that while he supports the mandatory video training for dangerous traffic violations, he feels that alone is inadequate, and future bills should allow for mandatory license suspensions for egregious violations that cause fatalities or serious injuries, especially repeat violations.

William Adamsen

Supports the bill stating that traffic controls such as speed cameras have a record of keeping traffic moving at a consistent speed with fewer crashes, fewer traffic jams, and most importantly lives saved. The value proposition is clear as are the benefits to our citizens. It is an investment that will retain and attract residents.

Robert Amatruda, South Windsor

Supports the bill and states reasons that adding sidewalks to more Connecticut towns is an investment in the safety, health, and prosperity of its residents.

Bruce Donald, Southern New England Manager of East Coast Greenway Alliance

Supports this bill adding that Sec. 4. Subsection (b) of section 13a-73 of the general statutes should be augmented to include language that allows CTDOT the right to acquire land for any bicycle lane or multi-use-trail.

Randy Collins, Advocacy Manager of CCM

Supports the bill saying HB 5917 would enhance the safety for vehicular and pedestrian users on our state and local roads. Many of the recommendations with the bill align with the legislative priorities adopted by CCM for the 2023 session and numerous local officials participated in the development of the Vision Zero recommendations.

Thomas Martin, West Hartford

Supports the bill with one amendment, being that Connecticut should skip the study on the Idaho Stop and No Turn on Red and include those with this bill.

Chaoulideer, Maximilian

Believes that the current state of our transportation infrastructure is designed around maximizing the speed and efficiency of private motor vehicles, leading to streets that are not safe, fair, or environmentally sustainable. Mr. Chaoulideer says that all these issues have led to 382 preventable deaths this past year in CT. However, this can be changed by supporting this bill, which will institute a pilot for automated speed and red-light cameras. Using armed police officers to enforce everyday traffic infractions is ineffective and dangerous, especially for Black and brown drivers. Automated enforcement reduces speeding, reduces injuries and deaths, and offers an unbiased and transparent alternative to traditional enforcement. This new system should use an income- based fine structure to ensure that these tickets do not disproportionately harm low-income drivers.

Clark, Sarah

Believes safety has become an issue on two state roads in Hamden, Whitney Ave and Dixwell Ave. Excessive speeds and reckless driving have contributed to numerous fatal accidents on both roads. In addition, traffic calming measures will reap economic rewards: slower speeds will allow drivers, and pedestrians and bicyclists, to take note of, and to safely access, the many small businesses along these roads to a much greater degree than is currently possible.

Cockram, Mary, Treasurer, Bike Walk Connecticut

Explains how traffic deaths are rising, and pedestrians and cyclists disproportionately die in crashes. BWCT supports the requirement that all towns adopt Complete Streets plans; this is established best policy nationally. Towns without such plans should not have access to DOT grant funds. They suggest that education of drivers through information shared at license renewal be required at every license renewal rather than alternate renewals. They support the use red light cameras and the recommendation that an independent body determine placement to lessen the potential for selective and racially discriminatory enforcement with location decisions justified through data.

Coggins, Lisa

Explains how the infrastructure for safe pedestrian and cyclists has been inadequate. She believes municipalities lack the funding and vision to see the overall benefits of having less automobiles on the roads. Concluding that allowing red light and speed cameras with automated by mail fine delivery will improve road safety by reducing speeding and red light running. These devices support police departments in being more effective.

Coon, Aurora

Says this bill will reduce drunk driving, speeding, and running red lights and allow our state to access needed federal funds. CT needs automated enforcement for speeding and red lights because we have lost \$102.5m in federal funds because of our antiquated open container laws. It is time to update our laws to reflect our priority on road safety for all users, those who have lost their lives in wrong way driving crashes.

Cournoyer, Marc

Says this bill should be amended to remove all sections except the automated enforcement cameras. We do not need to take peoples' property for bike trails or sidewalks. Cameras are effective in calming traffic and allow the police to focus on other crime. Cameras don't take days off, take sick days or take a pension.

