



Waterbury Regional Chamber  
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February 24, 2020

**STATEMENT OF THE WATERBURY REGIONAL CHAMBER TO THE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REGARDING RAISED SENATE BILL 155  
(LCO 1588), AN ACT CONCERNING RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, and members of the Transportation Committee, my name is David Krechevsky and I am the Director of Public Policy and Economic Development for the Waterbury Regional Chamber. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

The Chamber, which serves 14 communities in Greater Waterbury and represents the interests of more than 1,000 member businesses in matters of public policy, strongly supports rail infrastructure improvements, and specifically those that target the Waterbury Rail Line.

The Waterbury line is the longest of Metro-North's three branch lines, running 27 miles from Waterbury to the mainline in Bridgeport, with stops in Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Seymour, Ansonia and Derby. Despite this, ridership is generally low, about 1,000 passengers a day. You might think that makes the case for not improving the line, but the truth is just the opposite. As the saying goes, build it and they will come. The reason for low ridership levels is that service on the line is abysmal. That's in part because only one train at a time can operate on the line, in either direction — and that's when the train is operating at all. All too frequently, aging engines on the line break down, or worse, are removed from the line to serve the main line when a locomotive on that line breaks down. That relegates service on the Waterbury line to buses, with drivers who don't know the stops — which, not surprisingly, has helped to produce an on-time performance as low as 75 percent.

Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary and Naugatuck Mayor Pete Hess have worked hard to remediate and develop brownfield sites, and both municipalities are poised for a renaissance and would benefit from improved rail service. Naugatuck has a plan for transportation-oriented design that would include an inland port, offering vastly increased property tax revenue and hundreds of new jobs, if only the improvements were completed and the rolling stock acquired. And Waterbury and Naugatuck are not alone; Naugatuck Valley communities along the line will benefit from the immense economic development opportunities created by a revitalized Waterbury Rail Line. Improving the line's infrastructure also will alleviate traffic on Route 8 and the Mixmaster, easing the burden on its roadways and bridges.

Various studies also show that a dollar invested in improving transportation infrastructure creates three dollars of new economic activity. For all of these reasons, the Chamber asks the committee to support investing in improvements to the Waterbury Rail Line and to support LCO 1588.

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