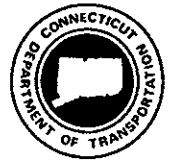




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**Testimony of James P. Redeker
Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety,
and Security**

**Power Outage on Metro-North's New Haven Line: How to Prevent Future Failures Along
Passenger Rail's Busiest Sector**

October 28, 2013

Good morning Senator Blumenthal, Senator Murphy, and members of the of the Subcommittee. I am Jim Redeker, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). I am also the current Chair of the Northeast Corridor Commission. I am honored to have the opportunity to discuss the power outage on Metro-North's New Haven Line (NHL), the impacts it had on the Northeast Corridor (NEC), and the need to ensure investments in the infrastructure to sustain this critical transportation and economic driver in the region and for the entire Northeast Corridor.

New Haven Line -- Infrastructure and Investments

For over 160 years, the New Haven Line has been an essential transportation and economic link between Manhattan, the northern suburbs of New York City and the cities in southwestern and central Connecticut. The New Haven Line is also critical to the entire Northeast Corridor, linking Boston to New York and Washington. The New Haven Line is the single busiest rail line in North America. Over 39 million passengers are served by Metro-North annually on the commuter system, and an additional 3 million intercity passenger trips are served by AMTRAK. The ridership performance is record-setting, indicating the attractiveness and the importance of the New Haven Line to Connecticut, to New York and to the entire region.

The State of Connecticut has a unique role on the NEC, since the State owns 46 miles of the NEC infrastructure between New Haven and the New York border as well as three branch lines. In total, Connecticut owns 235 track miles on the NEC and three branch lines. As the owner, Connecticut has invested significant state and federal resources to upgrade the rail infrastructure, including track, catenary and bridges. Connecticut has funded the complete replacement of 405 New Haven Line electric passenger vehicles (M8 rail cars) and the construction of related new

maintenance facilities to support that fleet. As a result of the State's investment, progress toward a State of Good Repair has been strong. In the last 10 years, Connecticut has invested over \$3.2 billion in the NHL. Of that, two-thirds, or over \$2 billion has been funded by state bond funds, while the remainder is Federal Transit Administration rail formula or discretionary funding.

Unfortunately, even this amount of funding is not enough to address the infrastructure upgrades or improvements necessary for the New Haven Line. And Connecticut is not alone in addressing the backlog of infrastructure investments. The NEC relies on over 1,000 bridges and tunnels, many of which were constructed over a century ago and are in desperate need of replacement or repair. Key segments of the NEC are operating at or near capacity, such as the Hudson River Tunnels between New York and New Jersey, which carry over 70,000 riders daily and have no space for additional trains during rush hour. Major components of the NEC's electrical and signaling systems date back to the 1910's, making service on the Corridor highly susceptible to malfunctions and delay. Major investment in the Corridor is essential to reduce delays, achieve a state-of-good-repair, and build capacity for growth. In 2010, the NEC Infrastructure Master Plan (Master Plan) estimated that the Corridor required approximately \$2.6 billion in annual expenditures over twenty years (\$52 billion total) in order to achieve state-of-good-repair and build infrastructure capable of supporting passenger rail demand forecasts for 2030. Investment levels over the past several decades have been critical in supporting the NEC's enviable record of continuous safe operation but have barely covered the costs of normalized replacement of basic components. They fall far short of the levels needed to address repair backlogs and meet future needs. The NEC Commission is currently in the process of developing an updated capital investment plan for the NEC that will address the needs of freight, commuter and intercity services.

New Haven Line Power

The New Haven Line receives power from four substations. The substation in Mount Vernon, New York which experienced the failure on September 25, 2013 is the single point of power between Pelham and Harrison, New York. In Connecticut, there are three substations that provide power for the New Haven Line. These are designed so that if one substation is off line, the others can provide redundant power. In addition, Connecticut is constructing two new substations – one in New Haven and one in Cos Cob. With the addition of these two new substations, there will be additional power to support the expansion of service with the new M8 rail fleet and provide complete redundancy in Connecticut to power the New Haven Line if any of the substations is off line. These projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of this calendar year. These projects are an example of the proactive, strategic investments Connecticut is making to upgrade the New Haven Line and support the future improvement and expansion of service for all the users of the line.

Power Outage

Unfortunately, on September 25th there was an unexpected failure of the power supply at the substation in Mount Vernon, New York. The substation was undergoing a planned, necessary upgrade, but the failure of a feeder cable left the New Haven Line without power in the critical section in New York. As a result, no Metro-North or AMTRAK electric trains could be

operated, leaving well over 130,000 customers without train service. For eleven days, the nation's busiest rail line was crippled. The impacts to New York and Connecticut customers and businesses had a compelling economic impact that cannot be simply modeled. The impact on people's livelihood and mobility was profound.

While we do not know what caused the failure, we certainly know that thousands of people were without this critical service, and we obviously need to seek to do everything possible to avoid a similar incident from occurring again. To that end, we await feedback from Con Edison so that critical lessons learned might be included in all future projects of this kind.

Customer Service

I want to take a moment to reflect on the efforts made to provide service to customers during the eleven days without the Mount Vernon substation in service. As soon as the incident occurred, Connecticut DOT was in direct contact with Metro-North to initiate the delivery of substitute services. Recognizing that there is no solution that can provide the full capacity of the New Haven Line, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), Metro-North and CTDOT developed and implemented substitute rail, bus and park/ride options that provided the most service that could possibly be delivered during the repair period. With the ultimate addition of temporary power by Con Edison, the substitute services ultimately were able to provide options for an estimated 85 percent of normal weekday New Haven Line peak ridership.

The immediate response by Governor Dannel Malloy to urge people to find alternatives, telecommute or to stay home was instrumental in the ability to manage this crisis. Consistent and thorough updates on the progressive addition of service were also communicated. Above all, customers and other citizens rose to deal with the crisis and deserve a great deal of credit as they coped through this long service impact.

The impact that this outage had resulted in an unprecedented action by the MTA Board of Directors to authorize a credit to customers. This action is not something that should be taken lightly, but it was clearly due to the once-in-a-lifetime failure that had an extraordinary impact. In fact, this singular action is not recommended for the ongoing business practices that govern the New Haven Line.

Summary

The New Haven Line, as part of the Northeast Corridor, is a critical transportation and economic system. The line has seen, and will continue to see, significant investments in ongoing maintenance and in system upgrades. Its performance, as the busiest rail commuter line in the country, is exceptional. On average, it delivers consistent, highly reliable service that exceeds 95 percent on-time performance. And the quality of the system is improving consistently and rapidly with the delivery of all new rail cars, upgraded power supply and catenary systems, new stations and new parking. Those investments have also seen the implementation of the most significant additional weekday and weekend services in the history of the line. The results are proven by the growth in ridership in all markets in this region and for trips along the entire Northeast Corridor.