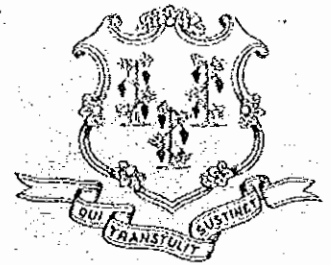


Connecticut Public Transportation Commission



2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546 * NEWINGTON, CT 06131-7546


DATE: June 29, 2016

TO: Honorable Dannel P. Malloy, Governor

Honorable Sen. Andrew Maynard and Rep. Antonio Guerrero
Co-Chairpersons of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Honorable Sen. Toni Boucher and Rep. Tom O'Dea
Ranking Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Honorable James P. Redeker, Commissioner of Transportation

FROM: Kevin Maloney, Chairman 
Connecticut Public Transportation Commission

I am pleased to submit to you the 2016 Interim Annual Report of the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission prepared pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes section 13b-11c(d). As you may be aware, the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission's implementing statute was repealed by Section 111 of Public Act 16-3 of the May 2016 Special Session (the Budget Implementer Bill) so this will be the final report issued by the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission.

The Commission traces its roots to the founding of its predecessor, the Connecticut Public Transportation Authority, in 1975. It has been my personal pleasure as Chairman of the Commission since 2010 and as a member since 2006 to have worked with such a dedicated group of individuals, volunteering their time, to serve the interests of the users and providers of public transportation services in Connecticut. Our chief mission has been to provide a conduit for the unfiltered collection and transmission of criticisms, suggestions and experiences between users, and to a significant extent, the operators as well, of public transportation services to the State of Connecticut, most significantly the Department of Transportation. We took pride in performing this role and believe we did it well. The Commission's Annual Reports, submitted December 31 of each year, were the chief vehicles for providing this feedback, both through the list of recommendations contained in the Annual Reports and the summaries of the Commission's public hearings held each year across Connecticut.

Due to the truncated nature of our schedule this year, the Commission was only able to conduct its three spring public hearings, which were held in Bristol, Willimantic and West Haven. In view of our limited hearing schedule this year, the Commission is not putting forward a formal list of recommendations, but the summaries of the three public hearings are attached, serving both to convey the views and information they provide, and to show good faith to those who took the time to come out and testify at the hearings. Though we

are not putting forth any specific recommendations in this Interim Annual Report, very brief encapsulations of the issues raised at the hearings are in order.

Key elements raised at the Bristol hearing included testimony from the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments that the top recommendation of the recent Waterbury Area Transportation Study remains the addition of a Wolcott Street/Lakewood Road/Waterbury Plaza bus route to serve the numerous malls, restaurants and other commercial businesses along these streets. This is consistent with testimony the Commission has heard over the last three years in the Waterbury area. The need to address the extremely limited Dial-a-ride service in the towns around Waterbury was also highlighted. Two observations relative to bus service in Bristol were a desire to have the local service portion of the Bristol CTfastrak route (Rt. 102) make additional stops in the area of Bristol Hospital, and the lost opportunity for bus connections when the CTfastrak bus pulls away from its City Hall stop as the Tunxis Community College shuttle is in the process of discharging its passengers at that location, some of whom very likely desire to board the departing bus.

In Willimantic, the Commission once again heard clear calls for the need for more interregional bus service. Willimantic was described as the city where the workers live but not the site of the employment opportunities. Therefore, bus connections to Norwich, the casinos, Manchester, Hartford and New London were cited as important for employment. The need for more frequent, as well as later evening, service on Windham Region Transit District (WRTD) routes was cited, particularly for later service from Storrs to Willimantic to accommodate UConn students returning from campus to their apartments in Willimantic after classes. Both of these needs, interregional connections and more WRTD bus service, are consistent with previous testimony at Commission hearings in Storrs and Willimantic.

The testimony at the West Haven hearing centered around suggestions to provide more frequent and/ or later evening bus service through extensions or reconfigurations of existing bus routes.

