



Passage of Transportation Lockbox Law Will Restore Public Trust; Failure to Pass Vulnerable User Bill is a Disappointment

For immediate release: June 6, 2013

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Statement of Tri-State Transportation Campaign Executive Director Veronica Vanterpool in response to the end of Connecticut's legislative session.

The passage of the FY 2014-2015 Connecticut budget marks the end of a legislative session that gets mixed reviews. The budget steals \$110 million from the state's dedicated Special Transportation Fund which supports state highways, bridges and mass transit, and moves it into the general fund. Repeating history, the Fund was again used as an ATM for non-transportation needs even though Connecticut has a backlog of transportation maintenance and repair projects. The sweep of funds is a disappointing step back from Governor Malloy's promise to preserve the dedicated fund for transportation projects, and it puts the state's transportation infrastructure at risk. At the same time, bus and para-transit riders, representing some of the poorest of the poor in Connecticut, will be hit with a fare hike, being asked to pay more for the same level of service.

Some salvo can be found in the passage of an encouraging new piece of "lockbox" legislation that was inserted into the omnibus transportation bill (SB975) that would ban future sweeps from the Special Transportation Fund. A bipartisan effort led by Democratic Transportation Committee Chairs Sen. Andrew Maynard and Rep. Antonio Guerrero, and ranking Republican members Sen. Toni Boucher and Rep. David Scribner, as well as Sen. John Kissel (also a Republican), finally elevated the growing transportation needs, and dire funding situation, facing the state.

Adding insult to potential injury, for the third year in a row, the General Assembly failed to pass a Vulnerable User Law that would protect the lives of all users of the road. The demise of the bill, which has sailed through the Transportation, Judiciary, and Insurance and Real Estate committees and has had bi-partisan support, is incongruent with the state's Complete Streets policy passed in 2009. The bill is needed now more than ever as walking and cycling become increasingly viable forms of transportation in the state. The law would protect these road users from careless drivers who put all users of the road at risk. Every year this bill fails to be signed into law is another year where preventable pedestrian deaths are sanctioned.

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.