

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

SB 518	(PA209)	scanned 1929
Motor Veh. 04-13		to be scanned July 2012

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives Proceedings

Connecticut State Library  
Compiled 2015

SB 518

(PA209)

1929

Motor Veh: 04-13

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

HEARINGS

GENERAL

Stenographer's Notes  
of  
PUBLIC HEARINGS  
before the  
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE  
on  
MOTOR VEHICLES

—  
COMMITTEE

Senator Albert E. Lavery, (Chm.) Fairfield  
" Mason Manning, Stonington

House Chairman - George W. Hanbury, Newington

Clerk - G. LeRoy Kemp, Darien

Messrs. Walter H. Goodrich, East Haven  
Arthur W. Williams, Killingly  
Frederick J. Hough, Canton  
Gus L. Goettler, East Windsor  
Fred I. Phillips, Montville  
Ansel R. Jones, Saybrook  
Bernard H. Matthies, Seymour  
Edward H. Rollins, East Granby  
William C. Hungerford, Watertown  
Henry E. Baldwin, Woodbridge  
Raymond B. Kelsey, Stafford

23644

General Assembly  
State of Connecticut  
January Session

1929  
C. G.

NOV 26 1930

C.B.Wilson: I don't know that there is anything I can add to what Mr. Healey's already said. We sincerely trust that the bill may meet with favorable consideration of the committee. It will enable the bus companies to take care of emergencies at any time with no loss of time and we feel that the State at the same time will not be losing any of its revenue and the traveling public will be better served.

Sen. Lavery: Anyone else to be heard in favor of this bill?

Mr. Barnett: I have not had a chance to thoroughly analyze this substitute bill but I think, however, that the suggested changes Mr. Healey made are very good and of interest to us, which is purely interest in the "O" marker operation. In our private party business where we are suddenly called upon to furnish a bus, perhaps on a Saturday night, we cannot get additional registration. I think the bill would be workful and advantageous in enabling us to serve the public better than under existing circumstances.

Judge Peck:  
Bristol I am not in here on this bill but I happened to hear Mr. Healey say that he didn't like the use of the word "jitney". Permit me to inform you that during the legislative in 1927 they provided to omit the term "jitney" and use the word "motor bus" or "motor Coaches" or some other phrase, I have forgotten, so that the term "jitney" will not be in bill and the term adopted can be used instead of "jitney".

Sen. Lavery: Thank you, Judge Peck. Anyone else to be heard further in reference to this bill?

Anyone opposed to this bill? No opposition.

Hearing closed.

✓ S.B. 347 ( ) AN ACT CONCERNING REGISTRATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE MOTOR VEHICLES.

Att. Healey: This bill was covered in the same substitute as S.B. 326.

✓ S.B. No. 518. (S.O'Connor) An ACT CONCERNING A UNIFORM TRAFFIC LAW.

Comm. Stoeckel: Perhaps this bill will be better understood if I give a short explanation. In the statutes there is a paragraph in the general law authorizing the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles and giving general powers which justifies that he shall at certain times and on certain occasions, as appeal to him, call conferences and discuss various matters of meeting traffic emergencies. That particular an-