Czepiel, Bradford

Says that this bill will contribute to a safer for CT for all road users by slowing traffic, making drivers more accountable, and allowing cyclists to travel more fluidly and predictably. CT needs automated enforcement for speeding and red lights because accountability helps create the predictability that bedevils many car/bikes interactions

Dawson, Chris

Safe streets and neighborhoods will nurture a thriving and sustainable Stamford leading to reduced car dependence, leading to increased support for transit services. The requirement of Complete Streets Plans doesn't go far enough, as it lacks a mechanism to ensure accountability. Given that state roads are not within jurisdiction of the municipality, who is responsible for them under these plans? I support automated traffic enforcement and recommend an Ombudsman be created to protect a citizen appeal process as well as to oversee data protection, privacy, and equitable placement of the technology.

Dehkan, Aziz, Executive Director, Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

Making roadways safer is essential to improving the connectivity of our communities. In CT's largest cities, as many as 35% of households do not own cars, and these are the people most vulnerable to road safety hazards. A key aspect of mitigating carbon emissions is encouraging people to travel using non-polluting methods. Complete streets that support pedestrian and cyclist safety are critical to that end. To further strengthen the bill, we recommend the implementation, rather than study, of the Idaho Stop and No Turn on Red rules.

Hilbebrand, Barbara

Ms. Hilbebrand expressed how unsafe she feels walking in New Haven, crossing streets, especially the Frontage Road York St and George St intersections. She expresses the number of tremendous deaths and disabilities have been caused by automobile accidents. She believes something needs to be done to ensure the safety of people in New Haven that need to walk to the streets daily.

Lang, Patricia District Coordinator, AARP Driver Safety Program:

The provisions in this bill will go a long way to helping avoid pedestrian deaths and injuries, which seem to be on the increase lately. AARP has advocated for pedestrian safety through PSA's and bus ads in recent years. It's too bad we need laws to enforce what should be common courtesy, but this bill will do so.

Riera, Antonio MD, Yale University:

Considering the burden of pedestrian injury and death related to unsafe and distracted driving, these are commonsense safety measures. Enacting a helmet law for all motorcycle riders, implementing automated traffic enforcement for speeding and red-light running, and educating of drivers either through public health campaigns or driver retraining after infractions all have the potential to save a lot of lives.

Taylor, John, Executive Director, Booker T. Washington Academy:

I believe State Street in New Haven, between Pearl and Bradley Street, may be the most dangerous 300 yards of road for pedestrians to cross in the entire State of Connecticut. The installation of speed and red-light cameras in school zones will go a long way in protecting our children, school personnel, pedestrians, cyclist, and other drivers from the potential of fatalities or severe injury, by elevating the awareness of drivers to monitor their speed and to think twice before exceeding the speed limit in congested urban areas and/or school zones.

Ward, Helen, Chair of the Traffic Committee, Whitneyville Civic Association:

We have long been concerned about safety on Whitney Ave and Dixwell Ave in Hamden. New Haven owns its stretch of Whitney Ave, and they are planning a redesign involving traffic calming there. We are concerned that as drivers emerge from New Haven traveling north, they will think they need to speed to make up for perceived lost time if traffic calming isn't extended into Hamden. We believe that installing traffic calming measures would not only make these roads safer but would reap economic rewards by encouraging foot traffic for our small businesses.

Susan Larkin, Director, Yale School of Medicine (YSM) Office of Curriculum

Supports this bill as they have worked at YSM for 18 years and advocates for more safety measures at the intersection of South Frontage Road and York Street. It was stated they have been almost run over several times by cars running the red light at this intersection and have observed many cars speeding through it. It was also stated they believe that red light and speed cameras would help slow drivers down and incentivize them to obey traffic laws.

