

**To:** CRCOG Policy Board

**From:** Roger Krahn, Principal Transportation Engineer

**Date:** March 17, 2020

**Subject:** Support CT Bill No. 151 – Restricting Open Alcohol Containers in Motor Vehicles

---

In Connecticut in 2018, there were 294 traffic fatalities, with 115 alcohol impaired, equating to 39%, well above the national average of 29%.

The Connecticut Strategic Highway Safety Plan states that “... Many risky driving behaviors or habits increase the chance of a driver being injured or killed in a traffic crash. Four primary driver behaviors were identified by safety stakeholders in Connecticut as areas of concern: lack of seat belt use, driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs, driving aggressively or speeding, and driving without complete attention to the driving task.” Restricting possession of open alcoholic beverage containers in motor vehicles supports reducing some of those risky driving behaviors.

Section 10 of Raised Bill No. 15 includes the following:

- No person shall possess an open alcoholic beverage container within the passenger area of a motor vehicle while such motor vehicle is on any highway in the state.
- “Open alcoholic beverage container” means a bottle, can or other receptacle (A) that contains any amount of an alcoholic beverage, and (B) that is opened or has a broken seal, or the contents of which are partially removed.
- “Passenger area” means (A) the area designated to seat the operator of and any passenger in a motor vehicle while such vehicle is being operated on a highway, or (B) any area that is readily accessible to such operator or passenger while such person is in a seated position. “Passenger area” does not include a locked glove compartment or an area not normally occupied by the operator or passengers.
- Any person who violates this section shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars.

The attached resolution includes statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, pointing to the high percentage of alcohol impaired fatalities in Connecticut, and notes that 42 states have adopted open container laws as reported by the Governors Highway Safety Association.

**The CRCOG transportation staff, recommends that the CRCOG Policy Board approve the attached Resolution supporting Section 10 of Raised Bill No. 151.**