

2001 PUBLIC HEARINGS

SCHEDULE AND SUMMARIES

In accordance with C.G.S. Section 13b-11a(b), the Commission is directed to hold public hearings in each of the metropolitan areas within the state, as determined by the Commission, for the purpose of evaluating the adequacy of rail, bus, motor carrier and other public transportation facilities.

The Commission conducted a schedule of seven public hearing, scheduled between spring and fall. The following is the schedule of public hearings for 2001:

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>MODERATOR</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
New Britain	Morton Katz	May 8	New Britain City Hall
Bridgeport	Yvonne Loteczka	May 16	Bridgeport City Hall
Middletown	Russell St. John	May 30	Russell Library
West Haven	Linda Blair	September 17	West Haven Town Hall
Willimantic	Russell St. John	September 24	Windham Town Hall
Winsted	Morton Katz	October 10	Winsted Town Hall
Kent	Fred Riese	October 15	Kent Town Hall

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission

Tuesday, May 8, 2001 – 7:30PM
New Britain City Hall
28 West Main Street
New Britain, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Morton Katz (Moderator)
Linda Blair
Terry Hall
Yvonne Loteczka
Tom Cheeseman
Richard Sunderhauf
Russell St. John

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Laila Mandour
Abby Rivera

(Hearing opened at 7:44 p.m.)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Morton Katz opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff. Mr. Katz read into the record a letter from Representative John E. Piscopo, from the 76th District and Minority Whip, who commended the Commission for holding the local hearing and receiving comments and suggestions on moving in the direction of providing more choices in transportation services. Mr. Piscopo wrote that he supports any effort to expand bus services and or new bus routes in Bristol, Plymouth Southington and New Britain.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ANTHONY SAVINO, Transit Manager of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA), presented four items of interest to the Region. First, the extension of fixed bus route. Town Bus Route 1 currently ends at two thirty. By extending the time to five thirty, it would be in line with other bus routes running in Bristol. With the present schedule, it is difficult for the senior citizens to get to the senior center in downtown Bristol. They cannot partake in activities because they have to leave at 1:30 before the bus route ends at two thirty and most activities are later in the afternoon. The Statewide Bus Study also recommended that this bus route be extended. The extension would also be offered to other riders in the area.

The second item of interest, a bus route to Plymouth and more specifically, Terryville, has been ongoing since 1993. CCRPA conducted a bus study survey with New Britain Transportation, which presently provides bus service in Bristol, and they might be able to provide the service. The route would loop around those towns and would take approximately one hour. It would not be an on-going hourly bus service, due to lack of funding. Meanwhile, CCRPA suggested a limited service to Plymouth but the DOT stated that there are no monies available and that there is not enough need in Plymouth to justify the service.

Third, there are no fixed bus routes into Southington. Mr. Peter Agostino, president of the New Britain Transportation Company, would like to provide this service, but there are no funds from DOT to put this run into effect.

The fourth item of interest is the proposed New Britain-Hartford Busway. A resolution was passed by CCRPA endorsing the building of this busway. No routes were developed, however, the need was for service to start in downtown New Britain and not outside New Britain.

RICHARD WHITTIER spoke against the busway and spoke rather, in favor of a single track rail to be built on this proposed busway for nine or ten miles between Stanley Street, New Britain and Newington Junction, including the now vacant railroad bridge over Route 9 downtown to join the active Berlin branch operated by the Guilford Railroad going to Waterbury.

Mr. Whittier also spoke in favor of passenger rail service connecting Hartford, Newington, New Britain, Plainville, Forrestville, Bristol, Terryville, Plymouth and Waterbury as an extension of the Metro-North/Waterbury Branch with service to Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

TOM CHEESMAN advised of Senate Bill 7002, which if funded will provide additional monies for senior services. One of the requirements would be for the municipalities to contribute a fifty-percent match and there is a formula as to how much each town would receive. Hopefully, the bill will pass and the municipalities can increase their services for seniors.

(Hearing closed at 8:05 p.m.)

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission

Wednesday, May 16, 2001 – 7:30PM

Bridgeport City Hall
45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

CDOT STAFF

Yvonne Loteczka (Moderator)
Linda Blair
Russell St. John
Richard Carpenter
Tom Cheeseman
Terry Hall

Fred Riese

Laila Mandour
Abby Rivera

(Hearing opened at 7:30 p.m.)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Yvonne Loteczka opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

JOSEPH GANIM, Mayor of Bridgeport, welcomed the Commission to Bridgeport. Mayor Ganim spoke to the Commission regarding the challenges and problems relative to transportation that Bridgeport faces. He stated that I-95 begins to become backed up at approximately six-fifteen in the morning and by nine thirty in the morning, it becomes the State's largest parking lot. The answer lies in other modes of transportation, Mayor Ganim stated. Every car that is taken off I-95 is one less car that causes traffic congestion problems.

The first phase of the State and Federal Intermodal Project which, includes construction of a nine hundred car parking garage off of I-95, was completed a little over a year ago. It is in the process of being connected physically to the platform of the existing train station in Bridgeport. It is also adjacent to a new surface lot that holds in excess of five hundred cars. The second and third phases, which include bus, ferry and safe parking garages need to be completed. Although Bridgeport has received substantial federal and state funding, more is needed to continue with these projects.

JEFF O'KEEFE, CEO of the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) brought four issues to the attention of the Commission, one of which is the Intermodal Transportation Facility. Phase Two of the Intermodal Project, which is the phase currently ongoing, calls for the building of a new bus terminal for the GBTA and its customers. Currently, there are about twenty two thousand riders that on a daily basis ride GBTA buses and three thousand of them go through the facility downtown, which is currently privately owned. GBTA does not have the ability to determine the hours of that facility, maintain the business, ticketing and vending. It is very important to try to get the project moving in terms of funding, particularly the operating funds to implement those new services.

Mr. O'Keefe reported that the City in the process of losing funding from the Jobs Access program. As of July 1, GBTA will have to make sixty thousand dollars in service cuts including cutbacks on extended weeknight services, extended weekend services, and perhaps cutting back the services tied to more of the successful Job Access routes. Consequently, this will result in cutting basic services that are highly popular and successful now.

KIM MORTON, from the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) stated that GBTA's first directive under the DSS funds was to address the Welfare To Work initiative through a collaborative that was initiated under the auspices of People To Jobs. The funding for those initiatives extended evening services on the Route 15, the first project to really address those needs. That took GBTA services directly from the Bridgeport area and brought it to the Valley Region in Derby. This was the first connection of its type servicing a growing, developing corridor, the Bridgeport Avenue corridor to Shelton. It's been extremely successful. This translates to anywhere from seven to eight thousand trips a month on the Route 15 corridor. Once the extended evening services were instituted, significant increases in ridership occurred. The GBTA continuously receives requests for additional service. Unfortunately, GBTA has severe budget constraints this year, which are expected to be far greater next year.

