

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2016

Administrator Sarah Feinberg
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: NEC FUTURE Tier 1 Draft EIS

Dear Administrator Feinberg:

As the Federal Railroad Administration continues the NEC FUTURE planning process, we write to underscore the importance of creating and maintaining a sense of open communication with communities who may be affected by new track segments constructed under the proposed Action Alternatives. Furthermore, we believe that it would be prudent for the FRA to consider hosting additional meetings and listening sessions in southeastern Connecticut.

As representatives for the southeastern shore of Connecticut, we have seen firsthand the major need for improvement along the rail line. In fact, the vast majority of our constituents support upgrading our rail infrastructure to benefit our local economy and boost tourism. Unfortunately, these same constituents believe that the FRA has not done its due diligence in providing proper community outreach in towns that will be the most impacted by new track construction.

Specifically, we write to raise concerns we have heard from our constituents regarding the proposed new segment construction outlined in Alternative 1. As you know, the new segment in Alternative 1 will shift northward east of the Old Saybrook Station and run through several Connecticut and Rhode Island shoreline communities before reconnecting to the existing segment in Kenyon, RI. Connecticut's shoreline boasts a rich, vibrant history and is home to quiet villages and historic port cities. Importantly, according to the assessment of cultural resources and historic properties in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Connecticut is home to the greatest amount of properties on the National Register of Historic Places that may be affected by new rail construction.


To that end, it is understandable that the NEC FUTURE Draft EIS has raised alarm among many Connecticut residents. Many in the region were surprised to learn about the potential placement of a new rail line in the towns. For example, as currently proposed Alternative 1 would run straight through the center of Old Lyme, impacting the cultural, historical and geographic integrity of the town – which is concerning to town leaders and community stakeholders. We recognize that FRA held listening sessions and public meetings in several Connecticut cities, and we understand that the proposals in the EIS are just the beginning of any analysis—a more thorough vetting with local stakeholders consistent with federal law would happen before any

project moves forward. Still, it appears that little engagement was done in these communities to assess even the preliminary views and concerns of those potentially impacted by the proposed new segment in Alternative 1 prior to inclusion in the report.

While we understand that the FRA is still in the project planning stages of NEC FUTURE and many more steps remain ahead in this process, we believe consistent community involvement will serve as the most important tool for finding agreeable alternatives, increasing local buy-in, and instilling a sense of trust among affected residents. As the planning process moves forward, we request that the FRA host listening sessions along the Connecticut shoreline where the proposed Alternative 1 new track segment will be constructed in order to hear the views and concerns of the communities in this area.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

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