

Rell Urged To Expand Rail Service To New London

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By [Stephen Chupaska](#)

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New London - Commuter rail supporters in the region want Gov. M. Jodi Rell to get the message about the need for expanded Shore Line East service to New London, so Tuesday they sent her a mix of postcards and petitions with roughly 2,000 names.

Organized by the One More Stop coalition, petitions and postcards written by people from around New London County, New Haven and Westerly urged the state to start regular commuter rail service to Union Station. Shore Line East has one arrival in New London, at 7:43 p.m., which then departs at 7:55 p.m.

"We want Governor Rell to come out and say publicly, 'Shore Line East is coming to New London,' " said Richard Caruso, a longtime downtown business owner and chairman of One More Stop. "We want her to put her words into action."

Caruso joined other members of the coalition - business owners, environmentalists and members of the local arts community - at a press conference Tuesday morning at Union Station. He said that with the Interstate 95 construction planned for this year, added rail service would ease congestion on the highway.

Kevin Nursick, a spokesman for the Department of Transportation, said Rell is "very much supporting the effort by allowing DOT to work thoughtfully and deliberately to bring quality expanded service to New London ... while building consensus rather than steamrolling ahead."

The expanded service would continue the 11 trains per day that leave New Haven and stop at Old Saybrook, to New London. The planned start date was this past spring, but it has been pushed back to either later this year or early 2010.

"We're very close," Nursick said. "And we're working with stakeholders, including Amtrak, and maritime interests."

The plan has also been fraught with delays. Amtrak announced in late 2008 that it would begin an extensive railroad-tie replacement on its tracks west of Old Saybrook. Also, an agreement between Amtrak and the Department of Environmental Protection, which is in charge of bridge openings in Niantic, Old Saybrook and over Shaw's Cove in New London, has not been signed. According to an agreement signed in 1996, the bridges remain in an open position by default from May 15 to Oct.15, only closing when a train is approaching.

Molly McKay, transportation director for the Connecticut Sierra Club, said rail has a bigger impact on reducing carbon dioxide emissions than hybrid cars and environmentally friendly buildings.

McKay also noted that neighboring Rhode Island is expanding commuter rail to Westerly, with connections to T.F. Green Airport in Warwick.

"We need the whole shoreline connected," she said.

"New London-CT"



By [Tim Cook](#)

Richard Caruso, left, chairman of the Shore Line East, One More Stop Coalition, addresses people gathered in front of New London's Union Station on Tuesday during a petition rally in support of bringing the rail service to the city.