thORIZATION is two years old - passed last general assembly, Acting under that privilege from time to time have studied the situation regarding uniformity of traffic, not only in the State but in other States, to see how it might be obtained. After a completion of that study some two months ago we commenced working with superintendents of police throughout the States to ascertain the situation in Connecticut, to see what could be done or how it would be best to do it. We first met with committee of association of police chiefs, including the city officials throughout the State, then from that we went into a larger meeting which included all of the police departments for cities and towns of over 10,000 and have had a very thorough discussion and an examination into existing conditions. In connection with that examination, of course, the discussion centered around the so called uniform traffic law involved in the conference under President Hoover. When we came to examining that law we found that in Connecticut we already had in our Connecticut law all of the provisions in that uniform traffic law, except, I think, five sections - not anymore than that anyway and this bill as now drafted is intended to cover those which are not in our law. To take the bill as it is now before a committee and analyze it - it accomplishes two things. The first it centralizes the major of traffic in two authorities. In cities and towns of over 10,000, or rather perhaps I should say and organized police of over 10, the traffic authority is created around the police and the police in those cities become traffic authorities. In all of the other towns in the State the selectmen become traffic authority and then the bill goes on and gives the interpretation which we think ought to be made of the use of ~~traffic~~ signals and gives to the traffic authorities set up in bill the necessary powers to create the various things which are necessary for complete traffic regulation. When we came to examine the situation in Connecticut we found that traffic was not uniform. If it is possible to so handle traffic through these authorities I think even without some of the substantial changes, which perhaps are to be made if this bill passes, uniformity could be obtained and I don't think there will be any question about the desirability of it. There doesn't seem to be any reason why I should discuss the other features of the bill, as they are set forth they are intended to show to you the various interpretations which the police have been obliged to give and the bill as drafted is the fullest interpretation. If it ought to be somewhat reduced in scope that is for you to say but I hope that the discussion on the general features of the bill will be taken care of by those better qualified than I am. In that connection there are here members of the association of Chief of Police and I hope they will tell you about the difficulties which they incur in traffic and why they think that this bill as before you is a good bill for making traffic uniform. I am sure that I will not be overstating

to say that if this bill is passed you will have uniform traffic in Connecticut in two or three months. I would like to have Chief Farrell of Hartford say a few words to you.

Chief Farrell: I might say ~~that~~ this time that Comm. Stoeckel has explained the situation quite thoroughly and I might also state that this bill as presented has been submitted to our Mayor and he has taken it up with the corporation counsel and they are in favor of it. Our great trouble is in getting something thru in the way of an regulation - it goes to the Board of Aldermen and it takes a very, very long time. It is quite difficult for us to work under present conditions and I think, as Comm. Stoeckel stated, in fact I know the Chiefs of Police all agree this is the proper procedure to take.

Chief Smith: I believe that we are all in accord that anything pertaining to the uniformity handling or regulating of traffic on our highways is beneficial. You can travel through the State of Connecticut for 25 or 50 miles and go thru 12 or 15 cities or towns with different traffic laws. Therefore the traveler is at sea. We believe with passage of this act putting control, the making of regulations, in the hands of the police department we are taking a long step in carrying out the idea of the Hoover law. This State has adopted most all of the recommendations already. We still have these conditions which are presented to us in this bill and I think it will be a long step towards uniform handling of traffic.

Supt. Wheeler: At the conference that was held, of which Comm. Stoeckel spoke, all of the police chiefs (42) were present and they all agreed, it was unanimous, that this bill was the sort of a bill to put thru. Up to date no opposition has been registered and they all seem to agree on it. If this bill goes thru we will for the first time in Connecticut have uniformity in traffic laws. We have checked every item the Commissioner laid out and we are all willing to go ahead and make traffic regulations in this State uniform.

Chief Anderson: I can only restate what the previous Chiefs have stated. We are all looking forward to uniformity in our traffic regulations. We had a special meeting and I want to assure everyone we are in accord with this bill and I hope you gentlemen see your way clear to pass it favorably.

Chief of Police of Norwalk: I can say that we are in favor of this bill going thru. I was talking to our Mayor and Treasurer and they are satisfied to have the bill go thru.

Sen. Lavery: Anyone wish to be heard further?

