



Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

14 Tremont Street
Hartford, CT 06105

January 31, 2020

Testimony in Support of ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT'S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE***

Submitted by John Harrity, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate & Jobs.

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is John Harrity. I serve as the chair of the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate & Jobs and submit this testimony on behalf of the Roundtable. For the record, I also serve on the Board of Directors of the CT Green Bank and on the Board of a national organization called the Labor Network for Sustainability, although this statement is not made on behalf of those organizations.

I am a resident of East Hartland, CT 06027.

The CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs supports the transportation sustainability bill. Connecticut has major transportation challenges before us, which demand significant and secure funding in order to address.

The toll program does this in a way that focuses on the vehicle traffic that 1) does the most damage to the highways, 2) uses the public roads to generate private profit, and 3) captures revenue from out-of-state trucking that otherwise would not pay at all for the toll we pay in road damage from their use of our highways.

We urge the Committee to report the bill out and for the legislature to adopt the legislation.

However, it has to be stated that the bill as written represents a major disappointment in terms of the historical moment in which we find ourselves.

It is unacceptable in the year 2020, facing the oncoming onslaught of climate change, to develop a strategic transportation plan for the next ten years, and not put the issue of climate change front and center in the framing of the issue.

Carbon output from transportation sources in Connecticut represents roughly 38% of our total carbon emissions. This is a major contributor to climate degradation. It is also a major impediment to reaching the ambitious goals set by the Governor and the legislature on curbing emissions and reaching "carbon neutrality" by 2050.

We readily acknowledge that the current legislation is primarily about funding. But to the extent that it describes the uses of these new revenues, there is little to differentiate this bill from one drafted in the 1950's.

In order to ensure that all parties, from the get-go, understand where the funds will be spent, that should be described in at least broad terms in this legislation. That should mean noting specifically the need to encourage

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mass transit, electric vehicles – and especially electric buses, pedestrian and bike paths, telecommuting, and other steps that will cut carbon emissions.

It would also be appropriate to acknowledge that alternative measures other than widening highways and “eliminating chokepoints” will decrease highway traffic, create jobs, and truly modernize Connecticut’s transportation system, in addition to reducing our carbon output.

We do not expect that there is time within the short time period between this hearing and an anticipated vote early next week, to change the bill’s language.

We would ask that the members of this committee, and members of the Connecticut General Assembly, would through their remarks on the bill indicate unequivocally the urgent need to have climate change as a main driver in determining transportation projects moving forward.

It should added that social equity and racial justice, including the resolution of long-standing wrongs – such as the concentration of diesel buses in poor neighborhoods – should be the lens through which to view and prioritize our climate change initiatives funded through this new revenue.

There is, to be sure, a tremendous amount of work to get our highways into a “state of good repair.” But preserving our roadways is obviously and significantly enhanced by providing people with alternatives to highway commuting in individual, fossil-fuel cars.

Policy initiatives such as Governor Lamont’s strategic transportation plan do not come before you frequently. To have such a long range initiative arrive at the same time that the state must begin to tackle the climate change impact of transportation in the state – is clearly an historic moment where visionary leadership is needed .

The Connecticut Roundtable on Climate & Jobs challenges Connecticut’s legislators, starting with the Transportation Committee, to be the visionary leaders we need. The people of the state – present and future – are counting on it.

Submitted by,

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