

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of September 4, 2014

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

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Robert Rodman, Mort Katz, Alan Sylvestre, Nicholas Lownes. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guests:** Stephen Troster, Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg, Alyssa Norwood, Charles Rothenberg, Lawrence Truman.

Before the meeting began, Commission member Russ St. John was injured in a fall in the Legislative Office Building parking lot and was taken to Hartford Hospital. Mort Katz also requested that the minutes reflect that Yvonne Loteczka, who has rarely missed a meeting, could not be in attendance today due to an unanticipated emergency.

Chairman Kevin Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:40 pm. The minutes of the meeting of August 7 were accepted as written.

**Featured Speaker**

The featured speaker this meeting was Commission member Dr. Nicholas Lownes, Associate Professor of Traffic Engineering at UConn, who explained the work of the Connecticut Transportation Institute, which is housed at UConn within the School of Engineering. Nick first set the context by noting that the School of Engineering has a faculty of 150 with Jim Mahoney as Dean. The work of the Connecticut Transportation Institute crosses many disciplinary lines including engineering, business and geography. Though there are a number of centers within the Institute, the Technology Transfer Center is the only one with an actual facility location and with staff. Donna Shay runs the Technology Transfer Center, whose function is to supply research results and new practices in fields such as safety, traffic signals, pavement technology and construction practices to Connecticut's 169 municipalities for practical applications.

The Institute's other centers do not have facilities or full time staff. They include the Center for Transportation and Livable Systems, which is directed by Nick; the Center for Resilient Transportation Infrastructure, which is funded by the Department of Homeland Security and studies issues such as the development of blast-resistant concrete and other ways to harden our infrastructure; and the Connecticut Transportation and Safety Research Center, which is funded by ConnDOT and develops safety and accident data. Other centers within the Institute are t-HUB, which focuses on public transportation issues and is financially supported by ConnDOT, some smaller grants, and recently by the Federal Highway

Administration; the Connecticut Advanced Pavement Laboratory or CAPLab; and the Connecticut Cooperative Transportation Research Program which deals with the applied side of research which has relatively near-term practical applications.

Nick then covered three new initiatives at UConn. Next Generation Connecticut is a \$1.7 billion investment in upgrading and expanding UConn's infrastructure and staff. The UConn Tech Park is a \$132,000,000 investment to foster research and development facilities for incubator enterprises to bring new technologies into commercial production. And the University will also be adding a new 50,000 square foot Engineering and Research Education facility. Lastly, Nick noted that Next Generation Connecticut also calls for adding 200-300 new faculty positions at UConn.

Regarding the Connecticut Transportation Institute's Technology Transfer Center, Nick mentioned outreach efforts including 3,000 participants last year in its technology transfer classes as well as a listserv and a newsletter.

Another outgrowth of the Institute's work is the Connecticut Crash Data Repository which lists data on all accidents for which police reports are filed. The accident data include location, vehicle type, cause of accident, time of day, number of occupants, any impairment of the driver, and other data that can be analyzed by any of those criteria for statistical analysis. The data can be accessed at [www.ctcrash.uconn.edu](http://www.ctcrash.uconn.edu)

Nick listed the faculty of the Connecticut Transportation Institute. The faculty consists of:

- Professor John Ivan, whose specialty is safety
- Associate Professor Nick Lownes
- Associate Research Professor Eric Johnson, Director of the Transportation Safety Research Center
- Associate Professor Norman Garrick, an urban planner who studies the link between transportation and land use
- Assistant Professor Karthik Konduri who is ½ computer engineer and ½ traffic engineer and develops models and simulations of traffic flow
- Assistant Professor Any Burnicki, the Institute's GIS specialist

As an example of the type of studies the Institute does, Nick cited an analysis of the link between the vitality of a city and the amount of area in the city that is devoted to parking. Maps showing this change for Hartford between 1957 and 2009 were compiled. An opportunity cost of \$20,000,000 per year in economic activity was calculated due to land dedicated to parking in Hartford, a figure Nick said had likely increased substantially since the study was done.

Another study done by a colleague in New York City looked at the impacts of bike lane design on freight deliveries. Poorly designed bikeways can be detrimental to freight deliveries and can, in some cases, end up causing pedestrians to use the bike lanes instead of the sidewalks, leading to conflicts between these two user groups. Lownes said he is a cycling proponent but it is important to design facilities correctly.

Nick has headed up the t-HUB effort within the Institute. t-HUB is a statewide public transportation data resource which will provide data on available public transportation services, and on the emergency response, ridership survey data, Title VI equity compliance, land use, public health and active transportation management aspects of public transportation. The need for a comprehensive site coordinating all of Connecticut's public transportation services was highlighted by the comparison of the metro Seattle area with its unified public transportation system and Connecticut, a state of the same size and population as metro Seattle but served by 18 transit operators and 9 planning regions.

The t-HUB site's database is built on the GTFS software used by Google maps. Nick said the goal for the database, which is only for internal use at present, is to go public with it next year. Examples of data available include populations served by various public transportation routes, the levels of usage and crowding on different routes, and Title VI compliance, which is an area where data is currently being compiled.