- Mr. Winter: I was requested by the Chamber of Commerce of Connecticut to appear before you today in favor of this bill and I was also requested by the Manufacturer's Assoc. of Bridgeport to appear in favor of this bill so it has had consideration of both these factors and think it is a worthy thing to pass.
- Mrs. J. Emery: I just came in and I don't know whether or not ~~we~~ you have Stamford appear relative to this proposed uniform traffic law but I have here a letter from Mr. Graves in which he requests I appear before this Committee in behalf of the bill. (Mrs. Emery read letter) The Chief of Police has been in Hartford in conference with the other Chiefs.
- Sen. Lavery: Anyone else to be heard? Any members of the committee any questions?
- G. Hanbury: Would like to ask the Chiefs in regard to the yellow Newington lights, whether this is a necessary part of the signals or whether it would be more advisable to go right from green to red like in New York?
- Chief Farrell: That has not been discussed. Possibly if it should be it would do away entirely with hellow lights.
- Sen. Lavery: Majority in favor of that Chief?
- Chief Farrell: Has not been put to them in that particular light.
- Sen. Lavery: What's your view Supt. Wheeler?
- Supt. Wheeler: I could never see any use for the yellow light. I never could see it. There has been some attempt to use yellow on cross walks but they will stop and start on the yellow. It should be one or the other green or red.
- Sen. Lavery: Supt. Wheeler of Bridgeport the right turn on red - what's your experience in regard to that?
- Supt. Wheeler: On the right turn on red we have had it for one year and have not had an accident and on corners if we did not have a right turn on red we would have to eliminate right on that corner.
- G. Hanbury: You would favor a uniform right turn on red?
- Supt. Wheeler: Yes, a slow right turn on the position near the curb.
- Sen. Lavery: How is that recognized?
- Supt. Wheeler: Like a great many rules and regulations not recognized very well - no State law on it. We can almost tell the



drivers from different cities,

Sen.Lavery: Do you have a right turn on red at all intersections?

Supt.Wheeler: I would expect it if the law was changed, whichever way the majority rules.

Sen.Lavery: You would have to have some information at that intersection that right turns were permissible?

Supt.Wheeler: Yes.

Sen.Lavery: Do you think that additional regulation of that kind would disturb a driver?

Supt.Wheeler: No, where regulation was displayed in vision of driver there is no reason why he should not see same.

Sen.Lavery: What has been your observance - they do not use right turn on red?

Supt.Wheeler: Well I saw in a city not long ago where 15 cars made right turn when green came on and those 15 cars could have pulled out of that line.

Sen.Lavery: What do you think the reaction is as to pedestrians?

Supt.Wheeler: Well as a general rule the pedestrian is always watching the automobiles - very seldom the light. Almost impossible for the pedestrian to watch light and car.

Sen.Lavery: Can you trace any accidents in Bridgeport to the right turn on red?

Supt.Wheeler: You are turning into pedestrians just the same if you are making left turn as turning on red.

Mr.Matthies: What's the fellow going to do that wants to turn right and the fellow, of course, going straight ahead pulls up at intersection? Some Streets are so narrow - particularly where trolley cars run. For instance on Chapel Street in New Haven.

Supt.Wheeler: Well on almost every Street 40-feet or more in width you can.

Sen.Lavery: Supt.Wheeler under section 2 that means that your Association is in favor of uniform lights and not the overhead lights. Does your association go further than that - or would they feel that there should be an official designation of the place where this signal light should be? For instance on the near right hand corner.

Supt.Wheeler: On the over-head - we had no discussion on that. Of

course there always has been and always will be overhead lights above the trolley wires but I have no comments on overhead. As to the location of the proposed signal light - the signal light shall be at a certain part of the Street on the near right hand corner.

- Sen.Lavery: Would it involve serious change?
- Supt.Wheeler: A number of towns have overhead lights. I think Chief Smith could explain this better.
- Comm.Stoeckel: On the drafting of the bill the bill the turn on the red light is permissible - it is not obligatory - it is permissible if traffic authorities wants to use it. I trust that it is permitted by a sign that would be uniform; otherwise no turns to right on red. I also think that the turn should be made close to the curb and not permitted from center of the street.
- Sen.Lavery: Any further questions?
- G.Kemp:  
Darien: I was wondering if you would make that obligatory - turn right on red?
- Comm.Stoeckel: That's a hard question to answer - would rather have some Police Chief give his views. Chief Smith can answer your question much better than I can.
- Chief Smith: The question has been raised as to whether or not it ought to be mandatory in all instances right turns on red. You cannot make it mandatory because your highways will not permit it. Right turn is useless unless you have width of Street sufficient to bring your traffic to that corner. 50% take right turn - other 50% left.
- Sen.Lavery: Thank you Chief Smith. Any further questions?  
Comm. Stoeckel have you anything further to offer?
- Comm.Stoeckel: I want to state that I have received a few letters in opposition to this bill and I would like to have the Commission hand them to the Committee at some later date.
- Emile Hemming:  
Norwalk: A representative and representing the Board of Public Safety of Norwalk registered in favor of Uniform Traffic Law.
- Mr. Pickett: Registered in favor.
- Mr. Fisher:  
Stamford: Registered in favor of Uniform Traffic Law.

