

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of December 3, 2009

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room A
Berlin Turnpike, Newington

Attendance: Members: Mort Katz, Kevin Maloney, Richard Carpenter, Russ St. John, Gail Lavielle, Kathleen Anderson, Richard Sunderhauf, Chris Adams, Ed McAnaney, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat (OPM), Connie Mendolia (DEP), Fred Riese (DEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King, Sherry Osterling. **Guests:** Terry Hall, Bradshaw Smith.

The meeting was called to order by vice chairman Morton Katz at 1:35 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of November 5 were approved as written.

Comments from the Public

Terry Hall explained that the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, among other requirements, obligated Amtrak to produce a list of improvements needed in order to reduce operating times on the Northeast Corridor. As shown in the list of such projects which Terry distributed, the majority of the projects listed for the northern half of the Northeast Corridor, from New York to Boston, are in Connecticut. Some of these projects are Amtrak-funded and administered, while others are ConnDOT projects which will also benefit Amtrak service and assist in achieving the target of three hours and ten minutes between New York and Boston. The most expensive and ambitious of the projects in Connecticut are the replacement of moveable bridges across the Connecticut, Norwalk and Saugatuck Rivers, the replacement of the New Haven Line catenary system, and the upgrade of the New Haven Line signal system, including the addition of positive train control. The achievement of the travel time goals will also require the replacement of Amtrak's remaining 1970s vintage rolling stock with new equipment. Terry mentioned that the project to replace the Niantic River Bridge could go to construction right after the first of the year.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John reported that the Providence and Worcester is doing OK despite the slow economy. The railroad is continuing to upgrade its Plainfield to Willimantic line, in part to handle ethanol shipments from the Midwest. Auto racks, mainly carrying Volkswagens, and coal shipments are also using the line. Outbound autorack of imported cars offloaded at Quonset Point are providing a significant upturn in P&W's business.

Russ also mentioned that Connecticut's Operation Lifesaver program has a new coordinator, Jim Peay of ConnDOT. Connecticut has a very active Operation Lifesaver program and Jim will bring extra energy to it.

Fred Riese reported that a meeting of the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Study Advisory Committee took place this past Tuesday at Bridgeport City Hall Annex. ConnDOT and the consultant team have narrowed the list of alternatives to be evaluated for

improving service on these two lines. Double tracking and electrification are among the options which have been ruled out for the Waterbury Branch. A new station just east of the Devon Wye where passengers from an expanded number of Waterbury Branch trains would transfer to main line trains is one option being considered. Fred mentioned that several speakers voiced strong support for a new East Main Street station in Stamford near the junction of the New Canaan Branch and the New Haven Line. ConnDOT will look at this option but will do so through a separate study.

Rich Sunderhauf reported that the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit now has its expanded bus service schedule in place for the Christmas season. The expanded schedule, which includes more service to the malls and more evening service, went into effect the day after Thanksgiving and will run through Christmas. Rich also mentioned that Tom Crispino, Division Manager for Connecticut Transit's Stamford Division, is retiring after 32 years with the bus company.

Chairman's Report

Fred Riese related that Chairman Cheeseman was absent from this meeting because Middletown Area Transit was in the midst of its FTA audit and Tom was being interviewed by the auditors this afternoon.

Discussion of 2009 Annual Report Recommendations

Extensive discussion on the draft recommendations to be included in the Commission's 2009 Annual Report took place. Ten recommendations were voted for inclusion in the Annual Report. These dealt with the topics of restoring ConnDOT responses to the CPTC's recommendations, installation of centralized traffic control (CTC) on the Danbury Branch, reopening of Wilton Station on the Danbury Branch, impacts to local bus service in Waterbury if the pulse point is relocated, improving rail access into Connecticut, construction of a new bus facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District, internet applications for transit trip routing, adequate parking for rail, bus and ridesharing modes, construction of a multi-use trail in the Super 7 corridor right-of-way, and access and amenities for bicycle commuting.

Discussion of Public Announcement and Presentation of Annual Report Recommendations

Gail Lavielle presented a proposal to have the Commission host a legislative briefing in early February to publically present the recommendations of the Annual Report and to announce the public hearing and meeting schedule for 2010. This proposal was well received and there was general agreement to pursue hosting a legislative briefing.

Due to the lateness of the hour, vice chairman Katz dispensed with calling any new business and adjourned the meeting at 4:27 p.m.