

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of July 10, 2014

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1-C
Hartford, Connecticut

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Russ St. John, Yvonne Loteczka, Chris Adams, Robert Rodman, Mort Katz, Ed McAnaney, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur, Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Michael Guerrero, Johanna Juskowiak. **Guests:** Mary Tomolonius (CACT), Danielle Herbert, Lawrence Truman, Bradshaw Smith.

Chairman Kevin Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm. The minutes of the meeting of June 5 were accepted as written.

Featured Speaker

Mary Tomolonius, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation, said the new State budget contains adequate funding to keep all existing bus services intact and to operate *CTfastrak*. The one negative in the budget as far as transit is concerned is a \$500,000 cut in Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) funding through the Department of Social Services. TEIP funding is a significant component in supporting Jobs Access transportation services. Originally, a \$1,000,000 cut in TEIP funding had been included in the budget but \$500,000 of this funding was restored. Tomolonius reported that the Departments of Transportation, Labor and Social Services had a meeting last week to discuss how to address the impacts of the TEIP cuts on Jobs Access service. Tomolonius feels there is an incomplete understanding at DSS as to how TEIP funds support the ability of low income residents to obtain and maintain employment through the use of Jobs Access transportation services.

Tomolonius also reported that the Vulnerable User bill has become law, being passed by the General Assembly this last session. The Vulnerable User law, Public Act 14-31, increases fines for injuries to bicyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users, and other non-motorized users of our roads. Under the Vulnerable User Law, any person operating a motor vehicle on a public way who fails to exercise reasonable caution and causes serious injury or death to a vulnerable user of the public way is subject to a fine of up to \$1,000. The vulnerable user must have shown reasonable care in the use of the public way before the motorist can be fined. As a biker and a runner, Tomolonius often sees a lack of driver awareness of other users of our roads.

Tomolonius reported that the General Assembly's Transportation Committee unanimously backed a bill to amend the State constitution to prohibit the use or transfer of funds from the Special Transportation Fund for uses not related to transportation.

On the national level, Tomolonius mentioned that there is no agreement on funding the Highway Trust Fund yet. There does not seem to be any sign of progress on reaching an agreement despite the urgency of the situation.

Lastly, Tomolonius spoke of the increasing awareness to the importance of transit in promoting successful development. She cited the example of her hometown of Stamford where the availability of multiple modes of transit has fostered the development of apartments, condos, and offices on what was "the other side of the tracks" when she was growing up. The concept that new development has to plan for transit access and be located where it can be effectively served by transit is now more accepted.

Comments from the public

Bradshaw Smith contrasted the replacement of two highway bridges on Interstate 84 in Southington while the much older Norwalk Railroad Bridge on Metro-North which has not yet been replaced. He also lamented that six new electric buses being purchased by ConnDOT will be used exclusively on the *CTfastrak* busway but will not see any service on other routes. [Note: A check with ConnDOT reveals that the department has no active plans to purchase any electric buses, either for use on *CTfastrak* or anywhere else.]

Smith noted that the export of trash from the state is an increasing business segment for freight railroads but questioned if it is good public policy for the state to be exporting its trash.

LawrenceTruman questioned various aspects of the construction methodology and of the design used by ConnDOT for Hartford area bridges.

Comments from Operating Entities

Russ St. John noted that the Providence and Worcester Railroad has been cooperating with a construction project in Middletown and Cromwell to install a new 60" sewer main to pump flows from the Middletown sewage treatment plant to the Mattabassett District treatment plant in Cromwell.

Kevin Maloney related that he had just spoken to Commission member Rich Sunderhauf this morning. As a complication of Rich's second hip replacement surgery, one of his vocal cords became temporarily paralyzed.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney mentioned a recent Wall Street Journal article which highlighted that many bicycle sharing programs have not been performing up to expectations. Though there have been some very successful bike-sharing programs, including those in Denver and Chicago, many cities have had to delay the launch of their bike-sharing programs or seek additional sources of funding to keep them going as memberships and revenues fell well short of projections or as the companies supplying the bicycles and/or managing the programs have themselves had financial difficulties. As one analyst put it, "The business model is still under development."

Maloney then noted that the concerns being expressed in Connecticut about for-hire rides being provided by drivers working through Uber is also a nationwide issue. In addition to the opposition of the taxi and livery industry and its drivers, most of whom operate as independent contractors, there are safety concerns arising from the lack of safety inspections on the vehicles of the Uber drivers and the fact that background checks on the drivers themselves are sporadic or non-existent. A consortium of taxi and livery industry representatives who recently met with ConnDOT Commissioner Redeker on this issue expressed dissatisfaction with their discussions. The issue is not only national but also international in scope as Uber has been an issue in Europe also. Maloney noted that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is a major financial backer of Uber.

Lastly, Kevin reported on the TransformCT stakeholders forum he attended June 19 in Cromwell. He noted the results of several questions from a random survey of Connecticut residents that generated 1,000 responses. Asked to rate their satisfaction with Connecticut's overall transportation system on a scale of 1 (dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), most respondents answered in the range of 5-8, with 5 being the most common answer. On the same 1 to 10 scale, when asked about pavement conditions on non-interstate roadways, 5 was again the most common answer, with responses 4-7 each getting at least 14% of the answers. Most respondents rated non-Interstate congestion levels as moderate, 5 again being the most common answer, with most responses falling in a range from 2 to 6 (12% or more each).

Among 12 options for potential transportation investments, the top five selections, in order, were:

- Maintaining highway infrastructure
- Services for elderly, disabled and low income residents
- New highways and new highway lanes
- Technology and low cost projects
- Improve public transportation infrastructure
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

(These last two were tied for fifth.)

Respondents favored maintenance of existing infrastructure over construction of new infrastructure by 38% to 14%, with 46% saying to keep the proportions between these two activities as they are. Similarly, when asked if they would rather see increased spending on highways or public transportation, respondents favored highways 32% to 18%, with 48% saying to keep the spending split as it is now.

Maloney noted that, whereas 4% of Connecticut's residents use public transportation on a regular basis, 60% of ConnDOT's budget goes to support public transportation. Kevin questioned whether this funding split is in line with the preferences of Connecticut's citizens.

Fall Public Hearing Sites

Fred Riese listed the five sites for the fall public hearings as Storrs, Waterbury, Torrington, Meriden and Hartford. The schedule for the hearings will be drawn up in the next few weeks.

Old Business

Mort Katz reprised his trip to England and France during May and June to mark the 70th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. Mort was one of 28 US World War II veterans selected to make this trip, which was funded by the organization Friends of the Greatest Generation.

Fred Riese mentioned that he had just submitted DEEP's comments to the Federal Railroad Administration on Amtrak's proposal to replace the Connecticut River railroad bridge between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme. He also mentioned that former CPTC liaison Dennis King retired from ConnDOT last month. Jim Stutz will be serving in the support role for the Commission in place of Dennis.

Lastly, Fred passed on the greetings of former CPTC member Linda Blair to the Commission.

New Business

Fred mentioned that the first submittals of travel reimbursement request forms have been reviewed and submitted for the first half of 2014 and he encouraged other members to submit their forms as soon as possible. He also mentioned that the speaker for the August 7 Commission meeting will be Don Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 2:56 pm.