



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

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Web Site: portal.ct.gov/csc

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

August 18, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Leeper
State Representative – 132nd Assembly District
Legislative Office Building, Room 5005
Hartford, CT 06106
Jennifer.Leeper@cga.ct.gov

RE: **DOCKET NO. 516** – The United Illuminating Company (UI) application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the Fairfield to Congress Railroad Transmission Line 115-kV Rebuild Project that consists of the relocation and rebuild of its existing 115- kilovolt (kV) electric transmission lines from the railroad catenary structures to new steel monopole structures and related modifications along approximately 7.3 miles of the Connecticut Department of Transportation’s Metro-North Railroad corridor between Structure B648S located east of Sasco Creek in Fairfield and UI’s Congress Street Substation in Bridgeport, and the rebuild of two existing 115-kV transmission lines along 0.23 mile of existing UI right-of-way to facilitate interconnection of the rebuilt 115-kV electric transmission lines at UI’s existing Ash Creek, Resco, Pequonnock and Congress Street Substations traversing the municipalities of Bridgeport and Fairfield, Connecticut.

Dear State Representative Leeper:

The Connecticut Siting Council (Council) is in receipt of your correspondence dated August 18, 2023 concerning the above-referenced application. Thank you for taking the time to provide the Council with your comments.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §16-50/(b), a copy of each application is required to be submitted to each member of the legislature in whose assembly or senate district the facility is to be located for review.

Before reaching a final decision on an application, the Council must carefully consider all of the facts contained in the evidentiary record that is developed by the Council, the applicant, parties and intervenors in the proceeding, and consider all of the concerns received from members of the public who speak at the public hearing or submit written statements to the Council.

Please note that you can view all of the documents related to this proceeding on our website at portal.ct.gov/csc under the “Pending Matters” link. You may also keep apprised of Council events on the website calendar and agenda.

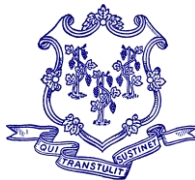
Thank you for your interest and concern in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Melanie A. Bachman
Executive Director

MAB/MP/laf

c: Service List, dated July 20, 2023
Council Members



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE JENNIFER LEEPER
132ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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VICE CHAIR
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MEMBER
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

August 18, 2023

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

Re: Testimony for Docket No. 516 – The United Illuminating Company (UI) application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the Fairfield to Congress Railroad Transmission Line 115-kV Rebuild Project

Dear Executive Director Bachman and Members of the Siting Council:

For the record, my name is Jennifer Leeper, State Representative for Connecticut's 132nd District, representing Fairfield and Southport. Please accept this written testimony for **Connecticut Siting Council Docket No. 516** - for the environmental compatibility and public need of extending an electric transmission line across CT DOT Metro North railroad corridor in the vicinity of Sasco Creek in Fairfield and UI's Congress Street.

Over the past several months, I have spoken and met with many residents, town officials, and representatives of United Illuminating about this project. From these conversations, I understand the need to upgrade our state's aging utility infrastructure, its resiliency to a rapidly changing climate, and the reliability of our power grid. However, this project will create several disturbances and severely adverse impacts not only the property owners who abut the rail line area, but also to our entire main street district, the wetlands soil, and the permanent removal of 5.5 acres of vegetation.

Numerous residents have shared their concerns about this project and have organized themselves to express their opposition to the scope of work as currently designed. I share in all of their very serious concerns and objections to this project as currently proposed. This project proposes capturing 19.25 acres of primarily privately owned land via eminent domain to site the new monopoles and create the corresponding permanent utility easements. This is wholly unacceptable. Such a grab of private land not only will decimate these homeowners' property values but it will also destroy their quality of life.

Additionally, the 10 acres of temporary easement during construction and the 6.5 acres of tree removal, 5.5 acres of which will be permanent loss, will have a devastating impacts on this community. This vegetative barrier to the current infrastructure is essential to neighbors having a site and sound barrier to the train. Without this barrier, the individuals abutting this area will have their quality of life irrevocably diminished.

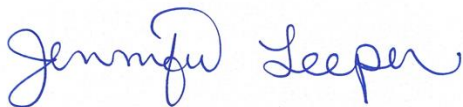
This project not only impacts the neighbors abutting the train corridor, but will also impact our entire community as out historic Southport Village and main street commercial district along the Post Rd, which will be forever-changed by the visual disruption of 95-145' monopoles towering above our mostly 2-3 story buildings. There are hundreds of businesses and a historic, nationally-recognized library directly in the path of this proposed work, all of which will be permanently disturbed by this project.

The above-mentioned concerns do not even touch on the environmental disruption and destruction of this project. The Town of Fairfield Conservation Commission also has documented comments describing how this work will infringe on conservation easements in place due to impacts of existing wetlands and vegetation.

Due to these existing issues, I respectfully ask that UI and the Siting Council reevaluate the proposal to underground the lines. When looking into the importance of this transmission line to the entire grid, it is essential to ensure that it is sufficiently resilient to a much more rapidly changing and intensifying climate than scientists have predicted. Florida has worked to underground their grid and have found that the undergrounded powerlines perform 85% better in hurricanes and 50% better in general conditions than non-underground lines. We have a unique opportunity given the dramatic influx of federal infrastructure dollars to begin the work of undergrounding with this important piece of our infrastructure. The longer this likely-inevitable work is delayed, the more expensive it will be. Undergrounding the lines will also save in significant future maintenance and damage to above-ground lines as well as prevent power disruptions to consumers as storms become more frequent and more intense. While the short-term costs of undergrounding lines are higher, over time this practice could save resources and money and mitigate significant power disruptions to consumers after storm damage.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. I look forward to continuing to work with United Illuminating, the town of Fairfield, and the Connecticut Siting Council on a resolution that will help to balance the interests of all parties and the communities of Bridgeport and Fairfield.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Leeper
State Representative, 132nd Assembly District