As this letter goes out, a significant initiative of the Commission is nearing fruition. As a result of testimony offered at the Commission's September 30, 2014 public hearing in Waterbury concerning the need for bus transportation between the Waterbury and Danbury campuses of Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) to allow students to access courses at both sites, the Commission began working with the college and Peter Pan bus company, which runs seven daily buses in each direction between Waterbury and Danbury, to develop an arrangement to provide affordable fares for NVCC students traveling between the two campuses. As a result of several meetings, a plan has been developed to provide this service using a combination of discounted commuter rate tickets which Peter Pan will sell to the college, \$25,000 of support voted by the NVCC Student Government Association to subsidize this service, other funding identified by the college and out-of-pocket fare payments by the NVCC students. The final agreement is currently under review by Peter Pan, with service to be in place before the start of the 2016/2017 academic year. As a further outgrowth of this effort, the UPass program available to Waterbury-based NVCC students to ride local buses free of charge has been expanded to Danbury, where HARTransit has been providing UPass trips to Danbury-based NVCC students since October 2015 through support from the Student Government Association. This service is currently providing approximately 500-600 rides per month.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Transportation to the Commission over the years and up to the present. Particularly, I would like to acknowledge the help of Sherry Osterling as our liaison with the Department who handles arrangements for our meetings and hearings, and the distribution of our minutes, annual reports and other documents. We also appreciate the support of her supervisor Jim Stutz. More broadly, we thank the Department for the many speakers it has provided at countless Commission meetings and its support with information needs and logistic and administrative matters. It has been a pleasure working with ConnDOT staff from Commissioner Redeker on down. Speaking on behalf of Commission members present and past, it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve the citizens of Connecticut and particularly those who have a need for or an interest in public transportation.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Bristol City Hall
111 North Main Street
Bristol, Connecticut
Tuesday, May 10, 2016 – 7:00 PM

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Francis Pickering
Robert Rodman
Richard Schreiner
Frederick Riese

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Francis Pickering opened the hearing at 7:07 pm. He welcomed the attendees, thanked them for coming to tonight's hearing and briefly explained the work of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing. He then introduced the Commission members present.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Christian Meyer, Transportation Planner with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, first discussed the Waterbury Area Transit Study. Meyer mentioned three areas addressed:

1. Expansion of intracity bus routes
2. *CTfastrak* west, i.e., extending the *CTfastrak* system west from Bristol to Waterbury and eventually to Danbury
3. *CTfastrak* south, i.e., extending the *CTfastrak* system south from Waterbury to Bridgeport to supplement Route 8 capacity

The NVCOG is overseeing an alternative modes study for the Route 8 corridor to look at a range of transportation options between Waterbury and Bridgeport. Meyer also mentioned that funding has been approved to add signaling and sidings to the Waterbury Branch of Metro-North which will add substantial flexibility and operating capacity.

Within Waterbury, the top recommendation of the Waterbury Area Transit Study is to add a Wolcott Road/ Lakewood Road bus route to serve the commercial areas long those streets.

The Downtown Intermodal Center recommendation is the last deliverable in the Study and is not done yet so Meyer cannot provide guidance as to what will be recommended. He also mentioned that many towns around Waterbury have very limited dial-a-ride service, only one or two days per week in specific towns. Among other problems, this makes it very difficult to schedule medical appointments. It is recognized that this problem needs to be addressed.

Cara Radzins, Principal Transportation Planner with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) updated the Commission on three study efforts currently underway at CRCOG. The first is the Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis covering the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit. This study is expected to be completed this fall. Much public outreach, including 10 meetings, occurred last January. With the recent expansion of the CRCOG planning region to include New Britain and Plainville, among other towns, the Transit Service Analysis has been expanded to include the New Britain/Bristol Division of CT Transit. Southington, though it does not currently have any fixed route bus service, is also included in this study. CRCOG currently has teams out doing passenger counts on every bus route and every run of the New Britain/Bristol Division. The New Britain/ Bristol study is on a later track than the Hartford Division study. The major public outreach for New Britain/ Bristol will occur this fall, with the final study completion in spring 2017.

The second study effort covered by Radzins was the Plainville/ Southington Gap Closure Project to look for the best route to close a gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. Public meetings for this study will be held this summer. A second phase of the study will evaluate routing options to connect the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail with the multi-use trail along the *CTfastrak* corridor. Study completion is scheduled for fall 2016 or winter 2017.

The final study underway at CRCOG is the Eastern Gateway Study which is a multi-modal study looking at way to improve access to and from the UConn Storrs campus, focusing on the Route 195 and US 44 corridors. This study will include land use and development aspects and will involve community outreach. Recent public outreach efforts included the UConn Earth Day Spring Fling, Bolton Family Day and Coventry Fest. Connections between the Storrs Campus, the upcoming Downtown Hartford Campus and the UConn Health Center in Farmington will also be investigated. Completion of this study is expected in summer or fall of 2017.

