

October 15, 2009



CONGRESSMAN **Chris Murphy** REPRESENTING THE 5TH DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

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Dear Friends,

Last week, I did something that I don't often get to do these days – I rode the train.

I wanted to get a group of folks together to ride the Waterbury to Bridgeport rail line and talk about how we can work together to improve service and further expand ridership. So, I got the area Chambers of Commerce, the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, local officials, and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3) to join me for what was a very productive "riding meeting" on the train.

Several years ago, an influential report on Connecticut's economic future predicted that our state risked becoming an "economic cul-de-sac" if we did not start unlocking our connections to the major markets of New York and Boston. Starting to reinvest in our long-neglected rail system is a key component of this effort, as well as a means of giving commuters real alternatives to sitting in gridlocked traffic on Route 8 and the interstates.

Would you ride the Waterbury to Bridgeport rail line, or a similar rail line near where you live or work, if stations were modern and convenient, and service was regular?

Yes

No

- I don't have rail service available to me, but I support the idea.
- I don't have rail service available to me, and I don't support the idea.
- I don't know

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Rick Dunne, executive director of the Valley Council of Governments, Bob Mezzo, mayor of Naugatuck, Congressman Chris Murphy, and Jim Della Volpe, mayor of Ansonia, discuss the Waterbury to Bridgeport rail line.

Already, demand is increasing on the crucial Waterbury-Bridgeport line. Ridership in the first six months of 2009 has climbed 7.8% compared with the first six months of 2008, growing at a faster rate than any other branch line in the state. We need to capitalize on this renewed interest in mass transit, and recognize that a revitalized Waterbury branch line can be a boon to both commuter and commercial traffic through the corridor.

On the train, I got a real sense of the diverse reasons why people want better rail options. I talked to a couple who commute together to their minimum wage jobs in Stamford, and don't have enough money to pay for a car and gas. I talked to a man who needed to take the train to Bridgeport for chemotherapy treatment, because he was too sick to drive himself. And I talked to an older woman who was on her way to visit her friend for the day, and just found convenience in taking the train.

I also learned from the rail experts who rode the train with me that in order to get more trains on the line, we need to both improve the intersection of the branch and main lines, but also the capacity of the track between Waterbury and Bridgeport. I gathered a new sense of the complexity of the solution to the under-utilization of the line, and I am going to bring back this knowledge, along with the first hand stories I heard from commuters, to Washington.

I am also going to encourage my colleagues in D.C. who care about mass transit to get back to their districts and get their own first hand understanding of rail service needs. Because, as I found out, you learn a lot when you ride the train.

Every best wish,

Christopher S. Murphy

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