



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



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Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto
Department of Transportation

H.B. 6746 AN ACT CONCERNING WRONG WAY DRIVING DETECTION AND PREVENTION.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) respectfully offers the following comments regarding H.B. 6747, An Act Concerning Wrong Way Driving Detection and Prevention.

The safety of the traveling public is CTDOT's top priority, and we are continually analyzing and investigating efforts to reduce the likelihood of wrong way driver crashes. As the General Assembly is painfully aware, when wrong way crashes happen, they are often fatal. **2022 is the deadliest year in recent memory** for fatal wrong way crashes in Connecticut; there were **13 wrong way crashes and 23 fatalities**. Most wrong way drivers causing these crashes – **over 80% of them** – are impaired, and most wrong way crashes happen between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. CTDOT will continue to use the tools and resources available to stop these crashes from happening, but the most important thing our state can do is reduce occurrences of impaired driving.

We want to thank Governor Lamont and the General Assembly for \$20 million in state bond funds that has allowed CTDOT to deploy wrong way countermeasures throughout the state.

CTDOT conducted an analysis of over 700 ramp locations in Connecticut, especially where on and off-ramps are located on the same side of the roadway and has identified 236 locations as high-risk. Research has shown that on and off-ramps on the same side of the roadway, and ramps near establishments serving alcohol, have a higher risk of experiencing a wrong way event.

CTDOT has had examined several technology options, and we have chosen one that will allow us to use solar/battery and/or wired electricity for our wrong way flasher pilot program and for the installation of future active Wrong Way Driving countermeasure installations. This technology will include important features such as the use of thermal cameras to verify if wrong way drivers do not self-correct after seeing wrong way driving countermeasures, the ability to examine snapshots or video streams of wrong way vehicles entering the highway, the ability to notify CTDOT and CT State Police of wrong way vehicles in real-time, and the ability for CTDOT to privately contract the maintenance of the entire wrong way driver system.

In addition to the wrong way flashers, CTDOT is also adding retro-reflective strips to guiderails around the state. These appear to drivers as white/yellow when heading the right way and reflect red to drivers heading the wrong way. We are also adding in-pavement markers (in-laid reflectors) that will outline the

white directional arrows at the end of off-ramps and on the edge line near the guiderail. We also have prepared a media campaign that will include highway billboards and digital advertising to bring attention to the tragic increase in wrong way driving crashes.

CTDOT also has a wrong way driving webpage which has the latest information on the installation of wrong way detection systems, including completed and upcoming ramp locations. The website also explains factors that make a ramp location higher risk. On the site, an individual will also find videos demonstrating the technology and previous countermeasures undertaken by CTDOT.

We appreciate the committee's focus on this important issue and would like to offer comments on a few sections of the bill that would require further examination. With respect to Section 1 (a), we have concerns with the requirement that the wrong way driver notification system broadcast the presence of a wrong-way operator on electronic message boards along the highway. We also have concerns with Section 1 (b) which would require the installation of rumble strips on highway exit ramps, as that has not yet been tested in Connecticut.

We would like to work with the committee to come up with the best ways to keep our roadways safe and save lives. CTDOT does not take this task lightly and will continue to research new and emerging wrong way driving countermeasures.

For further information or questions, please contact Anne Kleza (anne.kleza@ct.gov) at the Department of Transportation at (860) 594-3013.