Ms. Morton reported that the Coastal Link is probably one of the first initiatives multi-district funded under Job Access. This is a collaborative with the Milford Transit District and the Norwalk Transit District. There are approximately fifty-five to fifty-six thousand people a month utilizing the Coastal Link. Due to its success, GBTA had to institute additional buses. In order to continue these programs, it is important to consider institutionalizing these services.

Ms. Morton addressed funding for ADA paratransit. The ADA provides a federal mandate for equal services to individuals with disabilities. The challenge raised is bringing the demand for these services with this continuously growing budget in line with limited funds, which have remained flat for the last five years.

JOHN METSOPOULOS, First Selectman of the Town of Fairfield, stated that the Town of Fairfield has two train stations that are ADA accessible and have more train parking and accessibility to Metro-North. Given the fact that the entire Fairfield County area is growing, in 1999 the town began exploring adding a third train station in the area of Black Rock. Then, the Town secured a development corporation to do a two hundred fifty million dollars project in conjunction with the train station. This train station will be the main station for the town of Fairfield and will be ADA handicapped accessible. It would include a twelve hundred space surface parking lot that will eventually be replaced with a parking garage. The development will be in the neighborhood of two hundred fifty million dollars and will include approximately 1,200,000 square feet of office space, retail space, and two hotels. It is important to the entire region because it is in line with what the State of Connecticut needs in terms of more commuter parking and an incentive to get people off the roads and develop a commercial retail and hotel space on the train line.

The project is multi-faceted and a great benefit for the region and the environment. The developer will clean up the area, which would be an environmental benefit to the Ash Creek area and the Long Island Sound. This major commercial and office development will be at a location closer to where the employees live and work, that will increase productivity, and decrease the tension of employees of being in traffic for two hours in

I-95. It will have a ripple affect in the Black Rock area, the west end of Bridgeport; a project of economic impetus for the entire region that will provide the benefit of reducing traffic congestion on I-95.

The benefit to the community is that it will be generating anywhere between six and ten million dollars of direct and indirect taxes to the Town of Fairfield. There will be a tax benefit to the City of Bridgeport as the property values increase because all the homes in that area are going be within walking distance of a train station.

STEVE TYLISZCZAK, with the Office of Planning and Economic Development, reiterated that the Bridgeport Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) Project has already begun. The first phase of the project, consisting of the nine hundred space transit garage, Harbor Yard, was completed last year. It was funded by the Federal and State governments, and the City of Bridgeport. This garage is already, along with the surface parking lot, reducing approximately sixteen hundred vehicle trips per day, taking cars off the highway.

The I-95 construction consisting of the realignment of exit and entrance ramps is getting to be rather confusing and not people-friendly at the moment. When that is completed and when the next phase, the garage, is completed, there will be an overhead walkway that will link the garage with an extended train platform. The second phase consists of building the train and bus station and the third and last phase, is called will focus on linkages. The linkages would include a joint venture of linking two hundred fifty thousand square feet of office space. The Town is planning for additional convenience for the riding public. Phase 3 is a twenty-five million-dollar phase that would adaptively reuse a historical bank building that is boarded up. It consists of a promenade, some retail space and some commercial space that extends an extra block, to the intermodal station itself.

The Bridgeport ITC helps meet the objective of the State of Connecticut that it established for the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board by recognizing and strengthening links of transportation and land use, economic development, increasing air quality by the removal of cars off the interstate, and public safety. The ITC project is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program and is approved by the MPO.

STEVE SKREBUTENAS, a social worker and job developer for Team Incorporated in Derby started by thanking the Commission for coming to Bridgeport and listening to the community and its concerns. He stated GBTA is an integral part of People to Jobs Transportation Task Force. Mr. Skrebutenas represents approximately ninety-seven clients on his caseload. Out of those, thirty presently use the Route 15 bus to access their employment. According to statistics and the ridership on Route 15, sixty-eight percent use that bus for their employment needs back and forth to their job to enable them to pay for rent, clothes, taxes. They're members of the community. Once again, these are people formerly receiving some form of public assistance, and now they're all full-fledged citizens; now they're taxpayers. They're giving back to the community that they received from before, which makes them more proud.

Currently the funding is temporary and intermittent. It is important to consider this transportation as a permanent fixture of the Valley. The People to Jobs Task Force has also taken on a new project, extending service from Derby and Bridgeport all way to Seymour. The kick off last Tuesday was a big success, and the hope is for a large ridership in Bridgeport and Derby to the Silvermine Central Park where the jobs are. It is imperative for job developers to get a system in place to get our clients to the jobs.

FRANK RICE, a resident of Fairfield, stated that he served for eight years on the original Bridgeport Transit District. He served five years with what was the Connecticut Public Transportation Authority. He stated that public transportation is more needed today than any time before because of the traffic jams on I-95 and because of the air pollution it causes. Mr. Rice supports a third railroad station in Fairfield and more parking garages.

Mr. Rice suggested, that during off peak periods, smaller, shorter trains should be operated more often. He stated that the trains should be run on the half hour or every twenty minutes, with four cars rather than ten. The more often the trains operate, the more people are going to use them, the more cars coming off the road, resulting in better the air quality in this area.

TOM WHITE, with the Work Place, the regional work force development board for southwest Connecticut, thanked the Commission for coming to Bridgeport and for its support of the Job Access activity in southwest Connecticut and throughout the district. Currently, the prevalent issue is the level of funding that the governor has recommended for appropriation from the General Assembly to the Department of Social Service for the TEIP program. Throughout the state there have been increases in costs. He stated that we're playing catch up with the cost of some services that have been held, in some cases, at same costs since 1997 when the program first began.

Mr. White stated that as a resident of Bridgeport, he hoped that the reviewing authorities would check some history and facts regarding "spill-over economic development to Bridgeport". He stated that while there may be a need for another train station in Fairfield, it is a stretch to say that Bridgeport would benefit from having such a station.

(Hearing closed at 8:50 p.m.)

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Wednesday, May 30, 2001 – 7:30PM
Russell Library
123 Broad Street
Middletown, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Russell St. John (Moderator)
Linda Blair
Yvonne Loteczka
Tom Cheeseman

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Laila Mandour
Abby Rivera

(Hearing opened at 7:35 p.m.)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Russell St. John opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

TOM CHEESEMAN, Administrator of the Middletown Transit District and member of the Commission, provided an update on the status of transportation in the city of Middletown. Beginning with the fixed route service, which started in 1992, statistics show that the transit district provided 287,492 one-way trips, on a fixed route which consisted of five routes which served all of the geographic areas of the city. As the economy in Middlesex County started to deteriorate, the ridership also started to deteriorate. In 1995, a fare increase was implemented and the trips plummeted to 269,000.

In 1996, trips began to increase through 2000. One-way trips on the fixed route service increased by 73,512 and in 2001, one-way trips have increased by approximately 12,000 over last year. In November of 2000, the Transit District began a second Jobs Access program which operates between Middletown and Meriden.

