

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1377

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT
Title: OF TRANSPORTATION.

Vote Date: 3/19/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/26/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill consists of recommendations from the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Sections 1 and 2 establishes a new Connecticut Plane Coordinate System based on recent updates from the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) by the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and will replace the current system. These systems are for defining and stating the geographic positions and location points in relation to the surface of the Earth within Connecticut; DOT is responsible for the adoption and maintenance. It specifies that no editing on any survey, mapping project, deed, record, or other document from older systems is needed. This section updates the system to align with the newly published NSRS and will allow for more improved accuracy and consistent compatibility. Having a consistent and defined CPCS is necessary to minimizing errors and is critical to agencies or stakeholders that work within land management.

Sections 2, 14, and 15 repeals an existing statute regarding an autonomous vehicle program that was never enacted as it did not generate interest from the industry due to its restrictions. Instead, this bill allows the CTDOT to create an alternative pilot program for autonomous vehicle testers to test these vehicles, and other related technology, on state highways.

Sections 3 and 15 eliminates unnecessary requirements that special crosswalk markings be placed near schools and elderly housing. For decades CTDOT has used high visibility crosswalk markings for all crosswalks regardless of who frequently uses them.

Section 4 of the bill is a technical update that defines "light rail transit signals" and specifies that they include bus rapid transit signals and requires operators to comply with these signals in the manner specified. This change is in anticipation of the eventual implementation of new or upgraded BRT systems.

Section 5 further increases the distance a vehicle must park from an intersection or approach a marked crosswalk in compliance with federal guidelines and specifies that the stop sign parking distance also applies to yield signs and eliminates an exception in current law on stop sign parking distance that only applied to certain one-way streets in New Haven, if permitted by the LTA.

Section 6 of the bill also adds the words "EV Charging" to MUTCD permits.

Sections 7,8, and 9 of the bill allows the DOT to enter into agreements with municipalities regarding federal surface transportation urban program funds. This is deigned to add authority to enter into agreements with local officials when a municipality is the direct recipient of funding and request DOT assistance. It also seeks to update the Federal surface transportation funding program reference. This seeks to clarify statute language. There has been a significant increase in the number and size of discretionary funds provided by the federal government. It has become increasingly common for municipalities to apply for them directly. When this occurs, current statute does not provide for CTDOT to have the authority to enter into agreements with municipalities for the distribution of funds, thus CTDOT cannot assist municipalities with the right of way phase of their projects. This section aims to add authority for the DOT to enter agreements with local municipalities or when they seek help from the DOT.

Sections 10-11, current statute grants the commissioner or his agent authority to enter upon private property for the purpose of conducting surveys, inspections or geological investigations for the location, relocation, construction, or reconstruction of any proposed or existing highway. This section further expands the DOT commissioner's authority to enter private property for the purposes of constructing railroad facilities in addition to highways. This would clarify already existing language regarding access for surveys. CTDOT may need temporary access private property adjacent to a railroad corridor to conduct surveys, inspections, or geological investigations. This clarification would be particularly useful when the DOT cannot get in contact with an owner to be let onto the property to conduct a brief survey. This section aligns with CTDOT's current authority on entering private property adjacent to their highway right of way.

Section 12 also specifies that the DOT may issue an entry permit to any person for nonexclusive, temporary access to state-owned property that supports rail operations and requires a permit to specify the insurance coverage that the permittee must obtain and specifies that the state is not liable for injuries or damages to people or property resulting from the permittee's activities. This will speed up the permitting process as entry permits of a standard form can be issued to those seeking quick access, such as a utility company. Having a standard form will be more efficient than the current system and is in line with the current permit process for filming on state land, driveway permits, and state highway right of way encroachments.

Section 13 eliminates provisions in current law that freeze funding for urban transit districts and requires the DOT to establish a grant program to help urban transit districts maintain and expand transit services and prioritize grants to districts formed by a municipality with a population of at least 100,000. The way the current law is written has made CTDOT unable to implement it.

Section 14 and 15 repeals a statute enacted in 2006 requiring the governor to initiate ongoing formal discussions with bordering states about opportunities to enhance commuter and freight mobility in the region and biennially report to the legislature on these discussions and any action taken as a result. Continued discussions with our bordering states are vital to all freight and passenger rail operations, removing this statute will create efficiency in communication and the DOT already provides regular updates on these issues in their oversight hearings with the Transportation Committee. Section 15 also repeals a statute that previously authorized an autonomous vehicle testing pilot program.

Substitute Language:

The substitute language removes the provision allowing the DOT to establish a new autonomous vehicle testing program and makes other smaller technical changes.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, CT Dept. of Transportation

Commissioner Eucalitto supports the bill for a variety of reasons. They support sections 1 & 2 because the updated official Connecticut State Plane Coordinate System aligns with the newly published and reviewed NSRS and will enable improved accuracy, more consistent compatibility and interoperability, and increased confidence in the precision of spatial data analysis.

