

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of November 7, 2013

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

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner. Russ St. John, Richard Sunderhauf, Robert Rodman, Mort Katz, Yvonne Loteczka, Alan Sylvestre. Ed McAnaney, Bill Kelaher, Chris Adams **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg, Eric Gjede, Dan Giungi, Lawrence Truman, Randy Collins.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:31 pm. The minutes of the meeting of October 3 were accepted as written subject to one correction. Subsequent to the printing of the October minutes, Francis Pickering, Deputy Director of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, noted that of the nine towns for which that agency administers paratransit services, only four of them are within the Central Connecticut Planning Region, and five are outside the region. The October minutes had incorrectly stated that only two of the nine towns were outside of the Central Connecticut Planning Region.

**Featured Speaker**

Pamela Brown, Social Services Director for the Town of Enfield, had to cancel her appearance at today's meeting on short notice.

**Comments from the public**

Terry Hall would like to see a recommendation in the Commission's Annual Report calling for a study of extending Shore Line East commuter rail service to Westerly, RI. Terry also mentioned that National Transportation Safety Board hearings in Washington concerning New Haven Line maintenance in light of the recent derailment were conducted yesterday. Hearings on the death of a Metro-North worker at West Haven Station are going on today.

Terry also said that Amtrak ridership is going up steadily. There was a recent dip due to the power outage in Westchester County, a freight derailment, and the federal shutdown. Overall though, the ridership is increasing and Amtrak is adding extra cars onto trains where possible. South of New York City, virtually every train is full.

**Comments from Operating Entities**

Rich Sunderhauf reported that the former Star Shuttle downtown circulator in Hartford is now operating as the DASH shuttle. He also said some

Connecticut Transit buses were sent to Bridgeport to assist with replacement transportation during the New Haven Line electrical outage in September.

Fred Riese reported that Amtrak, ConnDOT and DEEP personnel had met this morning to consider an increased Amtrak schedule on the Shoreline and the potential impact of four additional round trip trains on the operation of the moveable bridges east of New Haven. Three of the four added trains would operate during the 6:00 am to 9:00 pm window of potential impact to marine traffic at the bridges. The first of the new trains would begin operation in early 2014.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney mentioned that MTA is outfitting all 5,700 of its buses with GPS equipment which will allow riders to track the location of buses and their arrival times at stops. The GPS equipment costs \$1,700 per bus, with a total cost of \$7,200 per bus including installation. Systemwide this GPS installation carries a \$41 million price tag. The system is already up and running for Staten Island and the Bronx and will be on every bus in the next six months.

A DECD study of the impacts of the Metro-North rail service outage determined that Connecticut's gross state product declined by \$62 million as a result of the 12-day disruption to rail service and State revenues took a \$2.5 million hit. The State lost \$5.3 million in rail ticket sales during this time.

Lastly, Chairman Maloney reported that the owners of many large delivery fleets are converting some, or even all, of their trucks to run on natural gas to take advantage of the price differential between natural gas and diesel or gasoline. UPS plans to buy 1,000 natural gas-powered trucks by the end of next year, while rival FedEx plans to shift 30% of its long distance truck fleet to natural gas over the next decade. By 2017, Lowe's plans to have all of its several hundred trucks operating on natural gas.

Next year, Volvo will introduce a new natural gas engine for its heavy trucks. Cummins just introduced a 12-liter natural gas engine that went on sale in July.

### **Summary of the Fall Public Hearings**

Fred Riese reported that the two public hearings last month in Enfield and New London were well attended. This continued a pattern for this year of very good hearings. The Enfield hearing, which lasted over two hours, featured testimony on the economic benefits of moving the Windsor Locks rail station to downtown Windsor Locks and of a rail station at Thompsonville in Enfield. Other topics at the hearing included the experience to date with Enfield's new Magic Carpet local bus service, the benefits of the upcoming Springfield Line commuter rail service and the

transit-oriented development potential that the Springfield Line service will open up in the Knowledge Corridor along this rail line.

The 9 speakers at the New London hearing focused on the lack of late night Shore Line East service to New London, the increase in ridership on Shore Line East to New London, the value and deficiencies of the local SEAT bus service, and the need for better coordination between all the eastern Connecticut providers of transportation services, especially those who provide paratransit service. Three speakers also mentioned regularly seeing Metro-North or Amtrak fares not being collected on the trains.

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese asked Rich Sunderhauf about a situation he had recently received a call about from a bus advocate. The situation concerns the Melville Plaza near Buckland Hills where Connecticut Transit buses no longer go into the plaza but now drop riders off on the road in front of it. This change is presumed to be as a result of a robbery which occurred in a store in the plaza and involved a person riding the bus. Rich assumes the change in the bus route is due to the plaza owner no longer allowing Connecticut Transit buses to access the plaza. Rich does not see this change as creating a major hardship because the buses still drop passengers off in front of the plaza.

### **Planning for the Annual Work Session**

Fred Riese reminded Commission members about the annual work session on November 21 at 5:00 pm at Union Station in New Haven. Food will be provided. He mentioned about ten potential topics for recommendations based on testimony from the public hearings. The summaries of the seven public hearings were mailed to members by ConnDOT this morning. Members are encouraged to review the summaries and to draft language for potential recommendations to be considered at the work session.

### **New Business**

Fred Riese mentioned four brief items under New Business. First, Jon Foster of the ConnDOT Office of Rail has agreed to speak to the Commission at its February meeting in New Haven to provide an update on Shore Line East ridership levels, the expansion of service and other SLE issues.

Next, Fred mentioned that the Connecticut Siting Council had received a petition from ClearEdge Power Corporation to install a 400kW fuel cell at the Connecticut Transit New Haven Division garage in Hamden. This petition was subsequently withdrawn while some contractual issues are being resolved.

Third, Fred said he has seen no evidence of any demolition activity at the old SNET building on Meadow Street in Waterbury in front of the Waterbury train

station. Demolition activities are supposed to commence this fall in preparation for improvements at Waterbury station to the parking and waiting areas.

Lastly, he mentioned that there has been some slow progress of late on the revised lease between DEEP and the Valley Railroad. The lease revisions are necessary in order to implement a second agreement with Providence and Worcester to accommodate access for Providence and Worcester freight trains to the lower end of the Valley Railroad property in Old Saybrook as stipulated in the Federal Railroad Administration's Record of Decision for the Amtrak electrification project from New Haven to Boston.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 2:16 pm.