In 1999, the Transit District introduced the first of its Jobs Access programs. Five routes were condensed into two and the buses began operating from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Jobs Access program will carry an additional 51,000 one-way trips in the last two years and three months. This does not include paratransit service.

The forecast, based on the present numbers, show that the Transit District will have carried an additional eighteen thousand one-way trips between Middletown and Meriden. Between 1996 and 2001, total, 118,405 additional one way trips have been added.

The main problem in the city of Middletown is funds to continue to run the Jobs Access program. This is the most critical issue faced by the transit districts. Although there is a concerted effort on Capitol Hill to secure the necessary funds, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is going to a formula process for allocating funds as opposed to a competitive submission bid. If FTA is successful, the State of Connecticut will lose two million dollars in the net go around and someone else will have to pick up that bill.

There is a demonstrated need for these services. Jobs Access is working and it is one of the few government programs that has been highly successful and results are showing throughout the state.

(Hearing closed at 7:58pm)

CPTC Public Hearing West Haven, CT
Thursday, September 20, 2001 – 7:30PM
West Haven Town Hall
355 Main Street
West Haven, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair (Moderator)

John Radasci
Yvonne Loteczka
Russ St. John
Tom Cheeseman

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Abby Rivera

(Hearing opened at 7:30pm)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Linda Blair opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

Ms. Blair mentioned the long service of Borden Steeves, former vice-chairman of the CPTC.

PUBLIC COMMENT

STEVE DARGAN, State Representative for part of West Haven, congratulated and applauded the Commission for giving its time to the issues of transportation and being involved within public service around the state. In an effort to better conduct transportation business within the state, the legislature has formed the Transportation Strategy Board. The main issue presented to legislators besides taxes is transportation within the state. One specific issue is the new proposed Metro North station in West Haven or Orange.

The State of Connecticut receives approximately \$80 million from 14 federal sources to complete projects within the state. Of these monies, some goes back to local Council of Governments (COGs). Last year, there were over \$400 million requested for projects around the state and through local COGs.

Representative Dargan quoted a paragraph from a letter from the Commissioner of Transportation as follows: "I must make it clear that at this time Connecticut DOT's transit capital management plan does not have funds that can be committed to the construction of a new station. A new funding source would have to be identified that fits within our other funding priorities or we will need to be creative in our approach to financing."

There is a need for more mass transportation, such as rail service and commuter service. Connecticut is a small state, but a strong state with the second highest per capita income, and the highest educated students.

There are some discrepancies in a study performed by the DOT that favored Orange as the proposed site of the train station. It does not take into consideration a parking garage and brings into question the widening of Saw Mill Road. Also, West Haven has had strong grass-roots support with over 7500 signatures in favor of the train station.

RICHARD BORER, Mayor of West Haven, thanked the Commission for being a sounding board for the COG and its residents. Mayor Borer stated that in deciding to find a location for the proposed train station project, it is important to take into consideration things such as State legislature mandates and simple common sense.

With regard to economic development, West Haven has been slowly and deliberately working on trying to create a renaissance. There are many abandoned brownfields that can be redeveloped and turned into positive things. The train station can help the city of West Haven, which consists of 55,000 people. Many commuters that travel on the highway could be taken off of the highway as a result of the new station.

People could not only drive and park at the train station, but walk to it as well as using alternative means of transportation. Additionally, West Haven has a very high mill rate, and the elderly population is particularly frustrated about taxes. One of the biggest by-products of having a train station in West Haven is economic development that would re-create a renaissance of businesses and commuters. The cheapest and fastest method is not the only thing that should be taken into consideration when deciding on the site for the train station.

JOE MATURO, JR., Mayor of East Haven and Chairman of South Central Regional Council of Governments, stated mass transit is very important to the region. Both Orange and West Haven are important to the region. A train station is needed in the region for mass transit. All the concerns of the taxpayers will be up for a lively debate at the Council of Governments.

RAY COLLINS, a resident West Haven, stated there is a desperate need for a train station in the region, whether in West Haven or Orange. However, West Haven desperately needs economic development. One way to provide the development is to make it easier for employees to commute to and from work. Mr. Collins urged the Commission to consider West Haven for the site of the train station in their recommendations.

GENE SULLIVAN, a resident of West Haven, stated he is concerned about the length of time it takes to accomplish projects on the state and city levels. West Haven is a town of 54,000 people; Orange is a small bedroom community of some 12,000 people. People could easily walk to the train station in West Haven, unlike Orange. There is more accessible public transportation in West Haven than in Orange. In looking at who is going to be serviced by the train station, people coming from Milford, New Haven, West Haven, Orange, Woodbridge, and Bethany can use a train station located in West Haven. The train station would be approximately an eighth of a mile away from the highway if located in West Haven. It would be an injustice not to consider West Haven as the prime location for the train station in order to help with tax relief and develop the area.

ELAINE KOLB, a resident of West Haven and a member of the Center for Disability Rights, stated that access to public transportation has been one of the prime demands of the disability rights movement. With regard to the proposed train station, the location in Orange is more than three-quarters of a mile from the existing fixed bus route system. In West Haven, there is more available public transportation allowing access to a train station there.

Additionally, for the record, there are places where taxi service is required to provide a certain percentage of accessible taxis. These taxis are financed by public funds, through vouchers, to assist low-income people. This is one solution that would help address the issues of the paratransit system. Currently, the paratransit services are provided within three-quarters of a mile on either side of the fixed bus route system

only when those buses are running. Many of the commuter bus systems do not provide evening or weekend service, which affects the paratransit service.

Having the train station in West Haven would serve the most people with disabilities, and it would be the most accessible for everyone. Secondly, the laws regarding taxis need to change to require that taxi systems provide accessible taxicabs as an option. Thirdly, more support for public transportation, in general, is greatly needed.

MICHAEL MERCURIANO, Chairman of the West Haven Train Station Committee, an organization that has raised 7,500 names on a petition once it was established that the train station was going to be located in Orange in December 1999. The petition was started in January of 2000.

Mr. Mercuriano submitted an informational booklet titled "West Haven Railroad Station Progress Report" prepared for the Metro-North New Haven Rail Commuter Council for the Commission's review. The booklet contains detailed maps showing the West Haven site with its surrounding institutions and the history of the proposed train station.

Additionally, it contains correspondence with testimony from various councilmen, the mayor, and different area institutions showing support as well as the need of a railroad station in the city of West Haven. Also for the record, Mr. Mercuriano submitted the results of a survey wherein 95% of those who participated favored West Haven as the site for the train station.

The train station is vital to the needs of commuters and the economic development of West Haven. It would also be in line with the governor's Transportation Strategy Board procedures, in terms of economic development and mass transportation. The state DOT engineering study recommended the Orange site as a better location based only on cost factors. In the West Haven site, there are two paved parking lots that accommodate approximately 1,000 cars or better.

The West Haven Train Station Committee is please that the DOT has passed this decision to the Council of Governments, as it will take on a more human approach and not a corporate welfare windfall.