Radzins closed her remarks by noting that improved transit connections to ESPN in Bristol will be looked at in the Comprehensive Transit Analysis for the New Britain/ Bristol region. Also, the use of Uber as a way to effect first mile/ last mile connections will be evaluated.

Mike Wilson was a member of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency in the 1980s, serving as both assistant director and interim director. He attended a meeting of the Bristol Transportation Commission last week. He noted that the need for bus shelters was mentioned along with a discussion of new route services needed in Bristol.

State Senator Henri Martin, whose 31st District includes Bristol, Plymouth, Harwinton, Plainville and Thomaston, is a member of the General Assembly's Transportation Commission. He sees empty *CTfastrak* buses in Bristol, especially at the City Hall stop. He is troubled by the fact that the operating subsidy for the *CTfastrak* system grew from the initially projected \$10,000,000 annually to \$17,000,000 annually and noted that they are still looking for ridership numbers to see if projections are being met. He feels the needs in Bristol are mostly for improvements to intracity travel, especially getting the seniors to downtown

Sam Alkas rides local Bristol buses, *CTfastrak* and DATTCO. He feels that bus service is very important. He is dependent on buses to reach his employment at Bristol Hospital. Maybe there

are some bus routes with low ridership but cutting back on these routes causes schedule problems for many riders.

Alkas faulted *CTfastrak* bus drivers doing the loop at Bristol Hospital for not making stops at any locations other than Burger King and the hospital. Other buses will make needed stops at the library and at High Street.

Alkas also faulted New Britain Transportation drivers who frequently run 10 minutes ahead of schedule for the 6:32 am and 7:32 am stop at Pine Street and Middle Street, causing would-be riders to miss their buses.

Alkas noted that on several occasions he has seen the Tunxis College shuttle pull into Bristol City Hall and, as riders are getting off the shuttle, the *CTfastrak* bus pulls away before shuttle riders can board it.

His last point concerned the sorry state of the bus shelter at Bristol Hospital. The hospital owns the shelter. It needs to be replaced.

Cara Radzins mentioned that the on-going bus stop study in Bristol and New Britain will designate more official stops. This may address Mr. Alkas' issue with the stops near Bristol Hospital.

Frank Caputo is the chairman of the Bristol Transportation Commission. He said \$5,000 is needed to replace the bus shelter at Bristol Hospital. Other than that, Caputo noted that the Bristol Transportation Commission is working with ConnDOT, the Bristol Development Authority, the police department, the recreation department and others to get local transit issues and needs addressed.

Moderator Francis Pickering closed the hearing at 8:03 pm.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Windham Town Hall
879 Main Street
Willimantic, Connecticut
Monday, May 23, 2016 -- 7:00 PM

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Lownes
Robert Rodman
Kevin Maloney
Edward McAnaney
Frederick Riese

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Nick Lownes opened the hearing at 7:06 pm. He welcomed the attendees, thanked them for coming to tonight's hearing and briefly explained the work of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing. He then introduced the Commission members present.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

John Carrington, Director of Public Works and Town Engineer for the Town of Mansfield, spoke concerning two points. First, he would like to see CTfastrak expanded to include Windham. He feels this is important both for commuting options and for access to health care options with Windham Hospital downsizing.

Second, Carrington advocates increasing fixed route transportation throughout the region to better serve both UConn and Eastern Connecticut State University, as well as commuters. Many students, especially international students, do not have cars. Many of them also have family members living here that also need transportation service.

Ned Connell, Transportation Planner for the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, first said that the bottom line is that more funding is needed for public transportation in the local area. The demand for interregional trips from Willimantic to Norwich, New London, Stonington and even Westerly, RI is currently unmet. The recently completed Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) study of its bus system and routes identified many useful improvements, but coming up with the local match to implement many of them is difficult. Connell also would like to see the current CT Transit commuter bus service, which currently extends to Colchester, go all the way to the end of Route 2.

A bus service between Willimantic/Storrs and Norwich/ New London timed to serve commuter needs would be the top priority for the region. Existing bus service does not really meet commuter needs.

The SEAT bus study identified better schedules and more efficient operations. The study recommended moving some runs from midday to peak times when they would be more heavily used.

