



*State of Connecticut*  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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**VICE CHAIR**  
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**MEMBER**  
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REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

**In Support of Additional Funding for the Waterbury Rail Line as outlined in HB6439, the Governor's Proposed Budget FY 2022-2023**

Good afternoon to the Honorable Chairs and Ranking Members of the Committee. My name is Mary Welander and I represent the 114<sup>th</sup> district which includes Orange, Woodbridge, and Derby. I am here to offer my enthusiastic support of the proposed improvements to the Waterbury Rail Line as outlined in HB6439, the Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Transportation, Judicial & Corrections, and Legislative Agencies, and to share the potential positive impact this action would have on the entire Naugatuck Valley, but specifically its effect on the city of Derby.

If we look at the framework of a successful, modern, small city, Derby has all of the puzzle pieces needed. Location, historic buildings, a walkable downtown, available area for development; to complete that framework we need to address transportation.

Some of those factors have begun to be addressed, and the next piece is improving the practical day-to-day functioning of the Waterbury Rail Line. While mass transportation has faced serious challenges across the state and the country due to the pandemic, when comparing the loss of ridership of all rail lines in Connecticut, the Waterbury Line showed the strongest ridership levels. That this level was maintained during a global pandemic, and while large structural repairs were interrupting service and requiring supplemental bus routes shows a very clear need and support for this transportation service in the area.

This past fall I spent a couple of hours at the Derby/Shelton train station and spoke with a handful of riders who were waiting for their connecting bus to travel home further in the Valley. The Waterbury Line was their main option for transportation; I asked if their daily lives would see any benefits if the rail line improved and each one emphatically said 'yes'. Not only would they see a positive change in their daily lives, but it would open up potential for life changing opportunities because these opportunities would be accessible.

The additional trains and improved schedule options are important steps that will allow residents to get to work more easily, and will keep cars off the road thereby improving traffic conditions and reducing the environmental impact of commuting. It will also bring more people into Derby, it's restaurants and shops, as well as the rest of the Valley and be a critical part of the overall success and rejuvenation of an area that has seen decades of economic hardship.

I would like to thank the committee for recognizing the potential impact of this additional funding for the Waterbury Rail Line and for supporting this opportunity to improve the lives of the residents of Derby and the Naugatuck Valley.