GLORIA IRELAND, a lifelong resident of West Haven and a member of the railroad committee, stated she has worked diligently to look at the needs of West Haven. Ms. Ireland urged the Commission to consider West Haven as the site for the train station.

FRED MESSORE is the Executive Director of the West Haven Economic Development Corporation, which is a non-profit organization that handles economic development for the city of West Haven. Selecting West Haven as the site of the station would tremendously benefit the region's economic growth. Currently, West Haven has struggling economic structures located around the proposed site and vacant buildings that are in need of tenants.

As a result of the national tragedy that took place in New York, many offices that were affected have been relocating to the Connecticut region, particularly West Haven. One of the main concerns of the people relocating is their proximity to a train station for transportation needs. Mr. Messore urged the Commission to consider both the transportation and economic issues of choosing West Haven as the site location.

MARK HEAFY, a resident of West Haven, stated that, in addition to the commuters' benefit of having the train station located West Haven, teen-agers from New Haven or Stratford would be able to use the train to go to the Showcase Cinemas. The section of the road between the train station and the cinemas is not designed for pedestrian use as it has high volumes of traffic at night. It is very unsafe to have teen-agers in that area at night.

Additionally, there are many different avenues for exiting from a West Haven station. In Orange, a train station would create more traffic congestion. Further, West Haven has a paid fire department that responds to emergencies.

Lastly, the Shoreline East service needs to run hourly on a daily basis. Otherwise, ridership will not increase.

PHILIP KING, a resident of West Haven, stated that putting a train station in West Haven is a golden opportunity for Connecticut in terms of mass transit. Due to the tragic events in New York, an increase in commuters from Amtrak and Shoreline East in New Haven is expected. With a West Haven station, people from the west end of New Haven, Bethany, and Derby could come into West Haven. Also, it would keep the West Haven people in West Haven instead of commuting out of Milford to New York. This is a good chance for the state to seize this regionalization of transportation.

BOB ROSENBERG, a resident and business owner in West Haven, stated that when comparing West Haven and Orange, there is a large disparity. West Haven has between 52,000 and 55,000 residents, and it is essentially a blue-collar community. Orange, on the other hand, is a white-collar community of approximately 12,000 residents.

West Haven has the VA Hospital, the Center for Disability Rights, and a larger elderly population that has difficulty getting around. Orange has the support of Bayer Corporation. Bayer does not need the State's help; the city of West Haven does. Orange has a thriving tax base and has a lower tax rate because it has businesses to derive its taxes from. In West Haven, most taxes are derived from the citizens. It is important to consider not only the transportation issue, but the economic issue as well.

Lastly, the petitions and the usage survey relative to this matter speak very well to the issue of taking more cars off of Interstate 95.

DAVID CARMODY, a resident of West Haven and counsel for the West Haven Railroad Station Committee, Incorporated stated the two communities of West Haven and Orange should not be pitting themselves against each other to decide which one should have the train station. The answer should involve what is best for the State of Connecticut.

According to the study released, Orange was considered because it is faster and cheaper to build there. The problem is that not all the costs are figured in. Due to the small size of the police and fire departments of Orange, the emergency services will be servicing the train station if it were located in Orange. As far as the sewage from it, Orange has no sewage plants; it flows through West Haven. Consequently, West Haven will be paying for this and getting no material benefits other than a ride another mile and a half down the road. There is opportunity with this to package a program that is best for the Shoreline community, not the pitting of two communities against each other.

Either location is going to take cars off Interstate 95, but what it is important is which location will take more cars off of the road. The location between the two communities is only a mile and a half to two mile difference. The Orange location is on a corporation campus where there can be no economic development surrounding it, such as restaurants and other facilities; the West Haven location does have that economic development capability. Therefore, both communities will benefit more by having the station in West Haven.

The infrastructure for the support of a massive size super station is in place in West Haven. It is not in place in Orange. The costs of the sewers, the increasing of police, emergency services, and fire departments, are not considered in the report. Those costs are taken into consideration by the infrastructure in West Haven that already exists.

MARTY DEGRAND, a resident of West Haven, thanked the Commission for its attendance and stated the new train station should be in West Haven. West Haven is a town that has low income, middle income, elderly housing and open beaches in need of relief in the Saw Mill Road area and other areas.

When looking at the overall picture of the train station issue, it is difficult to consider Orange for the purpose of helping the Bayer Corporation. Bayer already has a private entrance into its backyard off of Interstate 95 in Orange. The exit 42 off-ramp was supposed to be renovated prior to the exit 41 off-ramp. Now, in that area, Route 1 has been widened but it is congested beyond belief, day or night.

In solving the financial problem, Mr. DeGrand informed Mr. Harry Harris from the DOT that there are three potential sources of private income that Mr. DeGrand contacted to arrange for the station to be built and leased to the State at no expense. However, Mr. DeGrand received no response.

GARY PERDO, a resident of West Haven, stated that this is the second time this year that something that would be very beneficial to the city is pulled away. He stated that West Haven is in the midst of having the gateway to New England cut off, and it seems we are asleep on the job. There is no plan to address issues such as congestion and road rage. There is plan for another major highway to run alongside I-95 and I-91 because there is no land. Therefore, nothing will happen. Consequently, the answer is railroads.

According to a book entitled "History of Connecticut Railways," West Haven once had a small train station that was a flag stop, operated by the New Haven-Derby Railroad. Orange also had a station named Tyler City, named after the Lieutenant Governor Morris Tyler who owned all the land. Upon the sale of the land, it was closed down. All the areas of West Haven, East Haven, and Orange should have a train station.

The decision to select Orange as the site for the train station was highly prejudicial. Orange is a town and West Haven is a city that happens to be one of the oldest cities in the country, in existence for 350 years. For years, nothing was going on in the city. All of the sudden, there is opportunity for major projects. The railroad station is part of the re-building, the structure, the history and the renaissance of West Haven.

Mr. Perdo also stated that when there is congestion on I-95 or Route 1, traffic has to go through Route 34. The next thing to work on is the Route 34 connector, which is the only safe way to move traffic through New Haven. It is a matter of public safety.

BRIAN ELLIOT, a resident of West Haven and President of the West Haven Chamber of Commerce stated that transportation is an important issue to the businesses and residents of West Haven. The fundamental value of a good transportation system to any community is important, as it has a great impact on a city's economy.

West Haven has a large disabled and handicapped population that needs and deserves access to mass transit that is affordable, accessible, and convenient. The proposed train station will afford the city that opportunity. There is a need to increase the grand list and reduce the mill rate and the burden on the taxpayers. This is an issue that goes to the quality of life of the 54,000 residents of West Haven. In a collaborative effort, a survey was conducted with initiative from Michael Mercuriano, the train station organization, the City, the Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. Ninety-five percent of the respondents spoke in favor of a West Haven train station.

Interstate 95 is a bottleneck now that will become worse when construction starts on the Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge. The train station will take cars off I-95.

West Haven needs and wants the train station. West Haven is neither a small town nor a large urban metropolis and therefore receives no benefits from the State. This is an opportunity to solve a number of different problems and address a number of different issues. Mr. Elliot reinforced and emphasized that it is important to the residents of West Haven to have the train station located in West Haven.

