



AN ACT CONCERNING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Statement of Purpose: To protect both the state's infrastructure and the state's green infrastructure while contributing to the accomplishment of the state's climate goals.

Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by: SEN. KASSER, 36th Dist. & REP. MESKERS, 150th Dist.
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WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

CT's transportation corridors include 964 miles of state roads and 629 miles of passenger and freight rails. Their wooded rights-of-way (ROW) are part of our state's extensive urban forest and are managed by the Connecticut's Department of Transportation.

Unfortunately, clear cutting has been the favored vegetative management strategy along transportation corridors throughout the state. This management approach is not consistent with the goals of the recent Governor's Council on Climate Change report: *Taking Action on Climate Change and Building A More Resilient Connecticut for All*, which recognizes the importance of protecting and enhancing our forests, whether in urban or rural areas, for both climate mitigation and adaptation/resiliency benefits.

These edge forests and meadows along transportation corridors, are particularly vital as they provide for air and water quality, reduce flooding, minimize sun glare, provide noise abatement, and sequester carbon.

They also provide wildlife habitat, contribute to improved public health and real estate values in their communities, and to aesthetics as residents, commuters and tourists travel across our state.

FAST FACTS

- At 38 percent, the transportation sector is the largest source of Connecticut's [greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions](#).

- Due to higher light levels and reduced competition, edge forests typically contain larger trees storing more carbon per tree than interior forests.
- The climate mitigation value of our edge forests is "disproportionately large and should be reflected in the level of protection that they are afforded." (*Taking Action On Climate Change*)
- CTDOT's approach to "vegetation management" in the right-of-way has been to clear cut and then use pesticides to prevent regrowth in the future.
- Deforestation is not vegetation management! CT is working aggressively on climate change goals yet CTDOT practices, impacting thousands of acres, undermine this progress.

CONCLUSION

CTDOT's safety and vegetation management guidelines must be updated and followed to ensure that aggressive pruning and clear cutting are not used as vegetation management. It is time for CTDOT to follow guidelines that protect and enhance our natural assets rather than destroy them. Resilient urban forests and traveler safety are not mutually exclusive.

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