

**Re: Raised Bill 389 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

“Democracy dies in darkness.” -- The Washington Post

Chairmen Guerrero, Leone, Boucher, Ranking Member Carney, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. I am Joe Sculley, President of the Motor Transport Association of Connecticut (MTAC).

As much as we desire to be constructive and helpful, we cannot find any positive aspect of this bill. The Washington Post’s tagline is “Democracy dies in darkness.” MTAC believes that Raised Bill 389 is designed to hide the democratic process. It would provide cover for legislators who believe that the state should congestion-price toll its existing highways, but don’t want to go firmly “on the record” with that stance. With this bill, silent toll supporters could just blame that Transportation Authority for creating sky-high tolls that will devastate the local economy.

This is not the way good government works. A constant light needs to be shined on the democratic process. The best way to do that is to ensure that elected officials are accountable to their constituents. Hiding behind a quasi-government body is the opposite of that.

MORE DEBT

There is another major reason for this legislation, and it is not a good one. Specifically, this is a way to rack up more debt that will be paid off by Connecticut residents and businesses. This is proven in Section 3, where paragraph 6 empowers the Authority to “issue bonds, bond anticipation notes and other obligations...” Paragraph 8 allows the Authority to “borrow money for the purpose of obtaining working capital.”

Connecticut has strained its finances to the point that it can’t sell bonds on Wall Street right now. If a family or a business reached their credit limit, they would have to make some tough choices. The state should be thinking that way as well, but this bill would just be opening up new avenues for debt that will be paid by Connecticut residents and businesses. Connecticut cannot spend its way out of a financial mess.

\$47 TO TRAVEL 10 MILES

Interstate 66 lanes in Northern Virginia recently implemented a similar (but not identical) scheme to what CT is proposing, and the result was tolls as high as \$47 to travel 10 miles. <http://www.governing.com/daily-digit/4675-toll.html> If the General Assembly allows CT DOT to “implement tolls on Connecticut’s highways,” it is completely possible that the tolls could rise to these rates.



The system used on Interstate 66 is known as dynamic tolling. This bill allows for dynamic tolling in CT. From section 4, paragraph 7: “(A) establishment of variable or dynamic toll rates that take into consideration the day of the week, level of congestion or anticipated congestions.”

LACK OF PUBLIC INPUT

Section 3, paragraph 23 calls for “one public information meeting in the general vicinity of the proposed toll location.” There have been estimates for 70-80 toll gantries across all highways in the state. Where would this ONE public information meeting be?

MORE BEAURACRACY

Section 4, paragraph 2 allows the Authority to engage in “hiring, dismissing, promoting and compensating employees of the authority...” None of these employees will be accountable to any constituents. They will accrue large salaries, fringe benefits, and pensions that will be paid for by Connecticut residents and businesses.

QUASI-GOVERNMENT BODY FAILURES

Port Authority of NY/NJ – HUGE DEBT LOAD, NO OVERSIGHT

“New York’s public authorities play an increasingly influential role in government yet they operate outside the traditional checks and balances that apply to state agencies,” DiNapoli said in a press release. “Some of these entities are repeatedly used in a way that circumvents borrowing limits and oversight. As a result, New York is shouldering a huge debt load issued by public entities operating in the shadows that voters never approved.”

-- Thomas P. DiNapoli, New York State Comptroller

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/jan17/011217.htm>

NY Thruway – TOLL ROAD REVENUE DIVERTED

The NY Thruway diverts toll road revenue and spends it on upstate canals. A federal judge has ruled that this is legal. While it might be legal, Thruway users probably agree it is not ethical. Connecticut has a strong history of diverting “highway user fee” revenue away from highways, and a quasi-government body will most certainly divert Connecticut toll road revenue away from highways if given the opportunity. <https://www.law360.com/articles/896970>

PA NY/NJ – BRIDGE TOLLS DIVERTED

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey spent billions of road and bridge user money on the September 11 memorial. What does using a NY bridge or tunnel have to do with constructing a 9/11 memorial? A September 11 memorial, as great as it is, has nothing to do with infrastructure. “The escalating \$11 billion cost of the World Trade Center site redevelopment is one of the main reasons for the proposed toll and fare hike, and the Port Authority is already warning that failure to approve the toll hikes could jeopardize completion of the project.”

<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/11/0808/0206/>

PA Turnpike – FELONY CONVICTON, TAXYPAYERS PAID LEGAL FEES

Former turnpike CEO Joe Brimmeier pleaded guilty to felony conflict of interest in November and was sentenced to five years of probation. Taxpayers paid a Philadelphia law firm more than \$127,000 for Brimmeier's legal representation.

<http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/mc-pa--turnpike-investigation-20151026-story.html>

CORRUPTICUT

Unfortunately, Connecticut earned this nickname over many decades. It has largely cleansed itself of that moniker. Creating a quasi-government body with the ability to tax, spend, hire, compensate, and more, will send Connecticut backwards in terms of transparent government.

Do not let democracy die in darkness. Reject this bill and ensure that elected officials are directly accountable to their constituents.

###

ABOUT CT TRUCKING INDUSTRY:

85.8%: number of Connecticut communities that depend exclusively on trucks to move their goods

\$3.2 billion: total trucking industry wages paid in Connecticut (2016)

59,390: trucking industry jobs in Connecticut (2016)

\$53,430: average annual salary in Connecticut (2016)

\$8,258: average annual CT-imposed highway user fees paid by tractor trailers

\$8,906: average annual fed-imposed highway user fees paid by tractor trailers