BOB MANZELLA, a 22-year resident of West Haven, stated that DOT is incompetent and there are concerns about DOT being in charge of the train station project. For example, making the Quinnipiac Bridge wider is a huge waste of money. DOT does not recognize that the bottleneck of the bridge occurs after going over it.

Recently, DOT spent millions of dollars at Exit 41 making it five lanes wide. However, one of the lights in that area has been reprogrammed to make sure those two lanes of traffic, forty cars deep, does not move. Mr. Manzella has contacted the mayor of Orange and various people of the highway division of the police department. That light cannot be changed. The traffic congestion caused as a result can be remedied by installing a \$50 chip in a light instead of spending millions of dollars fixing a problem that isn't there.

DOT will probably not draw up plans for the train station project in less than five years, and it will be a long time before a station is realized and traffic congestion is resolved. It is an amazing frustration that needs to be addressed.

JUDY GOTT, Executive Director of the South Central Regional Council of Governments gave the following statement:

“Our organization has been and will continue to work with Connecticut DOT to ensure transit alternatives will be available to those citizens who wish to avoid highway travel during the Pearl Harbor Bridge Reconstruction project. This may mean modification and increases schedule for both bus and train. Our council supports those and we would hope that you would also support these increases and modifications as they become necessary.

“SCRCOG members recently passed a resolution supporting the efforts of ConnDOT to locate at least 400 spaces at each of the Shoreline East stations, again, increasing the amount of availability for the commuters. SCRCOG also supports Jobs Access Transportation. I'm sure there are others here who will probably be speaking about this, this evening. We would support the need and encourage you to support our state legislative people and federal people to not decrease Job Access funding but to increase Job Access funding.

“The possibility of implementing a “shoreline railroad” should be high on our priority list. Currently, east of New Haven commuters take the Shoreline East and when they arrive in New Haven, they change trains to go down to Stamford. A seamless rail service from New London to Stamford would do two things: make commuter service more efficient and provide added seats now needed on trains between New Haven and Stamford.

I'm here tonight also to listen and have appreciated very much hearing all the input from the citizens.

MITCH GOLDBLATT, First Selectman of Orange, stated that just over two years ago there was study to look at a site in the town of Orange for a railroad station. First and foremost the region needs a railroad station. The Council of Governments commissioned a study that looked at twelve different sites in different areas in Orange and West Haven. Of them, the two sites they found that seemed to be the most available for a railroad station were in Orange. COG then requested an independent study from the DOT that issued a report recommending the station in Orange.

The area needs a railroad commuter station. The stretch from New Haven to Milford is the longest stretch of Metro-North in the state of Connecticut without a station. The proposed Orange site for the train station is directly in the mid-point of that stretch. According to the DOT study, only four sites need to be acquired in Orange versus twenty-seven sites in West Haven. The costs are expected to be \$26 million for Orange and \$35 million for West Haven; that includes a parking garage in Orange.

The commuters of the New Haven region are the main issue in this matter. Mr. Goldblatt implored the mayors and first selectmen of the South Central Regional Council of Governments to vote for the best possible use for the entire region. Orange is the best site to locate the train station for the greater New Haven region and the State of Connecticut.

RICK FAMIGLIETTI, an advocate for the Center for Disability Rights, a membership organization which serves 1400 elderly and disabled people advocating accessible transportation and other accessibility issues, stated he supports having the train station in West Haven, not Orange. The bus stops are close to it. People who require paratransit service will not be able to access the train station in Orange.

Locating the railroad station in West Haven will make it accessible by both bus and paratransit. It will allow people with disabilities easier access to the train station. Also, if the train station is closer to bus stops and local bus routes, able-bodied people will access the train station more easily, as well. West Haven is the site that will benefit the most people, disabled or not.

SENATOR TONI HARP, representative for an area of West Haven, stated that over the past two years West Haven residents have communicated their need for the train station. The critically important point is that the need for the train station for West Haven residents is greater than that of Orange residents. Clearly, West Haven needs this station as a way to develop and focus economic development. Orange really does not need that.

Additionally, as the era of welfare leaves, not only do people with disabilities have difficulty with transportation, but also people who don't have cars will have difficulty as well. A train station that is not close to bus stops affects both those with disabilities and poor. West Haven has the public safety services in place, unlike Orange that is not as populated. It has a long history of bringing people together. The people of West Haven want and need the train station more than Orange. Meeting the need of West Haven residents for economic growth, even if it costs more in the long run, will benefit the region more. Ms. Harp urged the Commission to consider the comments given on the record.

TIM WRIGHTINGTON, resident of West Haven, stated he is a mechanic who repairs forklifts around the state of Connecticut at different industrial areas. Many industrial areas have closed down. For example, in Georgetown, a massive complex that manufactured fences since the 1800's, comparable to the Bayer Corporation, has been closed for quite a while. The former American Thread plant in Willimantic that was a massive plant that operated since the Civil War closed and was turned into housing and boutiques. The Armstrong Tire plant has also closed. Had a train station been built in one of these areas, it would be obsolete.

There was a report on national television that due to a certain prescription drug, Bayer Corporation was shaken at its foundation. It would make no sense to build a train station in the middle of an industrial complex, known as Biotech, if sometime in the future it will close. Putting a train station in a semi-urban setting that already has infrastructure surrounding it, has buses running to it, and has people that could walk to it would make more sense.

In the area of Savin Rock, Connecticut, there is a beach with restaurants and attractions that could benefit economically from the train station. Also, West Haven is half way between New York and both Indian casinos where people could get off the train to enjoy a meal. These issues should be considered when making the decision for the location of the train station.

With regard to the \$9 million difference between building a train station in West Haven and Orange, the economic development produced by the train station would cancel out the \$9 million.

RICHARD CIVIE, a resident of Orange, stated there is a serious infrastructure problem with putting the train station in Orange. The main access point from Derby Turnpike to the train station is Lambert Road, a 24-foot wide, residential country road. If the train station is built in Orange, there will be an increase of 100 to 200 hundred more cars per hour, added to the existing 400 cars per hour traveling on Lambert Road, that are crossing over to I-95. Therefore, the train station should not be in Orange.

It is unconscionable to take all the traffic from Derby Turnpike and cram it down that narrow road to the parking lot. Mr. Civie asked the Commission to note that the residential side of Lambert Road is going to take the burden of the traffic coming from Route 34 only because it is the straightest, most direct route to get to this train station.

CHIEF WILLIAM J. JOHNSON, Chief of the West Haven Fire Department and Fire Chief's Representative on the Commission of Fire Prevention and Control stated he has been chief of the West Haven Fire Department since 1981.

As it relates to public safety, the West Haven Fire Department is an insurance service, composed of 54 career fire fighters and approximately 120 volunteers, that offers Class II fire protection. There are 12 men a shift that can be placed on the fireground at the proposed West Haven site within two minutes of the alarm, being only four blocks from the site.