Kate Rozen, Connecticut Resident:

Supports this bill as a self-described transportation cyclist who travels by electric bicycle in Connecticut, primarily between her suburb and the City of New Haven. It is stated that poor road design, heavy motor vehicles, and irresponsible drivers create dangerous conditions on the roads. It is stated that they hope the bill's automated enforcement provisions will shift driver behavior and eventually eliminate the need for police officers in traffic enforcement. They also advocated for the quicker adoption of the Idaho stop and the elimination of the "no turn on red" rule, which is considered dangerous to bicyclists and pedestrians. It is further stated that this bill if passed would make Connecticut a leader in reducing traffic deaths.

Geoffrey Detrani

Mr. Detrani supports this bill. He does however believe that the two omnibus bills HB5917 and SB904 should make all roads safe for all citizens. Living in Hamden he is very concerned over the safety of Whitney Avenue and Dixwell Avenue.

Mark DeVoe, Town Planner, Town of Plainville

Mr. DeVoe, Town Planner writes in support of this bill and thanks the General Assembly for creating the Vision Zero Council. In 1991, Plainville started the plans for the trail that is now

the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. No one could have imagined that the trail would run from New Haven, CT and north to Northampton, MA. Unfortunately, though Plainville was one of the first to start planning, their portion is not complete. The ability to complete the trail has been hindered by private property impacts, the inability to obtain the necessary property rights to complete the trail will cause it to be unsafe and require on-road solutions. This bill will bring forth the necessary provisions to complete the trail.

Mary Donegan, Bike West Hartford

Ms. Donegan of Bike West Hartford writes in support of this bill. She realizes that many changes on our streets need to be implemented at the state level and Vision Zero Initiative does this by broadening municipal options for traffic safety. Five aspects of the bill are especially exciting, allowing municipalities to install red light and traffic cameras, requiring municipalities to adopt Complete Streets ordinance, allowing Idaho Stops for cyclists and eliminating right turns on red and changing CT open container law. These changes will allow towns to participate in the needed changes to make their streets safer.

Anna Doroghazi, Associate State Director for Advocacy and Outreach, AARP Connecticut

Ms. Doroghazi of AARP Connecticut writes in support of the bill. Two of the most important causes of injuries and deaths occur on our roadways as the dangerous driving and infrastructure encourages vehicles to travel at high rates of speed. All citizens deserve to live in communities that have safe streets. Especially vulnerable are the older adults, the number of motor vehicle deaths involving drivers and other road users over the age of 65 has increased 20% over the last decade. Deaths of older adults killed as pedestrians over the past year is 55%. Larger vehicles, increased speeding, reduced enforcement, and lack of safety designed streets and sidewalks have contributed to this cause of death. As people age the often lose the ability to drive, safer streets are necessary for their quality of life.

Eric Drouin

Mr. Drouin is in support of this bill. He fully supports this and would like the House to fund more sidewalks and multiuse trails.

Spencer Early, Connecticut Urbanist

Mr. Early of Connecticut Urbanist writes in support of this bill. Vision Zero will bring the citizens one step closer to safer streets. Connecticut needs automated enforcement of red lights and speed limits. When I am walking, I would feel much better knowing that traffic laws are being enforced every time, not just when someone is caught by a police officer.

Lisa Fernandez, President, Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trails

Ms. Fernandez of the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trails writes in support of the bill. The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is an excellent trail system and is an integral part for safe non-carbon transportation infrastructure. This bill will support completing the trail. The trail helps avoid carbon pollution and improves the resident's life and health for those who reside along the 54-mile corridor in Connecticut. The Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association is currently involved in maintaining monitoring stations and assist with visitor counts. We will continue to support this project.

John Filchak – Executive Director – Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

There is support for the intent of this legislation, specifically Section 7, with suggested amended language making it part of a regional plan for NCCOG. The towns in NCCOG cannot individually incorporate a safety action plan for roads due to staffing issues, but as a group, would fold it into the plan of development. As there are approximately 1,000 miles of roads in our COG, adopting a regional approach to the comprehensive safety plan, would be advantageous.

Matthew W. Hart – Executive Director – Capitol Region Council of Governments

Mr. Hart says the multi-use trails and bike lanes are important to this state and the ability for CT DOT to create these is essential. CRCOG also supports the prohibition of open alcohol containers and automated traffic enforcement. He believes all of these are necessary for the safety of motor vehicle drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

John Havlik

Mr. Havlik explained how red-light and speed cameras are necessary to prevent traffic accidents. The prohibition on open containers is a priority to keep our roads safe from drunk drivers.

