Comments and Public Testimony - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT'S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE. ([Link to Draft Bill 373](#))

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202  Sec. 5. (NEW) (Effective from passage) The Commissioner of Transportation shall prioritize the completion of transportation projects on and in the immediate vicinity of the tolled bridges described in section 2 of this act, except if the commissioner determines that, due to the presence of a toll gantry, a significant amount of traffic is diverting from a highway onto local roads in the municipality where a toll is located, the commissioner shall prioritize transportation projects to mitigate such traffic diversions.

**Comment on 202 through 209** – The immediate vicinity of tolled bridges should include the community impacts of the nearby interstate or tolled bridge including ramps, underpasses, and overpasses. The impacted vicinity should include a one-mile radius around the tolling location. Too often our interstates create significant negative community impacts from air pollution, excessive noise, and unsafe roads for local traffic, including those walking and biking as well as those driving. When possible, we should be repairing that community damage and improving community connections with Complete Streets for those that live and work near tolled locations.
Sec. 8. (NEW) (Effective from passage) (a) For each fiscal year during which special tax obligation bonds issued pursuant to section 13b-74 to 13b-77, inclusive, on and after July 1, 2020, and prior to July 1, 2022, shall be outstanding, the state of Connecticut shall not charge tolls for any class of vehicle other than large commercial trucks, as defined in section 1 of this act, traveling over the bridges described in section 2 of this act.

The state of Connecticut does hereby pledge to and agree with the holders of any bonds, notes and other obligations issued pursuant to subsection (b) of this section that no public or special act of the General Assembly taking effect on or after July 1, 2020, and prior to July 1, 2030, shall alter the obligation to comply with the provisions of this section, until such bonds, notes or other obligations, together with the interest thereon, are fully met and discharged, provided nothing in this subsection shall preclude such alteration (1) if and when adequate provision shall be made by law for the protection of the holders of such bonds, or (2) (A) if and when the Governor declares an emergency or the existence of extraordinary circumstances, in which the provisions of section 4-85 of the general statutes are invoked, (B) at least three-fifths of the members of each chamber of the General Assembly vote to alter such required compliance during the fiscal year for which the emergency or existence of extraordinary circumstances are determined, and (C) any such alteration is for the fiscal year in progress only.

Comment on 273 through 294 – It is unwise and unnecessary to effectively remove the future possibility of mid-size truck and car tolls from the purview of the legislature. As we increasingly adopt electric vehicles, more universal tolling will likely be needed to make up for falling gas tax revenue. We won’t be able to make up that revenue loss by increasing tolling on a small percentage of semi-truck interstate users. The legislative process to get truck-only tolls was arduous and legislators know that they need to be acting in the interest of voters, or they lose their office. Creating a second, higher hurdle is likely to put the state again into the position of struggling to keep up with infrastructure maintenance and improvements. This will put the Connecticut at a competitive disadvantage relative to other states that have more leeway in responding to changing transportation challenges, interstate congestion, new technologies, and the climate emergency.
Comment on 307 through 335 – The Transportation Policy Council should also include:

- an expert in the topic of increasing mode share and increasing safety for sustainable active transportation, walking and biking.
- A public health expert, with experience related to disparate health impacts of motor vehicle pollution and an understanding of the health benefits of increased walking and biking.

Comment on 380 through 386 – We are in a climate emergency and we also know that the current interstate system has had extremely disparate impacts on Connecticut’s urban and diverse communities. This should be worded as such, “evaluate whether such plan assures the development and maintenance of an adequate, equitable, safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable transportation system;
(11) To approve or reject any transportation project in the state transportation improvement program developed by the Department of Transportation pursuant to section 49 USC 5304(g), as amended from time to time, prior to submission to the United States Department of Transportation if such transportation project is not contained in the five-year transportation capital plan and is estimated to cost fifty million dollars or more. If the council does not approve or reject a transportation project within fifteen days of receiving the state transportation improvement program from the Department of Transportation, the transportation project shall be deemed approved by the council:

Comment on 421 through 430 – If the council is expected to meet quarterly, shouldn’t the council have at least 30 days to organize a special meeting to review and approve or reject a project? Fifteen days seems too short and could be used to intentionally sneak projects through between scheduled council meetings.

Comment on 517 through 619 – Blocking registration of a vehicle with unpaid parking tickets will have an inequitable impact on low-income motor vehicle owners that are already more likely to live in urban areas with parking restrictions. The existing enforcement and penalty options for accrued unpaid parking tickets are already more than enough. This would only be equitable if there was a “financial hardship” option to forgive a portion of unpaid parking tickets.