In addition, the West Haven Fire Department, which responds to approximately 6,000 calls a year, also provides advanced life support to its citizens. The water supply in the proposed area is more than adequate to provide fire protection.

Secondly, the proposed site in West Haven will provide economic development to the center of West Haven. Thirdly, one of the assets of the Orange site is its proximity to Bayer. However, when one gets off the train station in Orange, he still has to ride to Bayer; when one gets off the train station in West Haven, he too has to ride to Bayer. By simply making two lefts and driving straight for a quarter of a mile, he is at the Morgan Lane gate.

Lastly, about a quarter of mile east of the proposed Orange site is one of the largest elementary schools in the city of West Haven. From 7:30 to 8:30 in the morning, there is a lot of traffic. There is a concern relative to the safety of schoolchildren and also the traffic jam that will occur as a result. Additionally, there is also a large middle school in the same area. To get to the Orange station, one has to travel through that particular area. There is also a Catholic Grammar School in the area.

Therefore, every West Haven citizen traveling to Orange has to traverse three schools en route to the station. The potential traffic congestion has not been addressed in any report anywhere, which is a safety problem as it relates to children.

PAUL KUROWSKI, a resident of West Haven, stated building the train station in West Haven would assist many more people than if it were built in Orange.

CHUCK ZENTARSKI, a resident of West Haven, stated that his business on 52 Hood Terrace would be gone as a result of the train station. However, building the train station in West Haven would be more beneficial to him as a resident than a business owner.

JOSEPH AGRO, a resident of Milford stated he supports a new train station in the region regardless of its location. However, there is a concern about a decrease in service to the Milford station as a result of the proposed train station. The Milford station is becoming a more integral part of the development of downtown Milford and its traffic scheme, and it is becoming successful. No decrease in service would be appreciated.

GERALD CASCAGNE, a resident of West Haven stated he is a 26-year employee of MTA Metro-North. New Haven now has two railroad station: Union Station and a new one being built east of it, between Court Street and Grand Avenue. Mr. Cascagne would like to see West Haven have a station instead of New Haven.

JUDY ANN LAFRANCE-ZWACK, a resident of West Haven, stated that through increased commerce and as a result state tax dollars, a West Haven train station has a greater benefit. Even though the initial expenditure of locating the train station in West Haven would be higher, there is going to be a greater return to the State of Connecticut as well as the city of West Haven.

(Hearing closed at 9:22 P.M.)

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission Public Hearing

Monday, September 24, 2001

Windham Town Hall

979 Main Street

Willimantic, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Russell St. John (Moderator)

Linda Blair

Yvonne Loteczka

Tom Cheeseman

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Laila Mandour

(Hearing opened at 7:35pm)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Russell St. John opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

HELEN KOEHN from Storrs spoke regarding commuter bus service. Ms. Koehn stated that the commuter bus runs from Willimantic to Hartford and from Coventry to Hartford. The Coventry to Bolton to Hartford runs have been reduced from three runs to one run, which has resulted in a reduction in the number of riders. The Town of Mansfield was hoping that the Coventry service would go to Mansfield and it was a surprise when the service was reduced.

Ms. Koehn also stated that the Willimantic to Andover to Hartford run is a fairly direct route. In the afternoon, the bus route is opposite; it does not make the same reverse loop as in the morning. It goes to Downtown Willimantic and makes a loop before it goes to Frontage Road. Those who use the commuter lot are not likely to add the extra time it takes to go through the loop in the afternoon, therefore they will not use the bus.

Ms. Koehn stated that when bus runs are cut, the ridership is cut; it becomes inconvenient for the ridership to use the bus. Ms. Koehn also stated that if there were rail service available, then people would take the rail service, but the stops must be conveniently located and the service must be flexible enough to allow people to get to work without their day being extended by many hours.

WALTER PAWELKIEWICZ, State Representative from Windham/Willimantic for the 49th District and a member of the Transportation Committee at the Legislature, reported that the access to the jobs transportation program that has been a collaborative approach between the Windham Regional Community Council, the Windham Regional Transit District and EastConn, has provided a total of 37,400 one-way trips for those seeking enhanced employment opportunities in fiscal year 2001. He stated that if people seeking to work don't have the infrastructure access and reasonable schedules and the predictability with respect to the system, then there is no substance.

JOHN LESCOE, First Selectman to the Town of Windham, stated that whatever improvements are being made to Route 6 are a Band-Aid approach and the area needs a highway/expressway from Hartford through Bolton into Windham/Willimantic. There were many manufacturers who sought to move to Windham/Willimantic, while the workforce was available and the land was available, there was no way to move the product. He also requested that the Commission support the bus service into Hartford and to the casinos, as there are many residents who work at the casinos and who require the bus service to get them to work.

KAREN GRABER, Transit Administrator for Windham Region Transit District (WRTD) and a staff member of the Windham Region Council of Governments, stated that the CPTC 2000 Annual Report and Recommendations touch on many of the needs of the WRTD. However, some of the same issues are still issues today, especially funding. WRTD requests full funding of the State's 33% share of its rural transit district operating deficit for fiscal year 2003. Because of an unanticipated jump in WRTD's operating costs from fiscal year 2002 over 2001, a large share of the increase has to be absorbed by local towns through local match, which creates a big hardship for the towns involved.

A second issue is timely reimbursement of monies by the State of Connecticut. This year, the Transit District has had to take out a bank loan in order to sustain uninterrupted services. The State is usually late in paying the Transit District for funds expended in operating the service. If payment could be made in advance, then the service could go uninterrupted. Further, Job Access has quite a bit of ridership. It was started as a trial program, but the service is being used for people to go to and from work. If the funding is not made permanent, these people will lose their jobs because they are dependent on the service. The service is tenuous and is operated on a year by year basis by grant. A permanent funding source is necessary.

Lastly, interconnecting the regions is very important. The Transit District has funding only for a link to Norwich, operating a service four times a day in a 24-hour period, eight hours apart allowing people to get to work. If funding could be found, the service could go to Putnam and Danielson and other areas with unmet needs.

As for service from Willimantic to Hartford, the Department of Transportation reduced some services on that line and the Transit District was not advised or notified. The Transit District found out two weeks after the fact, from the riders themselves. The Transit District seeks a better exchange of information with DOT.

Additional improvements to the system with additional funding could include increasing hours on Saturdays and Sundays. Right now, Dial-A-Ride only operates Monday through Friday from 8 to 4. Many people using that system could use the service for evenings and weekends. Fixed routes services provide limited runs on Saturdays and no service on Sundays and city bus has a one-hour headway, which requires anyone missing the bus by a minute or two to wait another hour for the next bus. Additional funding could provide additional service with only one-half hour headway.

BARBARA BUDDINGTON, the Executive Director of the Windham Region Council of Governments, who administers the Transit District, stated that the region that they serve is not affected by congestion along I-95 and I-395. Peripherally, the problem is getting trucks in to the area locally. They are hoping that the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) will take into consideration the needs of those areas of the state (northeastern and northwestern parts of the state that are the rural pockets) for very good linkages to those areas where the interstate corridors are located so that the areas could be connected to allow people to get to their destinations.