Sandy Fry – Chair, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board

This legislation creates a safer environment for bicyclists and pedestrians for a variety of reasons, including the prohibition of open alcoholic containers in motor vehicles, creation of specified bike lanes or multi-use trails, and other safety measures. There are concerns about the legislating of cities and towns adoption of street prioritization plans due to the monetary burden. Instructions for school age children about bicycle/pedestrian safety should be included. Funding from the state would allow access to added municipal funding to finance a comprehensive road safety action plan.

Andrew Giering

Mr. Giering believes that with this legislation, municipalities will be able to pass their own laws regarding speed and red-light cameras in high traffic areas, pedestrian safety zones and school zones. As traffic deaths are increasing, it is important to use all the tools at our disposal to change this trend.

Catherine Chase – President – Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety

This testimony supports all major portions of this bill. The prohibition of open containers in vehicles is important, as is the requirement of all motorcyclists to wear helmets. Both create hazardous and deadly situations. The use of speed and red-light cameras are examples of roadway crash deterrents.

Ron Goralski – Chairman – Bike Walk Farmington

Automated enforcement is a necessary tool. Using speed and red-light cameras cuts down on accidents and fatalities. Open containers in motor vehicles lend the driver to alcohol driven crashes. To apply for federal safety project funds, we need a "Complete Street Plan" or comprehensive safety plan to apply for federal funds for safety projects.

Brian Kent, President, Bike Groton

Offered testimony in support of this bill because it will improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians and make roads safer for all users.

Jennifer Lacker, President, Bike Stonington

Offered testimony in support of this bill because Sections 16 and 17 will contribute to a safer Connecticut for all road users by slowing traffic and creating more awareness of vulnerable users. In addition to that, Section 7 would require Connecticut municipalities to lose state funds without a Complete Streets plan, a comprehensive safety plan.

Dr. Michael May

Supports this bill as a witness of the public health crisis of traffic-associated deaths. He states that the bill would improve the safety of roads and sidewalks for both drivers and pedestrians.

Frank Petise, Transportation, Traffic, and Parking Department Bureau Chief, City of Stamford

Supports this bill because it focuses the city's resources on proven strategies to eliminate fatal and serious traffic crashes which have recently seen an increase in the State of Connecticut.

Chris Schweitzer, Director, New Haven Climate Movement

Offered testimony in support of this bill because automated enforcement for speeding and red lights will enforce traffic safety for the entire community.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Richard Paukner, Legislative Committee Chairman, Connecticut Motorcycle Riders Association (CMRA):

Opposes portions of this bill that require the use of helmets by adult motorcycle operators and passengers. It is stated the CMRA believes the emphasis should be in measures seeking accident avoidance, not injury mitigation. It is cited that their rider education program is evidence that there are effective measures to reduce fatalities and injuries in motorcycle accidents. It is stated that proponents of helmet laws argue that such a law will reduce the rate of fatalities and the severity of injuries sustained by riders involved in a crash. However, the CMRA argues that correlation analysis is not scientific evidence and that none of the proponents' studies, nor their data, constitutes "scientific evidence." It is also stated that the CMRA continues to monitor CT DOT statistics, and the fact remains that despite no adult helmet law, the cumulative reductions in motorcycle fatalities and injuries have been substantial.

Tiffany Cipoletti, Government Relations Manager, American Motorcyclist Association

Oppose the bill stating that mandatory helmet laws do nothing to prevent crashes and regardless of the protective equipment worn, any motorcyclist involved in a crash is at considerable risk. The AMA holds that a common principle should be applied when consideration is given to mandating personal safety, whether it be for motorcycling or some other risk-related activity: Adults can make personal safety decisions for themselves. Society's role is not to mandate personal safety, but rather to provide the education and experience necessary to aid adults in making these decisions for themselves.