Lastly, Nick described the t-HUB workshop on September 24 at the UConn Graduate Business Learning Center on Constitution Plaza in Hartford. The workshop will provide an introduction to working with the t-HUB database and will also feature as speakers:

- Dr. Kari Edison Watkins of Georgia Tech speaking on the effect of information technology on transit user perception
- Dr. Brendon Hamily of University of Toronto speaking on Transit Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Dr. Stephen Boyles of University of Texas at Austin speaking on equity considerations in transportation decisions, and
- Dr. Nicholas Lownes speaking on equity and performance measurement in Connecticut's transportation systems.

In response to a question on how frequently data is updated and whether the database includes transit operators other than CT Transit, Nick replied that CT Transit data is updated quarterly, and that t-HUB is now branching out to work with other transit providers, and has begun this effort with the Greater Bridgeport Transit District. He also noted that demand-response trips (aka dial-a-ride) are the most difficult type of trips to count.

Following a question on the bike lane design issue raised earlier, Chairman Maloney noted a recent article he had read cited a 75% increase in bicycle sales over the last 10 years. Nick noted that Portland, Oregon, a leader in bicycle infrastructure, has even built an exclusive bicycle bridge over the Willamette River.

In response to a question about the Central Corridor passenger rail service proposed on the New England Central rail line from New London to Willimantic, Amherst and Brattleboro, Lownes said it was an idea which would be useful to him but he understands it is a question of whether the service would attract sufficient ridership beyond a large student base on weekends.

Alyssa Norwood of the General Assembly staff asked if there is a link between the Institute's research and practical applications. Nick responded that Donna Shay and her Technology Transfer Center do some of that function. Also, in the selection process for research projects to be undertaken, the Institute looks for projects which have a practical application.

### **Comments from the public**

Terry Hall said that John Bernick has been promoted from being project manager of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail service project to being Assistant Administrator at the ConnDOT Office of Rail. His former position as project manager has been filled by Bruce Olmstead. Terry noted that the scope of the project has now expanded considerably north of Springfield. Massachusetts plans to have passenger rail service in operation between Springfield and Greenfield by this December, well ahead of Connecticut's timetable. In Connecticut, Terry observed, we have placed a greater focus on urban renewal along the line. Terry said that Shore Line East equipment is planned to be used for the Springfield Line service.

In regard to Amtrak news, Amtrak needs to shut down its two Hudson River tunnels for major maintenance work, a need exacerbated by flooding from Hurricane Sandy. Amtrak's hope is to have two new tunnels in place, both for additional capacity and to avoid having service shutdowns or having to do repair work on the existing tunnels only on weekends. Lastly, Terry reported that Amtrak has 70 new Siemens locomotives on order and has accepted or is in the process of accepting the first 22 of them to date.

Alyssa Norwood of the Legislative Commission on Aging's Committee for Livable Communities stressed the importance of adequate public transportation services on the lifestyle options for our aging citizens, including their ability to continue to live independently.

## **Chairman's Report**

Kevin reported on an August 19 press conference by environmental, economic and construction advocates asking the gubernatorial candidates to address transportation needs, including considerations of higher fuel taxes, and specifically to:

- Make sure that state revenue that is supposed to be devoted to transportation uses isn't diverted to ease other state fiscal problems
- Ensure that existing state transportation funding already allocated to specific projects be used as rapidly as possible to get those projects done
- Create contingency plans to pay for transportation improvements in the event that federal funding is cut back
- Prioritize long-range transportation investments to maximize economic and environmental benefits.

Among those speaking at the press conference were Lyle Wray, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments, Karen Burnaska of Transit for Connecticut, Don Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association, and Roger Reynolds of Connecticut Fund for the Environment.

Kevin also mentioned a Forum on Transportation to be held September 15 in North Haven at which Governor Malloy and challenger Tom Foley will address transportation issues.

## **Old Business**

Fred Riese updated the Commission on the very long effort to craft a license agreement formalizing Providence and Worcester's access to the southern end of the Valley Railroad property in Old Saybrook. The Federal Railroad Administration stipulated that DEEP, Valley Railroad and Providence and Worcester formalize the existing handshake agreement which allows P&W to get trains off the Northeast Corridor when necessary to allow for the passage of Amtrak trains. That requirement was contained in the Record of Decision for the Amtrak electrification project in the mid-1990s. An agreement has finally been crafted with which all parties and the Attorney General's office and the Office of Policy and Management are satisfied. Arrangements are being made for all parties to sign the agreement.

Kevin mentioned being in Norfolk and Canaan, Connecticut recently and seeing many lawn signs endorsing the extension of passenger rail service along the Berkshire Line as has been proposed by the Housatonic Railroad.

## **New Business**

Moderators were selected for the Meriden and Storrs public hearings to be held on October 8 and 15, respectively. Kevin will handle the moderating duties in Meriden and Nick Lownes will moderate at Storrs.

Fred Riese mentioned that Frank Rogers, Vice President for Marketing at the Providence and Worcester Railroad would be the speaker at the Commission's October 2 meeting. [ Note: It has subsequently been determined that Frank Rogers is not available for that date but is tentatively scheduled to speak at the Commission's March 2015 meeting.]

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 3:12 pm.