MARY LOU DEVIVO operates a trucking company in Groton. She stated that she would like to see the passenger trains operate from Springfield to the New London area. Her company ships freight on lines that are in existence on that route. Passenger trains on these lines would provide transportation to many small towns that don't have transportation such as Willington, Coventry and Franklin. She has a hard time getting employees because they cannot get transportation from Willimantic to Groton. She believes that though providing passenger service on the route she mentioned, people would be able to get to work at her company as well as other local companies.

In addition, she suggested that perhaps school busses could be used during off periods to provide transportation to adults within the towns. These adult passengers could be transported to central locations to then pick up city busses to go to other towns.

TOM MCNALLY, the Chairperson of the Windham Regional Transit District spoke as a case manager for the Covenant Soup Kitchen. He stated that the court service for Willimantic is located in Danielson and that people who get into trouble in Windham must go to Danielson for court. It costs money to get the Bonanza bus to go to Danielson, many clients of the Soup Kitchen do not have the money for the bus ticket and moreover, the bus does not arrive in Danielson until after court begins its session. These circumstances cause more problems for those who are in trouble to begin with. This causes an unmet need and a solution must be found to meet this need because the numbers are increasing.

ROSE FOWLER, Executive Director of the McSweeney Regional Senior Center, noted that Town funded vehicles cannot provide service into other towns. The seniors of the McSweeney Center and of the Windham Region have many unmet transportation needs.

(Hearing closed at 8:50pm)

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission Public Hearing
Tuesday, October 10, 2001 – 7:30PM
Winsted Town Hall
338 Main Street
Winsted, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Morton Katz (Moderator)
Linda Blair
Yvonne Loteczka
Russ St. John
Thomas Cheeseman

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Laila Mandour

(Hearing opened at 7:35)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Morton Katz opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CAROL DEANE, Executive Director of the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District spoke regarding budget cuts and lack of funds. Ms. Deane reported that the Transit District provides three shifts for Jobs Access transportation and, while people want to work, the transportation cannot be provided due to funding cuts of Jobs Access funds. The Transit District attempted to do some fund raising by providing transportation to special events. This is the first time the Transit District has commenced fund raising and \$7,000 were raised.

The Transit District is in dire need of a maintenance and storage garage. They have only one garage in Torrington that can accommodate some of their busses. Many busses now are parked at different locations all over the city, which causes problems. Some of the busses are in unsafe neighborhoods, which causes problems for drivers when they pick up their busses. If funding is cut, conditions will deteriorate.

The Transit District operates four Candy Striper fixed route busses that seat 25 people, Dial-A- Ride has 3 eight-passenger busses and 6 or 7 twelve-passenger busses and they have an Astro-Van for emergencies. The Transit District shares its busses with the senior center.

The Transit District has approached the towns and employers that are served regarding subsidizing the Jobs Access funds. ITW approached the Transit District about running a third bus, but due to funding problems, a third bus could not be put on. Therefore, ITW is waiting for the demand to pick up and then will approach the Transit District about subsidizing another bus. Presently, the Transit District provides 800 to 1,200 rides per month.

The Transit District is funded by DSS and FTA through ConnDOT. If funding cuts are made, they will take effect in April 2002.

The Transit District has asked for \$50,000 to do a feasibility study for a new garage, but they have not been able to get the funds. The office of the Transit District is located in City Hall. City Hall is having a space crunch and they are in the process of restructuring, so the Transit District will have to find new offices. The busses get tickets often due to the fact that there are no parking spaces available for the bus drivers to park while they are picking up their schedules on a daily basis. If the Transit District is able to build a garage, it would also include its office space in the garage building and it would include maintenance facilities with the idea of maintaining the busses on site, as well as offering maintenance services to other companies in an effort to raise funds.

Dial-A-Ride has increased its ridership because the hours of operation were extended.

TOM CHEESEMAN advised that the budget cuts proposed from the Governor's budget dated October 2, 2001 for the Jobs Access funds is 1.8 million dollars. The funds to the new Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) have been cut by 14 million dollars. Of those 14 million dollars \$200,000 dollars, of that was a Jobs Access component. On the Department of Social Services (DSS) side, the Transitional Employment Independence Program (TEIP) funds will be cut by about \$147,000. The combined cuts equal approximately 2 million dollars in the area of transportation for the low-income people who are attempting to move into the mainstream of society to become productive individuals. Mr. Cheeseman encouraged the public and the transit districts to become active, contact their representatives and organize to save these vital programs.

DON MACLEOD, a student senator at Northwestern Connecticut Community College, spoke regarding concerns with existing services. Mr. MacCleod stated that most of the students at the college are local and they require additional bus services in order to attend many of the classes offered during the day and evening. The present bus schedule precludes the commuting students from taking early morning or late afternoon and evening classes. Mr. MacCleod stated that there is a communication breakdown between the college students and the Transit District regarding the availability of busses. Expansion of bus service is what the college students seek by way of public transportation.

STEVEN FRASIER, with the administration of Northwestern Connecticut Community College stated that the Governor reduced the College's budget by \$80,000 and the College is looking to making cuts and does not have the funds to contribute to transportation at this time.

AMANDA SCHAUB, Social Services Coordinator for the Town of Winchester, advocated for additional funding to expand routes. Title XIX clients are on state Medicaid and, as of September 1st, all SAGA clients lost medical transportation. Because doctors are limited and no dentists take Medicaid, all the clients must travel to other towns for treatment, so finding ways to make it easier for them to get to Torrington would be a great help for those clients. Regional offices such as the Department of Social Services, the Social Security Administration office and juvenile and family courts are in Torrington and clients get stuck there, so funding to expand bus service to and from Torrington and Winsted would be of help to these people. In addition, Ms. Schaub stated that many of her clients wish to work, but do not have the transportation to get to potential jobs so expansion of this service would be of assistance to them.

RICK LYNN, Planning Director for the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials (LHCEO), the planning organization for the greater Winsted/Torrington area, advised that the LHCEO 2001 Regional Transportation Plan documented that both population and employment continue to increase in the regional area. This growth will result in a dramatic increase of 30% in vehicle miles of travel in the regional area in the next 20 years according to ConnDOT projections.

Mr. Lynn stated that the demand for public bus services will also likely increase in the area because of the growing number of elderly residents. Those with physical or mental disabilities are also participating more fully in society and in so doing, they are utilizing public transportation. In addition, the increased use of buses can service to relieve traffic congestion, help to meet the needs of people without access to automobiles, help reduce parking requirements in community centers, reduce energy consumption and reduce pollution from traffic sources.

Mr. Lynn reported that several transit planning studies have been conducted in recent years by the LHCEO in cooperation with the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District and the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments. These studies have developed recommendations to enhance existing transit services.

