

Transportation Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-904

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF THE STATE TRAFFIC ADMINISTRATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF

Title: TRANSPORTATION REGARDING HIGHWAY SAFETY.

Vote Date: 3/17/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 1/30/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

With recent increases in traffic accidents and traffic-related fatalities in Connecticut, traffic safety is highlighted as an area of concern. The disregard of certain standards pertaining to maintenance of traffic infrastructure, confusion surrounding the right-of-way relationship between motorists and pedestrians, and inadequate training for traffic authorities have all been contributing factors to the traffic safety problem. This bill aims to resolve these issues to promote long-term road safety.

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE

Amended sec 1 regarding grant funding; sec 3 regarding pedestrian right of way; sec 6 to specify training frequency requirements; added sec 8 regarding Connecticut Public Transportation Council membership; added sec 9 regarding updates from DOT; added sec 10 to require reports from council; added sec 11 to extend Shore Line East rail study; added sec 12 & 13 regarding vehicles in livery service; added sec 14 regarding Norwalk Transit District; added sec 15 to address pavement marking.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation

Offers support on behalf of the CTDOT, providing brief overview of the provisions included. Section 1 requires municipalities to comply with traffic control regulations set forth by the Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA) and includes a deterrent to discourage non-compliance—the withholding of Town Road Aid grants. Section 2 allows for the use of symbols for pedestrian traffic signals. Section 3 requires drivers to stop for pedestrians on crosswalks rather than to yield, as confusion surrounding what exactly it means to yield have

led to accidents. Sections 4 & 5 concern the prohibition of local building officials from issuing certificates of occupancy until OSTA certification is obtained. Section 6 requires annual training for traffic authorities, as the training they currently receive is often inadequate yet necessary to ensure roads are safe and meeting national standards. Lastly, section 7 permits 65 mph speed limits on highways where suitable, where the maximum speed permissible was previously 55 mph.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Brannan, Erin

Supports the bill based on concerns about pedestrian safety, road safety and recent increases in traffic deaths; believes the bill is a step in the right direction.

Buono, Amanda

Supports, raising concerns about two streets in Hamden—Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. These two roads are notorious for speeding as well as the disregard of traffic signals. Buono believes that motorists on these roads put pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motorists at risk. These safety concerns need to be addressed, and the provisions in this bill will promote road safety for all users.

Cassidy, Jim Co-Founder, Plainville Greenway Alliance

Supports; believes bicycling as a mode of transportation deserves same right to acquire property necessary for trails as roads do highways.

Coggins, Lisa

In support of all efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. States that many factors, notably the pandemic, have led to inadequate police force focus on traffic safety. The allowance of red-light cameras will help ameliorate this problem.

Cumberbatch, Evelyn Dr.

Supports, believing the provisions in the bill will promote road safety. Raises concerns about the tendency to speed and run red lights on Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden and believes this area to be dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists as a result.

Drouin, Eric

In full support of the bill and suggests the addition of funding for more sidewalks and multiuse trails.

Sandra Fry, Chair, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board

Emphasizes support and raises certain concerns on behalf of the CT Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board. Supports provisions reinforcing pedestrian right of way and the requirement for traffic authorities to attend annual trainings. Raises concerns surrounding the requirement of towns to seek OSTA approval for traffic signal revision and the potential consequence of loss of funds. Also suggests the addition of modern pedestrian signals to the definition of permissible traffic signals.

Sarah Northrop

In support, concerned about Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden, particularly Dixwell Ave. where Hamden High School is located. Concerned for the safety of students who must

cross Dixwell Ave. to get to and from school as it is a site where speeding and disregarding traffic lights is common.

Andrew Pierson

Commits support for the bill, anticipating a shift in demand for more walkable style neighborhoods.

Bryce Lindamood, Renuka Rangappa, Susan White, Frank Poole

Supports the provisions of the bill based on concerns surrounding Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden.

Helen Ward, Traffic Committee Chair, Whitneyville Civic Association

Urges support for the bill, stating that Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden are neither pedestrian nor cyclist friendly and raise huge concerns in terms of safety. Adds that traffic calming measures are to be installed on the New Haven stretch of Whitney Ave. and believes this may cause the Hamden stretch to become more unsafe if motorists speed up to make up for lost time unless these same measures are added in Hamden.

K. B.

Supports every facet of the bill, emphasizing the reckless driving that can be witnessed around school zones and elsewhere, claiming there is virtually no traffic enforcement in Stamford. Pedestrian safety and driving under the influence of marijuana are also concerns.

Anastasia Brewczynski, Adam Callaghan

Supports the bill under the condition that concerns are addressed about section 2; in particular, language needs to be revised as to allow for quick safety improvements to walk signals should they malfunction, as well for allowing transit signals in addition to vehicular and pedestrian lights.

Sarah Clark

Urges support for the bill and suggests inclusion of provisions to improve safety along Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden, stating that the area is unsafe for motorists and pedestrians alike. Traffic calming measures would also benefit the small businesses along these roads, reaping economic benefits.

Franz Douskey

Believes the Planning & Zoning department in the town of Hamden have inadequately responded to growth in population, especially relating to enrollment at Quinnipiac, which have resulted in traffic build-up along Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. The bill is necessary to remedy the problems this has caused.

Carrie Erwin

Supports the bill for concerns surrounding Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden, where Erwin has witnessed drivers routinely ignore pedestrians and fears for safety of pedestrians and cyclists, which include children who go to school in the area.

Mary Fox

In support, particularly of cameras at intersections and increased funding for traffic stops by police.

Erin Heckler

Offers full support for the bill; resides near Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden and has pedestrian and cyclist safety concerns for the area. Believes the provisions of the bill would help remedy the problem.

Edward McKeon

Strongly advocates for the creation of any legislation that will enable passive enforcement of red light and speeding infractions, and/or protect pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ann Stiltner

Supports all provisions, citing concerns about safety on Whitney Ave. and Dixwell Ave. in Hamden; believes pedestrians are in jeopardy on these roads, and if nothing is done it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured at one of these intersections.

Juan Pablo Yepes Tobon

Supports the bill believing it is a step in the right direction in terms of dismantling extreme car infrastructure pushed by corporate interests.

Others in support

Maya Gollaher

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Randy Collins, Advocacy Manager, CT Conference of Municipalities

On behalf of CCM, opposes two sections of the bill. First, section 1(b), whereas the DOT is enabled to withhold funding to towns under the Town Aid Program for failure to comply with OSTA regulations, as this withholding could result in fiscal challenges for many municipalities. CCM also opposes section 6, as language concerning the mandated annual training of traffic authorities is unclear; specifics surrounding occurrences and length of the trainings should be articulated clearly.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, CT Council of Small Towns

In opposition to certain provisions, claiming that as drafted, the bill would penalize municipalities for failure to comply with OSTA orders, by withholding Town Aid Road funds. These funds are necessary for towns to maintain roads and infrastructure to ensure safety.

Adam Weber

Opposed to sections 2(a) & 2(b) in particular. The requirement of approval by OSTA in section 2(a) to revise or install traffic signals and signs will result in massive delays as this process is lengthy. Simple fixes would take months under these provisions. The codification in section 2(b) that traffic signals should use only green, red, and yellow lights will render the white lights that are used for transit signals illegal, which would make rapid bus transit unfeasible. Weber favors the remaining provisions of the bill.

Reported by: Lindsay de Brito

Date: 3/3/2023