

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of February 4, 2016

ConnDOT Headquarters. Conference Room B
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Morton Katz, Ed McAnaney, Nick Lownes, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Sunderhauf, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** Zack Hyde (OPM), Frederick Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Sherry Osterling. **Guests:** Matt Powers (Uber), Nicole Benincasa (Uber), Danielle Herbert, Christine Maguire.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. Mort Katz noted that he was not listed as an attendee of the January 7 meeting in New Haven but he was in attendance at that meeting. No other corrections were offered to the January 7 minutes.

Featured Speaker

Matt Powers, General Manager for Connecticut for Uber, introduced himself and Nicole Benincasa from Uber who assisted with the presentation. Powers began by saying that Uber is first and foremost a technology company. He then briefly explained how Uber interfaces with passengers and its drivers, who are referred to as partners.

Uber operates on a totally cashless basis. Riders must first register with Uber and provide a credit card number. Debit cards or Pay Pal can also be used. Rides are request via smartphone or computer. The average wait time for a ride to arrive in Connecticut is five minutes from filing the request. Fares are automatically billed to the credit card on file for that passenger. Uber riders rate their drivers at the end of the ride. Drivers also rate the riders. The drivers receive 80% of the fare, 20% goes to Uber. Uber serves the whole state of Connecticut though service is less robust in the northeastern and northwestern corners of the state. Uber began service in Connecticut in April 2014, beginning in Fairfield County and then serving the Mohegan Sun Casino.

Powers next discussed the process of becoming an Uber partner, i.e., driver. The process involves many checks of background information on the vehicle, insurance and driving record of the individual. Background checks of Federal and state records are done including the terrorist watch list, sex offender registries and court records. In answer to a question, Powers said the vetting process does not include pre-employment drug screening. The typical Uber driver works less than 20 hours per week.

The use of Uber does not involve hailing a ride from the street nor waiting outside for the arrival of your ride. Every ride must be requested via smartphone or computer. The driver does not know the destination or length of the requested trip before he or she picks up the passenger. The rider is supplied with the name of the driver, the make and model of the car being used and a small photo of the driver. There is no need for cash; the entire experience is cashless, which also adds a safety factor for the drivers who do not accumulate large amounts of money during the day. As mentioned, credit or debit cards or Pay Pall are used for payment.

Uber has an insurance policy providing \$1,000,000 of coverage for every trip. It also has an incident response team to address any accidents or emergencies that could arise on a trip.

Powers also sees a public safety benefit in that Uber trips can replace trips made by drunk or impaired drivers. Connecticut had 97 deaths attributable to drunk driving in 2014, which constituted 39% of all the state's traffic fatalities for that year, the 5th highest rate nationwide. Uber has also worked with Mothers Against Drunk Driving to raise funds and awareness to combat this problem.

In answer to questions from Commission members, Powers made the following points:

- All vehicles used for Uber service must be 4-door vehicles.
- Uber drivers are paid every Thursday via direct deposits from Uber to their banks.
- Though Uber is intended to be a cashless operation, tips to drivers may be made in cash, though Uber believes that tips to its drivers are not necessary.
- Fares are calculated using a base fare plus a per mile charge and a per minute charge. The minimum fare for a ride is \$5.45.
- All vehicles must be able to accommodate a standard folding wheelchair. Rates for trips involving disabled passengers are the same as for everyone else, and service animals cannot be denied.
- Uber actively seeks out drivers with handicapped-accessible vehicles.
- Uber does not individually inspect the vehicles that are used for service.
- Uber currently has 7,000 partners in Connecticut. The company does not disclose the number of rides it provides annually or the average length of an Uber trip.
- Per company policy, firearms are not allowed to be carried inside Uber vehicles.
- As a result of driver ratings of passengers, some passengers are on file as disruptive, violent or troublesome and are no longer accepted into the Uber system.

Uber was created as a company in 2009 and first provided service in 2011, in the San Francisco area. Its slogan is "Transportation as reliable as running water, everywhere for everyone." The company does not see its business as necessarily stealing market share from other operators but it believes it expands the market in the areas it serves. The Uber concept is potentially applicable beyond just passengers and it is currently providing package courier service and lunch delivery service in New York City under the names Uber Rush and Uber Eats, respectively.

Uber seeks to compliment local transit systems, especially in providing first mile and last mile connections. In Connecticut, Powers said 29% of Uber trips taken are from Metro-North stations. In Dallas, Uber has worked with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) to coordinate trips. Uber trips can even be ordered from DART's mobile app. Powers mentioned the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority as another transit operator with whom Uber partners, and the University of Southern California uses Uber to complement its shuttle service.

Back to Connecticut, Uber offered discounts to Stamford riders after 700+ parking spaces were lost due to the ceiling collapse at the Stamford Station parking garage. The company received much new business from that promotion.

Lastly, Powers mentioned that Uber has worked with the NAACP to add minority partners in Bridgeport, Waterbury and Hartford.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf distributed the January 2016 CT Transit Connections newsletter.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney noted that the New London Day had an article about the Commission's recommendation for the extension of Shore Line East service to Westerly, RI. A Hartford Courant article mentioned that Connecticut has funding for \$6.15 million in rail improvement projects on Metro-North. Kevin also followed up on the Uber presentation by saying Uber has 245,000 drivers in Los Angeles County.

Old Business

Fred Riese mentioned that the State of Connecticut will be submitting one comprehensive comment letter on the NEC Future Draft Environmental Impact Statement prepared by FRA. Either OPM or ConnDOT will be preparing that letter, incorporating comments from multiple state agencies.

Richard Schriener mentioned that the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation annual legislative breakfast is coming up on February 23 at the Old Judiciary Room in the Capitol. ConnDOT commissioner Jim Redeker will be the featured speaker.

New Business

Fred reported that a press release covering the recommendations of the Commission's Annual Report had gone out this past Monday. The Courant and several other papers picked it up and he had radio interviews on WPRO in Providence and on Rhode Island Public Radio. In all cases, the extension of Shore Line East to Westerly was the focus of interest.

Nick Lownes reported that there was a big turnout at UConn for two meetings on extending *CTfastrakEast* service to campus. The goal is to have service in place by this summer. Options include service on Interstate 384 and US-44 or on Interstate 84 to the Tolland commuter lot or to campus on Route 195.

Lastly, a discussion on the public hearing sites for 2016 took place. Spring hearings will be held in Bristol, West Haven and Willimantic. The likely fall hearing schedule will include New London, Waterbury, Torrington, a lower Fairfield County site and potentially either Enfield or Southington. Nick Lownes volunteered to moderate the Willimantic hearing.

The speaker for the March 4 meeting in New Haven will be Francis Pickering sharing a presentation on the Federal Railroad Administration's NEC Future study. Francis had previously given this presentation to the Council of Governments.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 3:15 pm.