The LHCEO, in cooperation with the Transit District and the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments has applied for a grant under the FHWA's "Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program" to conduct a feasibility study for a centralized transportation facility as

recommended in the Connecticut Statewide Bus System Study. He also reported that an emerging opportunity for enhanced bus service has developed with the extension of Metro-North's Upper Harlem Rail Line in New York State and that the development of bus service to the passenger line can help reduce traffic congestion on the I-84 corridor.

Lastly, Mr. Lynn stated that the LHCEO strongly supports continued and expanded public bus service in the region and that is critical that adequate state and federal funding be provided on a predictable and steady basis in order to meet this public transportation challenge.

MORTON KATZ read into the record a letter from Frederick S. Roden, Ph.D. from the Department of English at the Torrington Campus of the University of Connecticut who wrote in support of expanded transportation services between the towns in Litchfield County, in addition to service between the towns of Litchfield County and any of the Metro-North train stations that allow access to New York.

(Hearing closed at 8:29 p.m.)

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission Public Hearing

Monday, October 15, 2001 – 7:30PM

Kent Town Hall

41 Kent Green Boulevard

Kent, Connecticut

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair

Tom Cheeseman

Yvonne Loteczka

Russ St. John

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Laila Mandour

(Hearing opened at 7:39pm)

INTRODUCTION

Hearing Moderator Fred Riese opened the hearing with a brief description of the CPTC and its mandate as well as noting the attendance of CPTC members and CDOT staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

LORRY SCHIESEL, First Selectman for the Town of Kent, welcomed the Commission and thanked the Commission for its attendance in Kent.

Ms. Schiesel related that rural transit is very important to the Kent area. Kent participates in the Northwestern Rural Transit Program out of Torrington five days per week, with one day of trips provided to New Milford and the other four days of trips to Kent. The transportation is dedicated to Dial-A-Ride programs. People were able to attend a nutrition program with the Dial-A-Ride transportation. The nutrition program was cut back to four days a week and Dial-A-Ride, and as a result, Dial-A-Ride was unable to provide the four days of service. Service was cut to two days per week. One of those two days is

still dedicated to New Milford and the other is dedicated from homes into downtown Kent. On the days with no transportation, there are no customers attending the nutrition program. These people are elderly and do not drive or cannot drive for various reasons. Public transportation is very important to these people.

While the numbers requiring public transportation do not reach the scale of those in Hartford or even Torrington, they are, nonetheless, very important. If programs are reduced in rural areas, although the numbers are smaller, there is an impact on the rural population. The economy of scale is worth it, however, because these people have no other choices and no other way to get around.

Freight trains exist in Kent, and a number of residents have expressed their desire in passenger train service being pursued from other areas to the New Milford trains station. Many Kent people commute via the Harlem Valley Line, but there are people who work in the Stamford-Greenwich area who could use train service as well.

Lastly, Ms. Schiesel stated that she has seen many people waiting for the Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART) buses on the Route 7 line and there are no shelters at the stops on this bus line.

TOM CHEESEMAN stated that last year, there was a bill before the legislature that if passed, would have extended Dial-A-Ride services to all 169 towns in Connecticut. Anyone age 60 and above would automatically qualify. However, it required a 50% match from the towns. The bill was close to passing, but did not. Mr. Cheeseman stated that the bill might come before the Legislature this year and he advised everyone to encourage and educate his or her legislators about the need for this service. It is critical to the bill's passage to get public support for it.

DAN MCGUINNES, the Executive Director of the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments, whose region consists of nine towns stretching from Roxbury to North Canaan to Salisbury. Mr. McGuinness stated that New Milford is the town, outside of the nine towns in the region, that is the number one destination of the working people from the region. The second highest destination is New York City. The Harlem Valley Line gets a lot of business from this region. The Northwest Transit District has scattered facilities, they have offices at City Hall in Torrington, which they must soon leave. They have no dedicated place to fix their buses or to store them, and they are in desperate need of a facility of their own.

Additionally, there are a number of volunteer groups in the region that work at providing services to people in the local communities and with regard to public transportation and coordination, any connections that can be made between these volunteer organizations would be helpful.

BOB RUSH, from the New Milford Rail Service Restoration Society and Planning Commissioner in the Town of New Milford, encouraged the Commission to think about the extension of rail service to New Milford. There have been many studies and they have all been positive. Mr. Rush noted the Commission has supported rail service to New Milford in the past and now, with the reconstruction of Route 7 in the next couple of years, it would be important to get such a project underway. State senators and representatives have supported extending rail service to New Milford. The equipment is there and it should be done. Mr. Rush also stated that there is another study underway to look at the viability of extended rail service to New Milford and it is a sensible thing to do. The study will include information regarding the entire line.

GIL ALEXANDER, from the New Milford Rail Restoration Society, stated that marketing is the most important thing that must be done to further the rail, to find out if there is a ridership. Americans love convenience and if rail is made convenient to the public, it will be used. Route 7 is about to be reconstructed and this is one of the only routes in the area. The railroad, therefore, is a good alternative to the disruption that will be caused by the reconstruction. It is an ideal time to do a pilot project since there is automatic inconvenience with the reconstruction.

In addition to wanting convenience, Mr. Alexander stated, the people are creatures of habit, and if a pilot program is put in place for people to use during the time of reconstruction of Route 7, then once the construction is over, people will be in the habit of using the train to get to work. He stated that the DOT gives lip service to wanting to use mass transit. There is no real dedication or leadership on the part of the State or the DOT relative to public transportation. If the opportunity is not seized, then it is lost. Mr. Alexander also noted that it is easy to operate a program for large groups. However, while it is harder to operate a program that costs just as much or more that only serves a handful of people. But, the money has to be spent on those small groups, otherwise they get nothing for their contributions to society, and that is not equitable.

BOB GAMBINO, from the New Milford Rail Restoration Society, stated that he supported the other speakers on the rail issues. He supports a pilot program for rail service. If we don't plan now, the region may not have bus routes or shelters due to the reconstruction of Route 7.

Mr. Cheeseman suggested that the Rail Restoration Society might want to contact the legislators in Washington to try to secure a Congressional earmark for the pilot program.

ELAINE KOLB, a resident of West Haven, stated that she likes to travel around the state. Ms. Kolb has been involved for many years with a national organization that used to be called American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation (ADAPT), which is one of the organizations that is responsible for the fact that on the national level there is the mandate that all new buses must have lifts on them. Access to public transportation is therefore, the law of the land. You cannot have access to public transportation that does not exist, and public transportation does not exist in many areas. Ms. Kolb stated that she could get to New York City easier than she could to Hartford because the cutbacks affect the availability of public transportation.

Public transportation is very significant to the people who need it. It is more than for convenience, it is survival and its whether life is worth living. The kinds of isolation that people with disabilities, seniors and those who are transportation dependent and who don't get to go unless someone decides they get to go, experience significant isolation. Especially in winter, the isolation is overwhelming. Therefore, the public transportation efforts are imperative.

(Hearing closed at 8:27p.m.)

