

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Steven Higashide, Senior Planner/Connecticut Coordinator Connecticut General Assembly, Transportation Committee Public Hearing February 25, 2013

Good morning. My name is Steven Higashide and I am the senior planner and Connecticut coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a nonprofit transportation watchdog group that works in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

I'm here to offer our support for bills **SB634**, **HB5554**, and **HB6056** allowing municipalities to use red-light cameras to improve safety. Today, my organization released the latest edition of its *Most Dangerous Roads* report. That report found that 100 pedestrians have been killed in Connecticut between 2009 and 2011. As a pedestrian, there are few things more frightening than to begin crossing the street legally only to find that a car is racing toward you after failing to beat the light. Traffic deaths are a serious problem, and red light cameras are a needed tool to help our police officials enforce the law.

And red-light cameras *have* been proven to improve safety. You will undoubtedly hear about a great deal of studies today. I want to highlight one of the most extensive, independent studies that have been performed on this subject to date. In 2011, the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University released a study of red-light cameras in their state. The TTI examined 6 years of data, encompassing 275 intersections and 11,000 crash records. Their findings were very clear: After red-light cameras were installed, red-light related crashes dropped and *total* crashes dropped. Crashes decreased on every type of road – city streets, rural roads, interstate access roads, state highways and U.S. highways. Most importantly, this and other studies are unequivocal that red-light cameras reduce the deadliest incidents – the “T-bone,” right-angle crashes that result when someone runs a red light and hits the side of another vehicle, often leading to serious injury or death.

(More information about the TTI study can be found on its website at <http://tti.tamu.edu/2011/08/01/safety-benefits-of-red-light-cameras/>.)

I also want to speak on the many tolling bills that are up for discussion today. We support **HB5125** because we believe tolls or pricing roadways are an important tool to mitigate congestion on Connecticut's roadways and could be an important source of revenue to maintain

the state's existing road and bridge infrastructure improve Connecticut's transit system and identify new revenues for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

However, they must be part of a carefully planned statewide network. That is why we oppose **HB6050** and **HB6051**, which would establish border tolls. There are a number of problems with border tolls. First, they are inequitable, putting the responsibility for funding transportation solely on residents near the state borders. Second, they are an ineffective way to reduce congestion within the state, which must be an important factor considered when implementing tolls.

For similar reasons, we oppose **HB6052**, which would authorize tolls in just one location, specifically for the extension of Route 11. We oppose the \$1.4 billion Route 11 project because new highway construction will worsen sprawl, and won't mitigate long-term traffic congestion in the corridor. According to Connecticut DOT, "it is not anticipated that tolling will provide sufficient revenue to finance the full cost of the project." In other words, even if tolls were added to Route 11, the project could end up costing state taxpayers as well.

This bill is further problematic because it would retire the tolls once initial construction costs have been paid off. Infrastructure isn't free; if the Route 11 extension were to be built, it would represent an additional maintenance cost for the state even after tolls were retired.

Thank you.