

## Oral Testimony to Transportation Committee on SB 502, Feb. 11 2015

Good afternoon, my name is Kelly Kennedy. I'm the Executive Director of Bike Walk Connecticut. We are a statewide membership organization that works to make CT a better place to bike and walk.

We support the concepts in Senate Bill 502, AAC Bicycle Safety and Transportation Options.

We'd like to see Senate Bill 502 become a comprehensive bill that puts CT at the forefront of active transportation policy.

Our written remarks contain specifics on what we'd like to see in the bill, and I know you are getting testimony from many of our members. But today I'd like to emphasize why being bike friendly matters in the first place.

First, I should point out that last year CT's Bike Friendly State ranking dropped from 18<sup>th</sup> place to 21<sup>st</sup> place. We lost ground. This is a case of "if you're not moving forward, you're moving backward."

While other states were taking major steps to promote active transportation, we just maintained the status quo. It took 5 years to get a vulnerable user bill passed here. CT simply is not moving forward at the same pace as other states, and to our detriment.

Meanwhile, the 2014 MetroHartford Progress Points Report put out by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving found that 81% of workers in Greater Hartford commute alone by car. That's astounding, and not in a good way. Certainly, that has to contribute to our traffic congestion problems.

So why does being bike friendly matter? Being bike friendly has to do with providing transportation options – active transportation options.

Being bike friendly also has ramifications for environmental policy, health policy, and our economic competitiveness overall.

We'd like to see CT adopt express "mode shift" goals.

Whether we accomplish that policy legislatively or administratively, shifting the mode of transportation from *driving* to *biking and walking* for short trips would reduce traffic congestion. It would mitigate the need for expensive road building. It would reduce pollution and greenhouse gases.

Being bike friendly would be a good strategy for addressing the rising rate of obesity and obesity related diseases.

Then there's tourism. Our picturesque state begs to be explored by bike. Being more bike friendly would be a boon to our Tourism economy.

Moreover, being more bike friendly ties into our economic competitiveness overall. The millennials and knowledge workers we want to attract and keep in our work force choose to live in places that are bikeable and walkable.

As one of our members explained,

“When someone chooses to move to Boston over Hartford or New Haven, it isn’t because Boston has a lower cost of living. I work at Pratt & Whitney, and when we hire young engineers from MIT, they pine for the walkable, bikeable streets they left behind.”

Connecticut is not yet a great place to bike and walk, but it could be.

We hope SB 502 will mark a watershed year for CT’s active transportation policy.

Thank you.