- Mr. Lyon: Registered in favor of Uniform Traffic Law.
- Sen. Lavery: Anyone here opposed to this bill?
- Mr. K. Pierce:  
Hartford If the Police Chiefs want uniform traffic regulation I would not see any objection to it if the committee made certain changes. I don't see any provision in the bill for publication of regulations and I believe if you are going to have this and have Chief of Police and Police Commissioners authorities there should be a provision in that bill. There is one section in that bill which I think will make considerable trouble. Section relating to thru-thoroughfares. A lot of people from different towns assume they have a right of way and proceed without caution past intersection streets. Also in the last paragraph \$100.00 fine and 30-days in jail. That is altogether too severe a penalty and with such a penalty as that there will be cases where imposition of penalty will be abused. If there is any fine necessary it certainly ought to be confined to a second or third offense. I don't believe we should increase the penalty (approximately \$5.00) making it a money making scheme. You have discussed one more thing I intended to bring up - that is this right turn. I have a great many occasions to go to our Hartford Police Court in behalf of people coming from Middletown, New Britain. I believe in this bill it should be set up one way or another - make this traffic uniform either all over the State or not at all. There is no reason why he should not turn one place as another.
- G. Hambury:  
Newington Did Mr. Pierce notice that the \$100.00 fine 30-days was the maximum?
- Mr. K. Pierce: My experience has been the tendency is to get the top price.
- Chief Anderson: Left turn on red we ~~was~~ abolished that four or five years ago.
- Sen. Lavery: Any further opposition to this bill.
- Mr. McClure:  
New Haven We are opposed to this bill of taking the power of enacting ordinances from the present law-making powers at the present time. In all the cities whenever an ordinance is to be enacted it has to go thru certain procedure. It has to be presented to the Board of Aldermen. The committee hearing is duly advertised and anyone interested in that ordinance has a right to come in and be heard, present their views - the Board thereby knows the public's opinion of the proposed bill. The bill is referred back two or three times after the hearing and then either passed or rejected. If the board passes it

it is then given to the Mayor to see if he approves it. In this proposed uniform traffic law the power to make traffic rules and laws is left with the Police Commissioners. We submit with all due respect to our Chiefs that if this is ~~not~~ business of police to make the laws that belongs to the legislative branch of that municipality. The duty of the police is to enforce the laws. Each branch of the city government have their duties and you propose to take the law making power out of the legislative branch of the city and turn it over to the Police Commissioners or the police. We seriously object to that. Everyone has a right to go and be heard in regard to any new law and either object or register in favor of it. Gentlemen, violation of traffic laws means the arrest of the person violating - he is fined and convicted. It is a serious matter treated lightly - some cases - nevertheless serious matter - criminal record for him. If he is convicted of any violation of any traffic laws then I say that the right to be heard on the making of these laws should be left as it is - that the Board of Aldermen in the Cities should be given this power - the power should be left with them to make any laws that they think the public or City should have - think it is right. Why should they take the power of making laws and give it to the police commissioner. You take this power from a body amply able to pass these laws and place in the hands of the police commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor. That is not the spirit of the City Government. It should be left, gentlemen, we maintain where it is. Everyone should be given a chance to be heard on these traffic laws - they effect people very materially. They sometimes change the valuation of property in the central parts of the City - regarding no parking - certain places near one way streets. The owners of property come in to meetings and tell us that these regulations effect value of property - effects tenants and effect public. We submit that the matter of passing these ~~ordinances~~ ordinances in Cities relating to traffic should not be disturb'd. We are all in hopes that some day we will see more or less of a uniform traffic law, not only applying to the State but to the United States. However the placing of this power in the Board of Police Commissioners, Chiefs of Police, does not seem as tho that was going to make it. Regarding traffic control signals, Gentlemen, (in section 2) we have not any particular objection to that except so far as New Haven is concerned. They have installed an overhead system of lights and it would be a great expense to the City to change it over. Don't think it is fair to have City go to additional expense. Regarding Section 3 concerning pedestrians. We don't believe that it should be a criminal offense for pedestrians to cross the street between cross walks between signals. We certainly think the public should be given a chance to be

