

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of November 6, 2014

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

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Nick Lownes, Robert Rodman, Mort Katz, Yvonne Loteczka, Alan Sylvestre, Ed McAnaney, Bill Kelaher, Chris Adams. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guests:** Mario Marrero, Jeffrey Zyjeski, Alyssa Norwood, Lawrence Truman, Joseph Riter.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:39 pm. The minutes of the meeting of October 2 were accepted as written.

**Featured Speaker**

Mario Marrero, Senior Transportation Planner at the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), provided an update on Jobs Access transportation services and funding for the Capitol Region. As of January 1, 2015, the Capitol Region will expand to include the additional towns of Plainville, New Britain, Berlin, Southington, Willington, Coventry and Mansfield. Jobs Access transportation services have started their 18<sup>th</sup> year of operation as of August 2014.

The Jobs Access program originally started with a \$300,000 grant from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to modify CT Transit routes to reach additional job sites. Then vanpools were added, with 12-13 vanpools operating at one time. Today, the program is back to relying 100% on public transportation, with no vanpools. The original program goal was to reach 2,400 average daily riders. That goal has been comfortably exceeded, with approximately 4,200 riders per day served now, and a high of 4,667 riders per day reached for December 2013.

CRCOG convened the Jobs Access Task Force in 1997 to oversee the selection of services to be provided. The Task Force still meets, though the frequency of its meetings has been cut from monthly to every other month. Job developers have been dropped from the Task Force as the onus for finding jobs has been shifted to the individual job seekers, per Federal guidance. Task Force members include ConnDOT, CT Transit, the Department of Labor, the Greater Hartford Transit District, Capital Workforce Partners, CRCOG, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, and the Rideshare Company.

Funding for Jobs Access services comes from a combination of ConnDOT, and DSS funds and from the Federal Transit Administration, though no FTA funds are used in the Capitol Region. FTA funds are used in Connecticut's other four Jobs Access regions. The DSS funding, which has been reduced somewhat every year, is

committed through June 30, 2015. There is a good possibility that the DSS funding for Jobs Access will be moved to ConnDOT's budget at that time.

Marrero then described a couple of the more important Jobs Access routes. The Bradley Flyer is a very popular and well run Jobs Access service providing access from Hartford to the airport. It costs \$550,000 per year to run this route. At its inception, which was before the creation of the Transportation Security Administration, some airport screeners used the service to reach their jobs. In the early morning hours, the Bradley Flyer runs through the North End of Hartford because there is no service to Downtown at this point to make connections there. The Bradley Flyer operates from 4:00 am to 12:15 am. Marrero also mentioned that five bus shelters will be installed soon along Route 75 in Windsor Locks, which will be of great value to users of this route. The shelters should be in before winter.

The L-Route from Bloomfield to Buckland Hills began about 15 years ago. The service, which typically operates from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, has been very successful. It provides residents of the North End with service to these two commercial areas without having to make a connection in downtown Hartford. The L-Route carries about 400 riders per day and operates Monday through Saturday. The former Sunday service has been discontinued. Longer hours are run during holiday seasons.

No Rideshare vans are currently being used in the Jobs Access program. Drivers for those vans need a CDL. These runs have worked best when someone from the company whose site is served is the driver of the van.

Some recent discussions between DSS Deputy Commissioner Singleton, ConnDOT Deputy Commissioner Anna Barry and CRCOG Executive Director Lyle Wray seemed to be working toward an agreement on DSS's continuing role in the Jobs Access program. However, Deputy Commissioner Singleton left DSS and the discussions ended. Marrero said ConnDOT and DSS are working on a white paper on the future of this program for presentation to the next session of the legislature.

The Jobs Access trip to Home Goods in Windsor was questioned as having an extremely high per trip cost and low ridership. Marrero said that the ridership on that run is seasonal and is expected to improve this time of year, but an eye is being kept on that service because of its cost figure. If the cost continues to be out of line with other services, the service may be cut.

For the Capitol Region, Jobs Access services are run with 75% support coming from ConnDOT and 25% from DSS. Though other regions have some FTA funding in the mix, the Capitol Region does not. The Capitol Region receives \$738,000 from DSS. Total statewide Jobs Access support from DSS is \$2.5 million. The principal transportation services supported by Jobs Access funding in the

Capitol Region are the L-Route, the Bradley Flyer, and all bus service after 10:00 pm in Hartford and after 6:00 pm in New Britain.

Marrero noted that zero-car households constitute the majority of households in some census tracts in Hartford, which points to the importance of transit services in this city.

C&S Foods in Windsor Locks recently contacted CRCOG looking for bus service to its warehouse. This would involve a one-mile extension of an existing bus route, a distance which is currently walked by some employees. In an unusual situation, C&S Foods has offered to subsidize the necessary extension of the bus route to reach its facility.

The upcoming installation of bus shelters was the closing topic addressed by Marrero. In addition to the five bus shelters along Route 75 in Windsor Locks mentioned earlier, Phase I of the bus shelter program will involve 20 additional shelters in Wethersfield, South Windsor, and Bloomfield. Phase II will involve the placement of 75 shelters in Hartford. The shelters will offer solar-powered lighting and will be maintained by the advertising vendor, whose duties will include the removal of any graffiti.

