

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Steven Higashide, Senior Planner/Connecticut Coordinator Connecticut General Assembly, Transportation Committee Public Hearing February 4, 2013

Good morning. My name is Steven Higashide and I am the senior planner and Connecticut coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit transportation watchdog group that works in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. I'm here today to comment on three bills.

The first is **HB 6058, "An Act Studying and Improving Pedestrian Safety."** Tri-State believes this bill could help Connecticut DOT make further progress on reducing traffic deaths. Between 2008 and 2010, 121 pedestrians were killed in the state, and Tri-State's research has identified several of the patterns: We know most pedestrian fatalities occur on wide arterial roads, like the Boston Post Road. We know older residents are at greater risk of dying. And we know that, in Connecticut's cities, fifty-one percent of pedestrian deaths occur within a quarter-mile of a rail station or bus stop.

We believe the pedestrian study mandated by this bill will be most useful if it includes strong policy recommendations. In 2009, Connecticut passed a "complete streets" law and now transportation projects receiving state funds must take into consideration everyone who uses the road, including pedestrians, cyclists, and people of all ages and abilities. This law is considered one of the best of its type in the country, according to the National Complete Streets Coalition. However, though ConnDOT has made significant progress in implementing this law, additional work is needed.

One of the most important things the agency must do is update its Highway Design Manual—the standard reference book used by state designers and engineers—so that it includes more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly road designs. Three years ago, the agency said it would work on a comprehensive redesign of this manual; however, according to the annual report of the state's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, little progress has been made. We would suggest that a pedestrian safety study should include research on road designs that are safer for walking and cycling.

I would also like to comment on **HB 6164, “An Act Protecting the Revenue Deposited into the Special Transportation Fund.”** This is a common-sense measure to ensure that the dedicated revenues that go into the Special Transportation Fund stay dedicated for the fund’s intended purpose. Diversions from the fund not only threaten the stability of the transportation network, they reduce public trust in government.

In addition to locking the lockbox, the Legislature could consider putting an alarm on it. Every time funds are transferred out of the Special Transportation Fund for non-transportation purposes, the state could be required to issue a “diversion statement” detailing how much money has been transferred out—and how much bus service, rail service, or road maintenance that money could have funded. Such a statement would help elected officials and the public understand the consequences of reduced investment in transportation.

Finally, I’d like to comment on **SB 641, “An Act Concerning Consultation between the Dept. of Transportation and Regional Planning Agencies Prior to the Commencement of Certain Transportation Infrastructure Projects.”** We believe that state investments in transportation make the most sense when they are aligned with local land use, and this is one promising approach to that goal. We also hope and believe that Governor Malloy’s recently announced inter-agency task force on transit-oriented development will issue strong recommendations so that state policy supports investment in areas that are seeking to develop around transit.

Thank you.