
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 414

AN ACT CONCERNING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

SUMMARY

This bill delays, from July 1, 2025, to October 1, 2026, the due date for the UConn Department of Natural Resources and the Environment's final report on its study of carbon sequestration by trees and other vegetation along highways and other areas in Connecticut. (Under current law, its interim report was due by January 1, 2025, but, in practice, the department published that report on February 1, 2026.) Along with the final report, the bill also requires the UConn department to submit its study results and any related recommendations to the Department of Transportation (DOT), which is in addition to the Transportation and Environment committees as current law requires.

Relatedly, the bill requires the DOT commissioner, by February 1, 2027, to consider the results of UConn's study and determine whether DOT's vegetation management guidelines need to be accordingly revised. If the commissioner determines that the guidelines do not need to be revised, he must report to the Transportation and Environment committees explaining why. Alternatively, if he revises the guidelines based on UConn's study, he must submit them to these legislative committees and the committees must hold a joint public hearing for the commissioner to present on the revised guidelines.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes, including deleting obsolete language.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the DOT commissioner and legislative committee requirement provisions are effective October 1, 2026.

BACKGROUND

DOT Vegetation Management Guidelines

Existing law requires DOT to develop, and revise as necessary, guidelines on tree and vegetation management, removal, and replacement along state highways for its employees and contractors to use for maintenance and construction projects. The guidelines must include certain components and aim to ensure that maintenance and construction projects' impacts on the environment, landscape, and noise pollution are balanced or outweighed by measures taken to avoid and minimize them. The guidelines apply to construction projects financed, wholly or partially, with federal funds to the extent that they do not conflict with federal laws and regulations. They do not apply to tree or vegetation removal that is (1) needed to maintain public safety or (2) due to a weather-related civil preparedness emergency.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 36 Nay 0 (03/16/2026)