Jean de Smet said her remarks provide the commuter perspective. First, she formerly worked in Hartford and found the bus service to Hartford was good but was not well known. More publicity of the service is needed. Bus connections from Storrs to Hartford are not as good.

de Smet believes that routing *CTfastrak* east to Storrs is not supported by demographics. Willimantic has the greater needs. Specifically, the expressway section of Route 6 between Willimantic and Mansfield would be a good route for *CTfastrak*. de Smet observed that Willimantic is where the workers live. They need to get to Storrs, Hartford or the casinos to get to jobs. The people live in Willimantic but the jobs are elsewhere.

The loss of Peter Pan service really hurt Willimantic. Willimantic residents still use the service, but now they need to travel to Storrs to get that bus.

Bus routing also needs to consider topography, especially for seniors, with the steep hills of Willimantic.

Henry Crane is a bus rider and described himself as 'just a citizen'. He does not feel that taxes are being used to serve the people who need to get to Hartford or other regional destinations. Funds should be used to provide better service to local residents. A bus service from Willimantic to Hartford geared for commuters should be the top priority.

Crane also faulted Peter Pan for moving from Willimantic to Storrs. Older drivers who gave up their driver's licenses did so assuming the availability of bus service but now they find they need to get to Storrs in order to access Peter Pan bus service to Hartford.

Ellen Grant, Executive Director of Windham Region Transit District, said she agrees with all the points made by the earlier speakers. WRTD provides approximately 100,000 rides per year on its Storrs-Willimantic route and 80,000 rides per year on the Willimantic City route. Headways are long: 70 minutes on the City Bus and 90 minutes on the Storrs-Willimantic bus. At peak times, the buses are full. The last bus on the City route is 7:00 pm. A late 9:30 pm bus has been added from Storrs to Willimantic but there is a big gap between the last regular bus and the 9:30 bus. Grant sees a need for more late night service on both routes, as well as for Sunday service. She noted the late day service on both routes is very heavily used. Service to Manchester is needed for housing, shopping and employment. *CTfastrak* service to Mansfield would be great, but a connection to Willimantic is needed.

Breaking an extended trend, ridership for FY 2016 has declined. This applies to both the City route and the Storrs-Willimantic run, as well as to the Willimantic-Danielson service, the Route 32 service and Dial-a-Ride. The steepest drops were last summer when ridership in July and August fell 27%. Grant attributed most of the ridership drop to two factors: the opening of a new Price Chopper store in Mansfield, which eliminated the need for many riders to travel from Storrs to Willimantic, and lower gas prices.

James Flores is a bus driver and a member of the Windham Town Council. He began his remarks noting a recent trip he made to Indianapolis. He flew to Indy and took the bus back. The Indianapolis to Hartford bus trip took 12 hours, but it then took him another 14 hours to reach Willimantic.

Flores stressed two points: Willimantic is a very poor community, and there is a very strong link between employment and transportation. Hartford is a very important job market but getting home from Hartford at the end of a work day is not always easy. He suggested that perhaps every couple of hours a Hartford to Manchester bus run be extended to run to Willimantic. Providence is another big job market but there is no way to get there. Flores said *CTfastrak* may be a great long-term idea but in the short term, bus service to Manchester is a higher priority for Willimantic. Flores also requested a CPTC presentation similar to tonight's hearing be done before the Windham Town Council to gain further local input.

Jean de Smet added to her earlier comments noting that the commuter lot at Routes 6 and 66 is always full. She contrasted that to the Mansfield commuter lot where she never sees anyone get on or off the commuter bus when she rides it.

Moderator Nick Lownes closed the hearing at 7:48 pm.

Subsequent to the hearing, addition testimony was received by phone on May 25 from **Amy VasNunes** who was unable to attend the hearing. Ms. VasNunes, a resident of Willimantic, uses both ADA paratransit and Dial-a-Ride services provided by WRTD. She relayed multiple concerns with the transportation services in the area. The Dial-a-Ride service begins at 6:30 am and ends at 2:30 pm, after which time she will use ADA paratransit.

She acknowledged that ADA service provides a greater level of service, however, if she is short on cash, she can still ride the Dial-a-Ride, but she has to pay \$2 per trip for ADA paratransit. She is not eligible for Medicaid transportation. The fares which were recently increased \$.40 per trip are a hardship for her and are a barrier to finishing out her degree and attending therapy. She is charged an additional fare even if stops were made only for a brief time. Ms. VasNunes feels like being ADA eligible is a big penalty.