Ryder FitzGerald

Opposes the bill saying helmets laws don't lower serious injury or fatality rates. He states that through his observation that in Connecticut, approximately 30--40% of all motorcyclists

choose to wear helmets, whereas helmet use in New York is essentially 100%, because of the mandatory helmet use law. If helmet use had a significant effect on fatality or serious injury rates, one would expect these rates to be much lower in New York than in Connecticut but shows this is not the case through a series of charts included on his testimony.

Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director of River COG

Opposes the bill saying that River COG fully supports the Vision Zero goal of a safer transportation network for everyone however, River COG is concerned about Section 7 of the bill, which seems to misunderstand the Complete Streets prioritization plans, as described in 163 Section 11206(c)(2) of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public Law 117-58. These prioritization plans are required of the state of Connecticut and the state's metropolitan planning organizations, not of our 169 municipalities. Although River COG strongly supports complete streets planning in every municipality, and encourages municipalities to embrace complete streets, this requirement duplicates existing CTDOT and COG transportation safety planning efforts. Instead of mandating plans that are already being created on the behalf of the cities and towns, they suggest that state make available matching funds for federal IIJA discretionary grants.

Lessor, Peter

Mr. Lessor has been riding motorcycles throughout the U.S. and Canada for 50 years and still rides around 10,000 miles a year. He expressed how he was "vehemently opposed" to the bill. "Let those who ride decide."

Oberg, Christopher

Mr. Oberg expressed that he was opposed to a specific section of the bill, the section regarding helmets. He believes that it is an additional tax and an overreach of government, along with that, Mr. Oberg went on to express how it infringes on his belief in wanting to personal choose to wear or not wear a helmet.

Wailonis, Charles

Automatic Traffic Enforcement Devices Increase Accidents. Although major studies have shown little or no decrease in intersection accidents, all have shown a significant increase in rear end collisions as motorists panic and slam on their brakes when traffic signals turn yellow. The increase in time police must then spend on accident investigation as well as the increase in traffic disruption negates any supposed benefit of not having police periodically on scene observing traffic flow. Our elected officials' job should not be to force on the public what some local politicians believe is best, but to represent most of the people who are overwhelmingly against these money-making cameras in our state.

Jordan Dumas

Mr. Dumas opposes this bill. Mr. Dumas wears a helmet; he feels that it is up to an individual rider as to whether they want to wear one. It is a free choice and should be up to the individual. Many helmets are not the best or safest as they can reduce field of vision, they can be heavy if worn on long rides causing pain and loss of range of motion in the neck, upper back, and shoulders.

Diana Frink

Believes that as adults, it should be a personal choice whether to wear a helmet while operating a motorcycle. Enforcing such a law would infringe upon a rider's freedom of choice.

Michelle Garabedian

States in their testimony that motorcycle drivers are adults who take a state test to get their license. They should be able to choose whether to wear a helmet.

Francis Pickering, Executive Director, Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Opposes this bill because section 7 misinterprets and misapplies provisions of the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA), and it would duplicate existing state and regional programs in complete streets and transportation safety.

Carol Platt Liebau, President, Yankee Institute

Opposes this bill stating that it violates individuals' property and personal rights by allowing the Department of Transportation to "take any land" to create bike paths and the implementation of "automatic traffic enforcement safety devices."

Karima Mastrolillo, President, Motorcyclist Against Unjust Legislation of CT

Opposes this bill stating section 3 lines 56-63 is not accompanied with accurate data collection. If there is any benefit to this helmet law, it needs to be proven through data.

Viscount, Geoff

Mr. Viscount believes the words "under eighteen years of age" on line 56 in the text should not be deleted. Mr. Viscount served in the US Navy from the ages of 17 to 23 years of age, and during that time was entrusted with the responsibility of operating and maintaining multimillion dollar equipment and machinery on board navy vessels. He goes on to express how the statistics used to demonstrate the necessity of motorcycle helmets do not consider what impact a helmet would have had on the crashes in question.

Reported by: Lindsay de Brito

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