They support the changes in sections 3 and 16 because it replaces older language from 2017, which did not generate interest from industry partners in testing autonomous vehicles due to too many restrictions. The new language is more likely to attract such partners and the DOT notes autonomous vehicles could possibly be a significant development for the state. They advise that the DOT proposal in Section 3 be removed from the bill and at the present time, the bill should only proceed with the repeal included in Section 16. By removing Section 3, autonomous vehicles won't be able to operate in the state but by proceeding with the repeal in Section 16, it will sufficiently demonstrate to companies that we're willing to consider implementing this technology, upon further review, in the future.

They support sections 4 and 16, because it is a technical update that eliminates and unused and antiquated requirement that special crosswalk markings may be provided near schools and elderly housing, which are no longer needed to the high visibility crosswalk markings now used across the state.

They support section 5 because is a technical update to allow the use of Light Rail Transit (LRT) signals for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Operations.

They support section 6 because it would make the required distances for parked vehicles in relation to marked crosswalks, from (in general) 10 to 20 feet, and 25 to 30 feet, in compliance with federal guidelines.

They support section 7 because it provides a technical update to allow for an “EV Charging” sign on the state’s highways, similar to other traveler services.

They support sections 8 – 10 because the proposal seeks to add CTDOT authority to enter into agreements with local officials when a municipality is the direct recipient of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding and when they request CTDOT assistance. This would primarily affect smaller municipalities in the state that do not have the staffing or expertise needed for such projects, allowing the CTDOT to step in and assist more easily.

They support sections 10-12 because it provides clarifying language that adds rail facilities to existing statute regarding access for surveys which would be particularly useful when CTDOT cannot get in contact with an owner to obtain permission to be let on to the property, thus avoiding a long process when CTDOT only needs brief access to perform a survey. Multiple states have similar laws.

They support section 13 because it clarifies the CTDOT Commissioner’s authority to issue entry permits for non-exclusive, short-term access of the state-owned railroad right-of-way or property that support railroad operations. This provides a service delivery improvement, as entry permits of a standard form can be issued quickly to those seeking entry, such as a utility company, for short-term, non-exclusive permission to come onto the rail right of way.

They support section 14 because it removes previously adopted language that flat funds transit districts at state FY 2024 levels and that prioritizes grant awards to transit districts with a population of one hundred thousand or more because they believe the original intent of this law was to maintain a minimum funding level for TDs. However, language as written had the opposite effect, and CTDOT has been unable to implement the provision requiring the Department to establish a grant program for a TD to get any funding above SFY 2024 levels creates new administrative burdens for the TDs and the Department to allow TDs to continue operating their current services and requiring that the Department prioritize grant awards to TDs where the population is over 100,000 will effectively require that TDs with less than 100,000 reduce service to their customers. These service cuts will disproportionately impact low-income individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities that rely on public transportation service to get around their community.

They support section 15+16 – These repealed sections are needed for the requested changes regarding the AV pilot program, and Section 4 regarding special cross walk markings.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Robert Aloise, Director of Planning, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)

Mr. Aloise supports the bill in general. However, they note the summary could be improved by acknowledging the proposed change in minimum parking distances to crosswalks and intersections. They note their municipalities have traditionally been concerned regarding the balance between similar proposed minimums and provisions for parking.

Steven DeMichele, CEO/General Manager, Greater Bridgeport Transit

Mr. DeMichele supports the bill, citing that section 14 will keep funding at FY 2024 levels indefinitely (as opposed to current language which could mean a lower amount of funding is provided in subsequent years), which DeMichele says is critical to allowing transit districts to continue to provide high quality public transit to their communities, not just for expansion of service but for maintenance of existing services. They note Bridgeport saw a 36% jump in ridership in 2024, in part due to proper funding and that the bill does not commit the State to increase funding in the future but does give the DOT the flexibility to increase support as their budget allows.

Joseph Comerford, Executive Director, Estuary Transit District d.b.a. River Valley Transit

Mr. Comerford supports the bill because the proposed changes to Section 7-273I would eliminate the language of the statute freezing state funds. While not committing the state to any increases, it allows the Dept. of Transportation to increase state support as their budget allows.

Christopher Gilrein, Executive Director, Technet Northeast

Mr. Gilrein supports the bill because supports policies that encourage the safe deployment of fully automated vehicles (AVs) on public roads in the United States, citing testing regime in Section 3 of SB 1377 as a welcome opportunity to invite research and development in this emerging field.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Alex Sferrazza

Date: 3/25/25