

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-576

AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE
ON THE WATERBURY BRANCH OF THE METRO-NORTH COMMUTER

Title: RAILROAD.

Vote Date: 3/25/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/3/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Kelly, 21st Dist.; Sen. Berthel, 32nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To expand passenger rail service on the Waterbury branch of the MetroNorth Commuter Railroad.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Rep. Bill Buckee, 77th Assembly District of Connecticut](#)

Representative Bill Buckee presented and submitted written testimony in support of this bill. The testimony states that the issue of expanding passenger rail service is important for both the 77th district and Connecticut as a whole, as it is necessary "if we want to remain competitive with neighboring states [...]". The representative notes that, if passed, the bill would "help our state to improve the economic viability of the Naugatuck Valley and the surrounding communities through improving our transportation service in both safety and accessibility."

[Sen. Kevin Kelly, 21st Assembly of Connecticut](#)

Senator Kevin Kelly presented and submitted written testimony in support of this bill. The testimony stresses the importance of capitalizing on economic development, job growth, and nurturing the "untapped potential of the Naugatuck Valley"—all of which, Sen. Kelly attests, is possible via enhancing rail service by way of increasing its capacity. Further, the testimony references the approximate 90 million dollars in infrastructure improvements that Connecticut has already initiated for the railways—then notes as follows: "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." Lastly, the senator provides a statistical analysis of pre-pandemic ridership growth on the Waterbury line.

[Rep. Klarides-Ditria, Rep. Labriola, & Rep. Rebimbas; State of Connecticut, General Assembly](#)

Representative Klarides-Ditria presented and submitted written testimony in support of this bill. The written testimony was co-signed by Representative Labriola and Representative Rebimbas. The testimony states that the bill would "improve the economic viability" of the Naugatuck Valley, as well as "usher in new businesses and opportunities, [and] provide better transportation services, safety, and security for commuters." Further, the text explains that the expansion of commuter and intercity passenger rail service would be eligible for Federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds at 80%--and that the funding outlined in Governor Lamont's budget represents the state's share, which would provide funding of \$1,227,689 in FY 23 "to leverage the completion of capital projects on the Waterbury Branch Line by increasing the number of trains servicing the line from 15 to 22 on weekdays and from 12 to 15 on weekends."

[Rep. Rochelle, 104th Assembly District of Connecticut](#)

Representative Rochelle presented and submitted testimony in support of this bill, in which she clarified certain linguistic inaccuracies. The testimony clarifies that two stations—the Seymour station and the Derby-Shelton station—already exist, despite the bill calling to "add stops in Seymour, Derby, and Shelton." The representative then notes that the bill "does not include the Ansonia station, located in the state's most economically-distressed municipality, which has 116-acres of land available for redevelopment within walking distance of the station as well as developers who have expressed renewed and active interest in the site likely due to the Governor's proposal for increased service on the line and plan for station improvements." A brief explanation of the Naugatuck Valley's history as an economic driver is given, followed by an explanation of the regions current economic distress and impoverishment. The testimony concludes with examples of how investing in the Waterbury Rail Line would "not only uplift distressed municipalities, [but] benefit the entire region up and down the line [...]". These examples include the allocation of infrastructure investments, and opportunities for large-scale development.

[Samantha Dynowski, State Director of the Sierra Club](#)

Samantha Dynowski presented and submitted written testimony in support of this bill on behalf of the Sierra Club. The testimony states that their support has been given for the following reasons: "Passenger rail transportation is significantly more energy efficient, reduces carbon and air pollution from automobiles, traffic congestion, wear and tear on roads and bridges, and makes our neighborhoods safer for pedestrians and cyclists, while creating jobs, helping to revitalize town centers and reduce poorly-planned sprawling development."

[George S. Logan, Resident of Ansonia](#)

George Logan presented and submitted testimony in support of this bill. The testimony states that the bill would "[provide] a positive impact/boost to regional (i.e. Naugatuck Valley and its surrounding towns) economic development, [attract] more young professionals and families to the region with job opportunities/growth, [and solve] the transportation needs for many people across the economic/affordability spectrum, etc."

[Patrick Scalisi, Resident of Naugatuck](#)

Patrick Scalisi presented and submitted written testimony in support of this bill, which states that it would have a strong economic impact on Amtrack-adjacent towns in the Naugatuck Valley, and that increased rail service is essential to "downtown revitalization".

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Ian Bond

Date: 3/29/2021