

House Republican Press Release

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Opinion: Transportation Improvements For the Shoreline



By State Representative Marilyn Giuliano

For the Connecticut shoreline, transportation improvements in rail service, the expansion of the I-95 auto corridor, and new technologies to inform drivers of delays are being implemented.

Connecticut is maintaining its commitment to expand rail services and to make these services modern, reliable and convenient. A rail capitol improvement program has begun that includes ordering 300 new M-8 rail cars to replace the M-2 rail cars of the New Haven line; refurbishing rail cars purchased from Virginia for service on the Shoreline East; and renovating and expanding rail stations and commuter parking along the I-95 corridor.

For commuters taking the Shore Line East (SLE) train, Governor M. Jodi Rell has announced improved service to and from New Haven and for reverse commuters to Old Saybrook. For the first time, three trains bound from Old Saybrook to New Haven and one early morning east bound train to Old Saybrook will stop at the new Guilford station. In addition, a new midday train will be added at 1:00 p.m. from New Haven to Old Saybrook to allow SLE riders who traveled in the morning to return earlier in the afternoon. Improved service east of New Haven is an important component in reducing traffic congestion and improving mobility in Southeastern Connecticut.

Governor Rell has just announced special weekend holiday rail service on Saturdays and Sundays beginning Saturday, November 17, 2007 through Sunday, December 30, 2007. This new holiday weekend service will include three morning trains to New Haven, which will connect with service to New York City. In the late afternoon and evening, Shoreline East will offer train service out of New York City to New Haven and Old Saybrook. These six trains will have station stops in Old Saybrook, Westbrook, Clinton, Madison, Guilford, Branford and New Haven's Union Station. Parking is free at all Shoreline East stations, and children under 12 accompanied by an adult will ride free.

Shore Line East recently conducted a rider satisfaction survey, and received high marks from rail commuters. According to survey results, over 97% of those surveyed would recommend Shore Line East to a friend, and 93% agree that SLE is a good value for its cost. Shoreline East currently provides almost 2,000 passenger trips each day, totaling approximately 450,000 passenger trips each year.

To consult the new timetable for the Shore Line East, go to www.ShoreLineEast.com or call 800 ALL-RIDE.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) expects to expand commuter rail service to New York's Penn Station to relieve I-95 corridor congestion and improve mobility along our shoreline. A recent DOT study concludes that more than one million automobile trips per year could be eliminated along I-95 if daily Connecticut to Penn Station rail service were offered.

Expanding rail between Connecticut and New York is a top priority, but there are challenges to this goal. Electric rail equipment on the New Haven line is not currently capable of operating into Penn Station due to differing overhead catenary power systems. However, new M-8 electric rail cars designed to operate into Penn Station are on order for the New Haven line. The DOT report, "Implementation of Connecticut Rail Services into Penn Station New York" is available on the department's web site at www.ct.gov/dot.

Traffic congestion can be taken as a sign of a strong economy in our region as more people enjoy living and traveling in our area, and more goods are being shipped across our highways improving our economic competitiveness. Local residents, though, are rightly concerned about congestion, delays and traffic accidents on area highways.

For the long term, the state Transportation Strategy Board has identified I-95 east to the Rhode Island border as a priority for expansion. Adding another I-95 lane through the southeast Connecticut corridor would cost an estimated \$1.75 billion. The full statewide Transportation Strategy Board report is available at: http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/tsb/reports_tsb/tsb2007report.pdf

Though the state cannot simply build its way out of traffic congestion, Connecticut now has a detailed plan in place to help southeastern Connecticut in several ways:

- Relieve chokepoints
- Improve operation of existing roads, buses and rails
- Create some additional long term road capacity.

For drivers headed to New Haven and points west, a major bottleneck in East Haven is about to be removed, as a third travel lane on I-95 is extended to the Quinnipiac River Bridge.

To better use existing roads, technology is in the works to better inform drivers of traffic problems. With immediate traffic information, motorists can reroute or reschedule their trip in order to avoid wasting time in a long traffic backup.

A nationwide 511 system may soon be coming to Connecticut, along with more roadway signs, to warn of delays, construction, accidents, and other information. Motorists can call 511 for the latest travel information.

The latest road conditions are currently available at the state Department of Transportation website: <http://www.ct.gov/dot/site/default.asp>.

Developing a regional approach to providing mass transit, improving our transportation infrastructure, and making smart use of traffic information technologies are initiatives underway in our state – and that's good news for the shoreline.

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State Rep. Marilyn Giuliano serves the 23rd Assembly District of Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and Westbrook in the state House of Representatives.