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Subject Matter: Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Transportation, Judicial and Corrections, and Legislative Agencies:

Item: "Expand Rail Service on the Waterbury Branch Line"

Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of the expansion of rail service on the Waterbury Branch Line and the relevant funding of this project.

Rail service is often associated with the past. When many hear of trains and branch lines they may be inclined to recon back to a bygone era when trains were the primary means of travel that connected our beloved valley to large municipalities like New York City. However, it's time that we recognize that rail service is not a nostalgic nod to the past; it is a vital pathway to the future of mass transit in our state.

The Waterbury Branch Line has all of the potential to weave the Naugatuck Valley into the greater New York - Boston corridor. What it lacks is the capacity within its current infrastructure to meet that potential. Expansion of the line as spelled out in this budget item will bring the Waterbury Branch Line up to the demands of the future. This would help the greater Naugatuck Valley be an essential part of the regional economy. Moreover, these upgrades will help my town, Naugatuck, to move forward with economic growth plans that would revitalize our small business community in our downtown and support future rail related economic development.

With many more people relocating to areas away from New York City and Lower Fairfield County to the Naugatuck Valley this branch line expansion would be crucial to maintaining both personal and business connections that they may have. In a post Covid World we are destined to see a mass migration that will certainly require a reliable transportation system to support those that are moving. This branch expansion is a logical first step in improving our state's mass transit system and should become a reality. Let's move forward and do this now. The time for delay has passed.

It is, in my opinion, essential to the citizens and small businesses of The Naugatuck Valley that the \$1,227,689 appropriated in this budget be moved forward and approved. The cost benefit of such an appropriation is clear. The benefits would most certainly outweigh the cost. I encourage this committee and the Connecticut Legislature as a whole to approve this plan.

Best Regards,
Charles Paul Marengi