In response to a final question about the possible transfer of DSS Jobs Access funding to ConnDOT's budget, Marrero said such a transfer would mean the end of the non-traditional Jobs Access solutions such as taxis, assistance with car ownership, and other car-based services.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney reported on three articles he had read recently. Massachusetts has made a \$47,000,000 commitment to upgrade the Berkshire Line and restore passenger service on it. Of this amount, \$12.1 million is for purchase of the 37-mile segment of the line in Massachusetts from the Housatonic Railroad, and \$35 million is to upgrade the line.

Secondly, a TIGER grant of \$8,000,000 was awarded to upgrade 19 miles of the New England Central Railroad in Franklin, Norwich, Stafford and Willimantic with new welded rail. The work will also include the installation of 15,000 new ties and 15,000 tons of new ballast along the line.

Lastly, the deteriorating condition of the nation's highway network and the levels of congestion on it have been cited by the National Association of Manufacturers as undermining productivity because of the delays and uncertainties they cause in making deliveries. The article cited a 19% drop in the combined rate of Federal, state and local spending on highways and streets between 2003 and

2013 as an important underlying cause of these deficiencies. Job creation and economic efficiency and competitiveness are being harmed as a result.

Kevin participated in a webinar on ConnDOT's Transform CT initiative on October 23. Forty-six people were in on the webinar or as callers. Kevin distributed a print-out of the 32 slide presentation, which he asked members to review and consider before the November 20 work session. He thought 46 participants was a surprisingly low number and wondered if ConnDOT is getting sufficient public input and whether the input it does receive comes from the usual crowd of transportation and transit advocates or reflects the views of the broader public at large.

Lastly, Kevin reported that, as a result of testimony at the Commission's October 15 public hearing in Storrs, he had e-mailed the new manager of the Buckland Hills Mall concerning the expressed needs for transit services from Storrs, Willimantic and the two universities there to the mall, and the possibility of interest in a mall-operated or subsidized periodic bus run. To date he had received no response.

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

Fred Riese gave a quick summary of the dominant issues raised at the Commission's five public hearings this fall. At the Hartford hearing on September 9, the program to add bus shelters in the Hartford area, the CRCOG study of the bus routes in the Hartford Division of CT Transit, and the bicycle and pedestrian count program coordinated by CRCOG were the main topics. In Torrington on September 17, the chief issues were the need for a new bus storage and maintenance facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District, historic preservation concerns about the selected site for the facility and the demolition of the foundry building at the site, the expanding need for transportation for the 65+ population demographic, and need for better bus and even rail ties to Waterbury were raised. The very well attended hearing in Waterbury centered on the value of the local evening bus service and the UPass program for Naugatuck Valley Community College students, the need for a shuttle service to connect the Danbury and Waterbury campuses of Naugatuck Valley Community College, the value of the *CTfastrak* service to Waterbury and the enhanced bus connections from Waterbury to the busway, the upcoming study of the Waterbury bus system including routes, pulse point and amenities, the Naugatuck River Greenway, and various observations on bus and rail transit services in and to Waterbury.

The October 8 Meriden hearing discussed existing bus transit services, the relocation of the bus system pulse point from the train station to Pratt Street during the time the new train station is under construction, and security concerns at the commuter parking lot at the junction of Interstates 91 and 691. Lastly, in Storrs on October 15, the Commission heard testimony on the need for bus service

from Storrs and Willimantic to Manchester and Hartford, a desire for enhanced transit connections to Danielson, the new Windham Region Transit District bus facility currently under construction, the increasing need for out-of-region medical transportation, and an update on the new Storrs Intermodal Center.

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

Fred Riese reminded Commission members about the annual work session on November 20 at 5:00 pm at Union Station in New Haven. Food will be provided. Commission members are encouraged to review the summaries of the eight hearings and to come with ideas or even draft language for potential recommendations to be considered at the work session.

### **New Business**

Fred mentioned four upcoming meetings concerning topics of potential interest to the Commission. On Wednesday, Nov. 19, MassDOT and the Vermont Agency of Transportation will be holding the second informational meeting on the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative concerning enhanced passenger rail service from Springfield north to Vermont and from Springfield to Worcester. The meeting will be at 7:00 pm at Union Station in Worcester.

The Federal Railroad Administration will be hosting an open house November 10 in New Haven concerning the NEC Future study and the selection of the system alternatives for upgrading the Northeast Corridor which will be carried forward to the next phase of the Tier I EIS process.

The next meeting of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering on the winter highway maintenance study for roadway deicing treatment will be Friday, November 14 at the Connecticut Economic Resources Center in Rocky Hill. And the next meeting of the Central Connecticut Rail Study will be Nov. 20 at 10 am at the Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

The dedication of the new bus facility for Middletown Area Transit will be Friday, November 14. The new facility will honor and be named after former Commission chairman Tom Cheeseman.

Lastly, Fred mentioned that Sam Gold, Executive Director of the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley will be moving to a similar position at the River Council of Governments. The Commission will be losing a valuable friend and partner in Waterbury but will gain a new one in the lower Connecticut River valley.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 2:50 pm.