



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 237

February Session, 2026



AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than July 1, 2026, the
2 Department of Transportation shall increase the frequency of service
3 and number of runs on the Shore Line East rail line to a level comparable
4 to the level of service and number of runs that existed prior to the
5 reduction in service due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and
6 the civil preparedness emergency declared by the Governor on March
7 10, 2020. In establishing such level of service, the department shall
8 consider ridership data, connectivity with other rail lines and public
9 transportation services, workforce commuting patterns, employer
10 hiring activity and feedback and the demands of seasonal tourism. The
11 goal of such increase in service and number of runs shall be to reduce
12 the waiting times for passengers and increase the reliability of service
13 on the Shore Line East rail line.

14 Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) In conjunction with any state-wide study
15 on bus service undertaken by the Department of Transportation in the
16 calendar year ending December 31, 2026, the department shall include
17 in such study an assessment of the feasibility of increasing the frequency
18 of service on the bus transit route between the Naugatuck Valley region
19 and the city of New Haven at peak times and any recommendations to

20 ensure such service meets the demand of the traveling public and
21 reduces waiting times for passengers. Not later than thirty days
22 following the completion of any such state-wide study on bus service,
23 the department shall submit the results of such state-wide study to the
24 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
25 matters relating to transportation, in accordance with the provisions of
26 section 11-4a of the general statutes.

27 Sec. 3. Section 13b-38h of the general statutes is repealed and the
28 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

29 (a) The Department of Transportation shall provide for changes in
30 fares for mass transportation by land in accordance with the provisions
31 of this section and shall not be required to conform to the procedures in
32 chapter 54.

33 (b) Prior to adopting any [change] increase in fares for mass
34 transportation by land, the department shall (1) give notice of the
35 proposed fare [change] increase, its amount and the date and time it is
36 proposed to take effect by advertising, at least once, in one or more
37 newspapers having [general] circulation in all areas [of the state] that
38 [may] would be affected by such [change in fares] proposed fare
39 increase, and (2) in such notice, provide information on the date, time
40 and place a public hearing is to be held on such proposed [change] fare
41 increase. Such notice shall be provided at least fifteen days prior to such
42 public hearing. The department shall, at least fifteen days prior to such
43 public hearing, send a copy of such notice to the chairpersons and
44 ranking members of the joint standing committees of the General
45 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation and
46 finance and to the Connecticut Public Transportation Council,
47 established under section 13b-212b. A public hearing on the proposed
48 fare [change] increase shall be held at such date, time and place as will
49 be convenient for public attendance.

50 (c) When the department is required to hold a public hearing
51 regarding a proposed major service change to commuter rail service in

52 accordance with the Federal Transit Administration Title VI Circular
53 4702.1B, as amended from time to time, the department shall, at least
54 fifteen days prior to such public hearing, provide notice of such public
55 hearing to the chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing
56 committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
57 relating to transportation and finance and to the Connecticut Public
58 Transportation Council.

59 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Department of Education
60 shall administer a grant program to provide grants to local and regional
61 boards of education for the purchase of passes for the use of state-owned
62 or state-controlled bus public transportation services and distribution of
63 such passes, without cost, to students who are enrolled in grades nine
64 to twelve, inclusive, of a public school under the jurisdiction of such
65 local or regional board of education. Applications for grants shall be
66 filed with the department at such time and in such manner as the
67 department prescribes. The department may develop guidelines and
68 grant criteria as it deems necessary to administer such grant program.

69 (b) Each local or regional board of education receiving a grant award
70 under this section shall submit, at such time and in such form as the
71 department prescribes, any reports and financial statements required by
72 the department. If the department finds that any grant awarded
73 pursuant to this section is being used for purposes that are not in
74 conformity with the purposes of this section, the department may
75 require the repayment of the grant to the state.

76 (c) Not later than July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the
77 Department of Education shall submit a report, in accordance with the
78 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
79 committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
80 relating to education and transportation. Such report shall include, but
81 need not be limited to, the amount of grants awarded during the prior
82 year and an assessment of the impact of the grant program on student
83 outcomes.

84 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) For the purposes of this
85 section, "veteran" and "armed forces" have the same meanings as
86 provided in section 27-103 of the general statutes.

87 (b) The Department of Veterans Affairs shall purchase passes for the
88 use of state-owned or state-controlled bus public transportation services
89 and distribute such passes, without cost, to veterans in the state.
90 Applications for such passes shall be filed with the department at such
91 time and in such manner as the department prescribes. The department
92 may develop guidelines and criteria as it deems necessary to distribute
93 such passes.

