

## State of Connecticut SENATE

STATE CAPITOL  
300 CAPITOL AVENUE  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICES

### Testimony

Transportation Committee

February 24, 2020

Senate Bill 155

Submitted by: Senator George Logan, Senator Kevin Kelly,  
Senator Eric Berthel, and Senator Craig Miner

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Senator Martin, Representative Devlin and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 155 An Act Concerning Rail Infrastructure Improvements.

We believe strongly in the importance of improving rail service in the state of Connecticut. Representing communities along the Waterbury Rail Line, we are all committed to supporting our residents who utilize Waterbury Line service and who could greatly benefit from further expansion, improvements and capacity growth along the line.

We appreciate the committee recognizing the importance of rail by raising a bill to study the issue. We are advocating to go further and take action to make the Waterbury Line a top priority.

The Waterbury Line has been overlooked for far too long by those in power. Rail service in our communities needs to be a focus for Connecticut. There is so much untapped potential in the Naugatuck Valley and surrounding communities along the rail line, from Stratford all the way up to Torrington. Enhanced rail service can help us nurture and develop opportunities. Increasing rail capacity is vital to economic development and job growth in our region.

We are all members of the bipartisan Waterbury Rail Line Caucus and together we are urging our colleagues on this committee to consider the value of expanding the Waterbury Rail Line, including increasing capacity and addressing issues and concerns to modernize and improve service. We are supportive of making improvements to both rail service and infrastructure, including platforms and modern rail cars and increasing the number and frequency of trains and adding additional stops in various communities.

Current stops along the branch include Derby-Shelton, Ansonia, Seymour, Beacon Falls, Naugatuck, and Waterbury, with potential future expansion to Thomaston and Torrington.

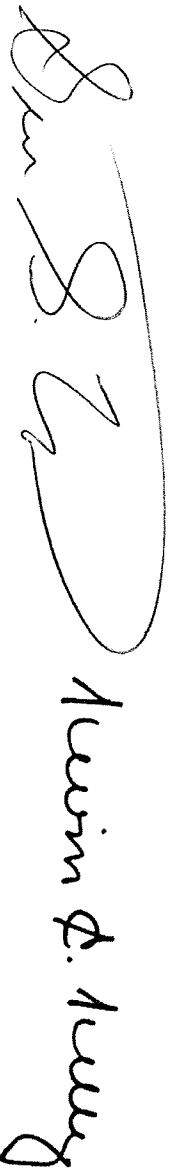
Connecticut has already initiated an infrastructure improvement project to install a traffic control signal system, implement Positive Train Control and construct passing sidings at four locations along the line, with investments totaling approximately \$90 million and various parts of this project due to be complete

in December 2020 and mid-2021. But we need to do more to ensure that the state's investment is fully leveraged. We must have a commitment to finish the work started by the DOT. Upgrading existing rail equipment, acquiring new needed equipment, and expanding service to better help our residents get where they need to go must be part of the conversation and development to generate the economic development and job growth we all know our communities can support.

Annual ridership on the Waterbury Line increased from 178,170 in 2004 to 345,027 in 2018/2019, a 94% increase. After adding just one new inbound trip in the morning peak period, ridership jumped 34%. And we can do so much better. Limited service makes it difficult to make connections. And we need improvements to unreliable equipment and on-time performance and overall rider experience.

We understand that transportation funding is a major issue in Connecticut as we all work to identify the best course of action to move our state forward and invest more in infrastructure improvements and modernization. We have proposed plans to invest in transportation that do not ask for any more from overburdened taxpayers and we hope to see a bipartisan effort to advance our shared goals. We believe that whatever transportation plan our state moves forward with the Waterbury Line must be part of that conversation and focus. In addition, we must prioritize the Waterbury Line within current DOT planning.

Thank you all for the opportunity to share our support for rail investment and specifically taking action to improve the Waterbury Rail Line.

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Senator George Logan (R-17)

Senator Kevin C. Kelly (R-21)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Berthel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "E".

Senator Eric Berthel (R-32)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Miner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "C".

Senator Craig Miner (R-30)