

Western Connecticut COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



February 15, 2023

Esteemed Chairs Cohen and Lemar,
Members of the Transportation Committee:

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Raised Bill 1078, *An Act Concerning Rail Service*.

WestCOG **supports** the following provisions of the bill:

1. Extension of the Danbury branch line to New Milford. This has been a longstanding priority of the region. Such an extension would bring rail service to:
 - a. Downtown New Milford – which developed as a walkable, mixed use transit village and still has the structure to be reborn as one in the 21st century, as well as the transit gateway to Litchfield County. Passenger rail in New Milford will provide Litchfield County residents with an alternative to congested Route 7 to access employment and services to the south, as well as enable day and weekend trippers from the New York City metro area to travel to northwestern Connecticut by rail.
 - b. Brookfield Center – over the last decade, Brookfield has systematically redeveloped its Four Corners area with new businesses, housing, and pedestrian infrastructure. Restoration of passenger rail to Four Corners will complete the process of transforming a disinvested strip into a vibrant and diverse town center.
 - c. Danbury North – a proposed station here would provide rail access to one of the busiest commercial areas in the state (Federal Road), support the redevelopment of underutilized properties, provide a transit alternative to driving in the traffic-choked Route 7/Interstate 84 interchange area, and provide an easy on/easy off rail station parking option for the Danbury branch, supporting ridership growth.
2. Purchase and installation of new rail cars for the Danbury branch. Replacement of the branch's rolling stock – much of which has become superannuated – is key to the future of the line.

Should you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Pickering". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Francis R. Pickering
Executive Director