94 (c) Not later than July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the
95 Department of Veterans Affairs shall submit a report, in accordance
96 with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
97 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
98 matters relating to veterans' affairs and transportation. Such report shall
99 include, but need not be limited to, the amount of passes purchased and
100 distributed during the prior year and an assessment of the impact of the
101 distribution of such passes to veterans.

102 Sec. 6. Section 7-273l of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is
103 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
104 *2026*):

105 (a) As used in this section, "urbanized area" has the same meaning as
106 provided in 49 USC 5302(24), as amended from time to time, and "rural
107 area" has the same meaning as provided in 49 USC 5302(17), as amended
108 from time to time.

109 (b) Each transit district established under this chapter or any special
110 act may (1) impose service charges and user fees on persons using transit
111 systems operated by such district, and (2) apply for funding from the
112 Department of Transportation in accordance with the provisions of this
113 section to finance the construction, acquisition, purchase, lease or
114 operation of a mass transit system and related programs authorized
115 under section 7-273b. Commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30,

116 1984, and each fiscal year thereafter, the commissioner shall distribute
117 such funds to each transit district located in an urbanized area or a rural
118 area in the same manner as the formula specified under 49 USC 5307, as
119 amended from time to time, or 49 USC 5311, as amended from time to
120 time. Any municipality providing transit service that is not part of a
121 transit district may either establish a transit district under the provisions
122 of this chapter to assume operating control of such service or negotiate
123 an agreement with the Department of Transportation to administer the
124 operation of such service. In the latter case, the department shall provide
125 financial assistance to such municipality according to the formula
126 specified in this section. As a condition of receiving any funds under this
127 subsection, a transit district or municipality shall meet eligibility criteria
128 established by the commissioner, including, but not limited to, deriving
129 a portion of operating costs from service charges, user fees, federal or
130 local subsidies and sources other than from state subsidies.

131 (c) The Commissioner of Transportation shall provide an operating
132 subsidy to any transit district that discounts the lawful charge to use the
133 transit systems operated by such transit district for (1) veterans, as
134 defined in section 27-103, (2) persons who are sixty-five years of age or
135 older, (3) persons with disabilities, and (4) persons who are eighteen
136 years of age or younger, provided the amount of any such discount shall
137 be not more than fifty per cent of such lawful charge. Such operating
138 subsidy shall be provided for the purposes of offsetting revenue losses
139 incurred by such transit district as a result of providing such discounts.
140 The commissioner shall establish eligibility criteria, an application
141 process and reporting requirements for transit districts to receive such
142 operating subsidy.

143 ~~[(c)]~~ (d) The Commissioner of Transportation shall adopt regulations,
144 in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to implement the
145 purposes of this section.

146 Sec. 7. Subsection (d) of section 4-186 of the 2026 supplement to the
147 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
148 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

149 (d) The provisions of this chapter shall not apply: (1) To procedures
150 followed or actions taken concerning the lower Connecticut River
151 conservation zone described in chapter 477a and the upper Connecticut
152 River conservation zone described in chapter 477c, (2) to the
153 administrative determinations authorized by section 32-9r concerning
154 manufacturing facilities in distressed municipalities, (3) to the rules
155 made pursuant to section 9-436 for use of paper ballots, [and] (4) to
156 guidelines established under section 22a-227 for development of a
157 municipal solid waste management plan, and (5) to changes in fares for
158 mass transportation by land made in accordance with the provisions of
159 section 13b-38h, as amended by this act.

160 Sec. 8. (Effective July 1, 2026) The sum of three million dollars is
161 appropriated to the Department of Education from the General Fund,
162 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, for the grant program
163 established pursuant to section 4 of this act.

164 Sec. 9. (Effective July 1, 2026) The sum of one million dollars is
165 appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs from the General
166 Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, for the purchase and
167 distribution of passes for the use of state-owned or state-controlled bus
168 public transportation services pursuant to section 5 of this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	13b-38h
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	7-273l
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	4-186(d)
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 2, "on or after the effective date of this section" was changed to "in the calendar year ending December 31, 2026" for accuracy, in Section 5(a), the definition of "veteran" was rewritten for statutory consistency and to conform with the changes being made in Section 6, in Section 6(c), "up to" was changed to "not more than" for consistency with standard drafting conventions, a new Section 7 was added for statutory consistency, and the remaining sections were renumbered accordingly.

TRA *Joint Favorable Subst.*