heard and that you Gentlemen won't change the method of enacting laws by taking it out of the law making power and placing it in the hands of the Police Commissioners.

- Sen. Lavery: Do you represent the New Haven Automobile Club as a result of a meeting?
- Mr. McClure: Yes - this is the expression of the club members.
- G. Hambury: You are in favor of a uniform traffic law?
- Mr. McClure: Of some uniform traffic law - general principle - yes.
- Sen. Lavery: You are now under the discretion of the police in New Haven?~~xxx~~
- Mr. McClure: Our traffic laws are made by the Board of Aldermen.
- Sen. Lavery: Chief Smith what do you do at the games in New Haven?
- Chief Smith: We ask the Mayor to give us an order and that is what we work on. The order is worked out, looked over at the Police Department and submitted to the Mayor and must be published 24-hours prior to the enforcement.
- Sen. Lavery: An emergency provision?
- Chief Smith: Yes sir - an emergency provision. It is the right of the Mayor to control an emergency.
- Sen. Lavery: Any questions?
- Supt. Wheeler: The Gentlemen from New Haven speaks of hearings in New Haven where the public is invited. I am wondering how many people appear at those hearings. I have seen those for years and they have never been attended.
- Mr. McClure: New Haven sees plenty at theirs. Last hearing we had about 115 - if I am not mistaken.
- Sen. Lavery: What was the hearing about?
- Mr. McClure: Fire hearing - to prevent anyone parking within 10 feet from building. Another hearing prevented parking in certain sections at certain times. I think probably 1/3 public men turned out. The Common Council was not large enough to hold the crowd. Don't know what they do in Bridgeport? It is the principle of the bill we object to and not the present Chief. There isn't any one able to regulate traffic better than Chief Smith.
- Mr. Kemp: Do you think that the Board of Aldermen can make more wise regulations than the Police Chiefs?
- Mr. McClure: At all hearings the Chief is usually present - presents his views.

- Mr. Kemp: I don't think that answers my question.
- Sen. Lavery: Are the Board of Aldermen in better position than the Chiefs of Police to pass traffic laws?
- Mr. McClure: Have not had the experience to do that. That hasn't been their business.
- Sen. Lavery: Should it be their business?
- Mr. McClure: No, I don't think so.
- Comm. Stoeckel: Perhaps we could provide<sup>for</sup> an appeal in the bill.
- Mr. McClure: We don't want a law passed unless we have a chance to be heard on it.
- Sen. Lavery: Comm. Stoeckel - what was your thought in relation to the appeal?
- Comm. Stoeckel: Provide in the bill that the order go to the Common Council, Board of Aldermen, and see if the order should be revoked or not.
- Mr. Hungerford: Why would that be necessary?
- Comm. Stoeckel: I don't say it would - I wondered if we could meet his objection in that way.
- Mr. McClure: Section 7 - that is the section telling where to park or not. We want to be heard on that before passed.
- Sen. Lavery: How is the parking in New Haven regulated now?
- Mr. McClure: By ordinance and passed by the Common Council.
- Sen. Lavery: And the police have no authority?
- Mr. McClure: Except by ordinance. It is the police duty to enforce the law.
- Mr. Matthies: If I understand you right you say the police department don't regulate traffic. What about signs in New Haven - "No parking here" - "30 minutes parking" per order of police?
- Mr. McClure: We don't believe in those signs.
- Sen. Lavery: Anyone else to be heard in opposition to this bill? Any questions by the committee - if not, hearing closed.