

House Republican Press Release

February 21, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

REP. RYAN ANNOUNCES TRAIN CARS ONE STEP CLOSER



HARTFORD-State Representative John J. Ryan, R-Darien, today commended Governor M. Jodi Rell for unveiling the exterior design and the interior features of the new M-8 rail cars for the New Haven Line commuter train fleet.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) and Metro North Railroad (MNR) have been working with Kawasaki Rail Car, Inc., over the past several months to finalize designs and begin engineering of the new fleet. Continued progress on the state-of-the-art replacement rail cars are a major component of the Governor's 2005 transportation initiative to revitalize Connecticut's commuter services.

"It is exciting to see the new Connecticut rail cars take shape," Governor Rell said. "This past month, engineers from both DOT and MNR were in Japan to review a prototype and test several key systems for the new M-8 car. This spring, we expect to see a mock-up of the car for review. We continue to make essential progress toward bringing these rail cars to the state in a timely and cost effective manner."

Rep. Ryan said, "Commuters are fortunate that Gov. Rell took the initiative a few years ago and got this topic moving from the category of a political possibility, to reality. For the long-suffering Fairfield County commuters, this is good news indeed."

A customer seat-drop survey was conducted on all New Haven Line afternoon and evening trains departing from Grand Central Terminal in November. Final input was gathered from the flier and a self-addressed comment card. Customer focus group sessions were conducted in Connecticut and New York City. In addition, flyers were posted at all New Haven Line rail stations, and two displays were created of the new M-8 design at Grand Central Terminal and Stamford Train station.

Since executing a contract with Kawasaki to build the new M-8 fleet in 2006, DOT and MNR hired an industrial designer to create the interior and customer amenities in the new M-8 rail car. Input from focus groups was incorporated into the final designs presented in the flyer sent out in November. Specific design changes incorporated from focus groups include:

- Brighter interior lights and color

- More open appearance
- Enhanced comfort and customer security with enhanced vestibule flooring highlighting egress
- Larger windows, high-back seats featuring individual head rests,
- Convenient outlets by seats
- Automated announcements with coordinated destination signs to improve customer communications

On Connecticut's Intrastate service, from Stamford, Bridgeport and other Connecticut cities, there has been seen substantial increase of seven percent more riders in 2007.

Testing is currently under way for various components of the new equipment as DOT continues to work closely with Metro-North and Kawasaki during the engineering and design phases. DOT and MNR will continue to meet and finalize M-8 rail car design over the next several months, with plans for delivery of the first M-8 prototype rail car in late 2009. After that, the production schedule calls for the delivery of 10 cars per month.