

JOSEPH R. SCULLEY
PRESIDENT

Statement of Joseph R. Sculley
President
Motor Transport Association of Connecticut
Before
The Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2016

**Re: H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

Good afternoon, my name is Joe Sculley, I am the President of Motor Transport Association of Connecticut, also known as MTAC. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

I'd like to talk about concerns I have with the proposed Transportation budget. One of them is the proposal to close down rest areas on I-84 in Southington and Willington. The thought process must be that the state would save money by not staffing or maintaining these rest areas. However, since many truckers frequently use these rest areas, we believe this would create safety issues that would far outweigh the financial benefits.

Generally speaking, truckers won't take a break from driving unless absolutely necessary. One thing that would make a break absolutely necessary is the need to stop driving in order to comply with federal Hours of Service regulations. Hours of Service regulations are mandated by the federal government, and they govern how many hours truckers can drive per day and per week. Since both of these rest areas are almost always full of trucks, we know that truckers are there to take a break because they are required to. The breaks the truckers are taking there are not limited to a 30 minute rest, many of them are 8+ hour sleeps. Truckers take these breaks 24 hours a day 7 days a week. On Friday when I drove by the Willington rest area at the end of the snowstorm, the lot was full of trucks.

If these rest areas were to be shut down in an effort to save a few dollars, it would send a message that Connecticut does not support truck drivers, who move the freight that we all purchase. Now is not the time for Connecticut to be sending a message that they are unfriendly to business, especially a business that is often referred to as "the backbone of the economy."

One thing to note is that the truckers that use the rest areas are unlikely to be Connecticut-based drivers from Connecticut-based trucking companies. If a trucker is using a Connecticut rest area, they are likely to be based out of state.



There is already a shortage of truck parking in our state. If drivers know that there are even fewer places to take their mandated break and get a safe sleep, they might choose to take a route that requires fewer or even zero miles in CT between their origin and destination. This would result in a loss of fuel tax revenue that the state would be owed because of the International Fuel Tax Agreement, and sales tax revenue from food and beverage purchases at the rest areas.

Also included in the budget was a proposal to cut a “third shift” from all other rest areas. We are not completely sure what is meant by that. Whether it means physically closing down the rest areas at night, for example, or leaving them open but unstaffed, is a bad idea.

Some of you may be familiar with “Jason’s law.” Jason’s law was passed following the murder of truck driver Jason Rivenburg. Jason was killed because he was forced to park at an abandoned gas station to wait to deliver his load because there was no other parking available. His killer robbed him for the seven dollars he had in his pocket.

Jason’s law was included as part of the MAP-21 highway bill, which was the last federal highway authorization before the long-term bill that Congress passed earlier this year. The law mandated the completion of a truck parking survey to identify areas with parking shortages. The survey included input from the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, American Trucking Associations, truck stop and travel plaza owners, state motor carrier safety officials, and state DOT personnel. States reporting the most severe parking challenges are New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, Washington and Oregon. Connecticut was listed among many other Northeastern states, and that obviously doesn’t factor in these proposed shortages.

Connecticut should not stand out for negative reasons by reducing an already low amount of truck parking. It should not go against “Jason’s law” by putting drivers at risk, and it should not force truckers to violate the Hours of Service rules and keep driving simply because there is nowhere to stop. Rest areas should remain open and fully-staffed. Thank you for your consideration.