The Dial-a-Ride service span should be adjusted, ridership is low, and she feels the start time is too early. WRTD does not have a Spanish-speaking scheduler in spite of the fact that 40% of the community is Hispanic. Not many Hispanic people take advantage of the service for that reason.

She has experienced problems riding the lift, almost tripping on the edge of the lift platform when alighting and once falling backwards off of it. She is critical of the new computerized scheduling system and reported that buses sometimes do not show when they have been scheduled. One positive addition was the implementation of a system that records phone calls.

She has had difficulty with some discourteous members of management staff but the drivers are lovely.

Bus service in the area is very limited and transportation is a hardship -- there are many poor residents in the community.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

West Haven Hall
355 Main Street
West Haven, Connecticut
Tuesday, June 7, 2016 – 7:00 PM

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Schreiner
Bill Kelaher
Kevin Maloney
Yvonne Loteczka
Alan Sylvestre
Frederick Riese

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Richard Schreiner opened the hearing at 7:08 pm. He welcomed the attendees, thanked them for coming to tonight's hearing and briefly explained the work of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing. He then introduced the Commission members present.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

James Murphy described himself as a full-time user of CT-Transit. He lives in the West Shore neighborhood of West Haven. The J-5 and J-7 buses serve the West Shore neighborhood, providing hourly service from the early morning to late afternoon. But the last bus out of West Shore to the Connecticut Post Mall in Milford is 5:40 pm and the last bus returning from the Connecticut Post Mall is 7:00 pm. Also, when returning from New Haven after 5:45 pm, he must walk the last two miles home if he take in any entertainment in New Haven, and after 7:00 he is out of luck if coming back from the Connecticut Post Mall. He suggested that the J-5 bus could continue down Ocean Avenue to the rotary on the West Haven/Milford line in the evening. Since this bus already has a layover at Surfside, there might be time to make this extension without playing havoc with the schedule. This would involve extending four runs per day, namely the J-5 buses that leave the New Haven Green at 6:25, 7:30, 8:00 and 9:15 pm.

Murphy also conveyed the comments of a friend who used to ride the J-5 bus on Saturday leaving New Haven at 7:30 pm. The 7:30 run has been eliminated. The J-5 bus now leaves the New Haven Green at 6:15 pm, 8:45 pm and 9:45 pm, but the 7:30 bus was at a convenient time for Mr. Murphy's friend. Another comment Mr. Murphy attributed to his friend was that several bus stop signs which were taken down when United Illuminating replaced some utility poles were never put back up. This is particularly true along Ocean Avenue. Some newer bus drivers who aren't familiar with the traditional stops will not stop where there is no sign. Therefore, these signs need to be put back.

Lastly, Murphy noted that the J-7 bus to Milford does not run on Saturdays. So to get to the Connecticut Post Mall, he has to first take a bus to New Haven, then catch the bus to Milford. The bus on the return trip does loop through the shoreline area of West Haven but the outbound trip is very circuitous.

Patricia Donnelly commented on the design of the new bus shelters that have been erected in West Haven. They have wire mesh sides instead of plexiglass so they only give protection if the rain is coming straight down, and they provide no shelter from the wind. Many of these shelters are along Campbell Avenue. Mr. Murphy agreed with her assessment and said this design of shelters only appears to be in West Haven.

Donnelly also offered a suggestion and an observation regarding the J-4 bus from New Haven to Waterbury. She suggested that the J-4 bus run as an express bus to the Route 10 connector, then to Waterbury. She has made the connection between the J-4 bus to Waterbury and the CT Transit 925/928 buses from Waterbury to Hartford. When she makes this connection, she does so at the Route 70 commuter lot in Cheshire. This can be dangerous since the J-4 bus drops her off on the north side of Route 70, while the commuter lot, which is serviced by the 925/928 bus, is on the south side of Route 70. Crossing this road would be a lot easier if a walk light and crosswalk were added at this location.

James Murphy closed the hearing remarking that the J-7 route provides hourly service. In a perfect world, he would like to see it run more frequently. Extending the J-5 bus to the rotary near the West Haven/Milford line would accomplish this.

Moderator Schreiner closed the hearing at 8:00 pm.
