

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of April 4, 2013

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room A
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Yvonne Loteczka, Mort Katz, Russ St. John, Chris Adams, Richard Sunderhauf, and Robert Rodman. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Sherry Osterling.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:38 pm. He reminded attendees that the March meeting had been cancelled for weather reasons.

The minutes of the meeting of February 7 were approved with the one change that Mort Katz asked that the minutes reflect his comment to Mike Sharff of Peter Pan that intermodal connections could be improved if bus service to New Haven was better coordinated with Amtrak's Acela schedule from that station. Mort said Amtrak's schedule from Hartford does not provide for timely Acela connections at New Haven.

Featured Speaker

Kelly Kennedy, Executive Director of Bike Walk Connecticut, has been in that position since April 2012. The organization began as the Central Connecticut Bicycle Coalition but it expanded to a statewide scope in 2010. A 15-member board directs the organization.

The increasing costs of gas and of car ownership provide strong incentives for biking and walking. These modes of travel also provide good exercise and they reduce vehicle miles of travel and pollution. Kennedy also noted that May is National Bike Month and that May 17 specifically is Bike to Work Day.

Kennedy then mentioned a number of programs and initiatives that Bike Walk Connecticut is involved in. These include the Safe Routes to School Campaign to promote student safety, Traffic Skills 101 classes to teach urban driving skills, passage of a 2008 law requiring motorists to allow for 3' of clearance when passing cyclists, passage of Connecticut's Complete Streets law in 2009, and the 2011 extension of the Recreational Liability Act to cover private lands open to cycling. Bike Walk Connecticut has also been pushing a Vulnerable User bill for the past several years. Vulnerable users are any non-auto-using travelers on the highways. A vulnerable user law would tighten up penalties for drivers hitting cyclists or pedestrians on the highways. This bill has not passed in several previous attempts but this year's version, with a reduction in the fine from \$5,000 to \$1,000 and the deletion of a community service requirement, has better chances for passage.

Kennedy feels that many of the needs of the cycling community could be addressed through an effective, pervasive "Share the Road" campaign.

Membership dues are only a very minor part of the financial support of Bike Walk Connecticut. Kennedy mentioned that although the organization has 3,500 names on its distribution list, it has only 238 actual members.

In other points mentioned by Kennedy, she noted that the usage of bicycle racks on buses has been increasing at an impressive rate, that there seems to be some legs to the push for more distracted driver laws, that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is a big supporter of Bike to Work Day and relatedly, that DEEP commissioner Dan Esty, ConnDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker and Department of Economic and Community Development Deputy Commissioner Kip Bergstrom will all be participating in that event. In response to a comment that some cyclists, particularly in urban areas, engage in unsafe practices such as cutting across traffic, Kennedy acknowledged that this is a problem with younger cyclists and will need to be addressed with a campaign which meets kids where they are, such as in schools and churches.

Chris Adams, himself a cyclist, noted that helmet cameras are increasingly popular with cyclists and can provide evidence in complaints of dangerous driving by motorists or in actual accidents.

Comments from the Public

Terry Hall of the National Association of Railroad Passengers noted that in 1998 the CPTC Annual Report contained a recommendation that the State of Connecticut acquire the Springfield Line from Amtrak. Now 15 years later, signal cables are being laid along that line in preparation for a State-operated commuter rail service there.

Hall sees the next passenger rail service need as the extension of Shore Line East service to Westerly, Rhode Island where it could potentially link up with passenger rail service coming south from Boston and Providence. Chairman Maloney asked whether such a service extension would help or hurt the deficit situation on the heavily subsidized Shore Line East service. Hall replied that hopefully it would help that situation by increasing ridership on the line. This extension of service would also shift the layover point for Shore Line East from New London to Westerly which could also serve as a connection point.

Comments from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf reported that CT Transit ridership for 2012 was 27.6 million, an increase of one million riders or 4% from 2011. He also mentioned that new routes and schedules will go into effect on April 21 including a return of Saturday service to Middletown. Finally he said that the contract ratification vote on the tentative contract with CT Transit will be this Sunday.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney said that the Federal Railroad Administration will be holding one its three April Dialogues concerning the NEC Future study of improvements on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor at Gateway Community College's downtown New Haven campus on April 8. Terry Hall and Fred Riese said they would be attending that session.

Kevin also discussed a bill put forth by Rep. Gail Lavielle to give refunds or credits to Metro-North riders for rides they had paid for but which were not provided due to the cessation of rail service during Hurricane Sandy. He noted that ConnDOT has opposed this bill and that Jim Cameron of the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council has supported it. Kevin then mentioned that the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council is proposed to be eliminated under legislation submitted by Governor Malloy. Though the CPTC's inclusion in this same bill was scheduled as a later agenda item for today's meeting, Kevin decided to move this discussion up as this was a fitting point for it. House Bill 6363, proposed by the governor also would repeal C.G.S. section 13b-11a, the Commission's implementing statute, by including it in a list of sections of statute to be repealed pursuant to section 95 of HB 6363. Chris Adams said that HB 6363 has just come out of the General Administration and Elections Committee but will need eventually to go to the Transportation Committee which is where it would be most likely to be amended.

Old Business

Fred Riese explained that he has received some new guidance from a legal counsel at ConnDOT concerning the minutes of the Commission meetings and the classification of some Commission meetings and hearings as special meetings. From now on, only Commission members and ConnDOT staff will be listed in the attendance section of the minutes. Other guests and attendees will no longer be listed. Guests are only to be mentioned in the minutes if they are either featured speakers or are presenting testimony under an agenda item. Also, all public hearings are now classified as special meetings because their dates and locations were not provided to the Secretary of the State by January 31 of the year. In addition, any meeting for which there is a change in any agenda item including the featured speaker after the distribution and posting of the initial agenda is now classified as a special meeting.

Fred also listed the dates and locations of the three public hearings for the spring schedule. They are May 8 in Norwalk at the City Hall, May 14 in Putnam at Town Hall, and May 22 in Bristol at City Hall. Moderators will be Rick Schreiner in Norwalk, Fred Riese in Putnam and Mort Katz in Bristol.

New Business

Fred announced that the speaker for the May 2 meeting will be Stephen Gazillo of URS Corporation who will speak on the Central Connecticut Rail Study for which he is the project manager. This study is evaluating the potential and alternatives for passenger rail service between Waterbury and Berlin, where connection would be made to the Springfield Line to reach Hartford or other points. Gazillo's presentation was originally scheduled for the March 7 meeting which was cancelled due to snow.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 3:10 pm.