

Murphy Announces Passage of Amendment to Boost Commuter Rail Service in Central Connecticut

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MERIDEN, CT - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) announced passage of his amendment to Amtrak legislation that aims to facilitate the creation of expanded commuter rail in central Connecticut with service to Meriden.

"At a time when gas prices are squeezing the budget of Connecticut's families like never before, we need to invest in the kind of commuter rail service that the New Haven - Springfield line represents. This is an investment that Connecticut has waited far too long for already, and it is one we cannot afford to delay any longer," said Murphy, who returned Thursday night from Washington to announce the passage of his amendment at the Meriden train station.

With the third-highest gas prices in the nation, Connecticut has seen a 5.55% increase in commuter rail usage over the first quarter of 2008 alone. While the southern portion of the state is well-served by the Metro-North and Shoreline East rail lines, there is insufficient service to meet demand through the central portion of the state. Amtrak and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) are currently in discussions to employ the Amtrak-owned New Haven - Hartford - Springfield line as a conduit for expanded commuter rail service run by ConnDOT.

Murphy's amendment expressed Congressional support for increased commuter rail service along the vital Northeastern transportation corridor, and directed Amtrak to report to ConnDOT on the uncompleted infrastructure maintenance on the line. ConnDOT worked with Murphy's office to draft the amendment, as they were encountering difficulties in obtaining track maintenance information from Amtrak. The amendment passed the House of Representatives earlier this week.

Expanded commuter rail service on the New Haven - Springfield line will result in an estimated 2,215,384 passenger miles per year, helping to curb pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that vehicle usage would otherwise produce. The town of Meriden plans to construct a state-of-the art intermodal transportation hub to take advantage of the new commuter rail service this line would provide.

"We have been working to establish commuter rail and we need Amtrak's cooperation. Congressman Murphy's assistance is vital to our success," said House Majority Leader Chris Donovan.

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