

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2005 – 1:30 P.M.

CONNDOT HEADQUARTERS
BERLIN TURNPIKE, NEWINGTON

1. Approval of minutes of October 6, 2005
2. Featured Speaker: Linda Mitzy, Office of Protection and Advocacy
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old Business
7. New business, including Annual Report preparation

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Minutes of October 6 2005

Union Station, New Haven
Fourth Floor Conference Room

In the absence of Chairman Tom Cheeseman, Vice Chairman Morton Katz opened the meeting at 1:36 pm. There were no corrections offered to the minutes of the meeting of September 1 and they were approved as written.

Reports from Operating Entities

Peter Richter, Director of the ConnDOT Office of Rails, updated the Commission on several New Haven Line rolling stock issues. The specifications for the 342 new M-8 rail cars are currently under development. ConnDOT has received the qualifications statements for potential bidders to construct the cars and is currently reviewing them. Approximately five firms are expected to be qualified and interested in building the new cars. All of them are foreign firms. Where possible in the development of the specifications, opportunities for standardization of components with the existing fleet will be pursued.

Thus far, 84 of the existing M-2 cars have been rehabilitated, and these are performing well. Nonetheless, there is a continuing car shortage on the New Haven Line. On Shore Line East, six sets of Virginia Rail Express cars are now in service. Amtrak's contract to operate Shore Line East has been extended to June 30, 2006. Amtrak is currently negotiating with ConnDOT for a further extension to December 31, 2006.

Site prep work and pile driving are underway for the new running repair facility at New Haven Yard. The structure will be enclosed by December, and the facility is expected to be open and fully operational by July 2006. It will contain 12 spaces to maintain cars, configured on two tracks of six spots each. This is a more efficient layout than the existing M-2 shop, which also has 12 spots, but they are configured as four spots each on three tracks. This is not efficient for the M-2s which operate as triplets.

In response to a question on ridership levels since the fuel price increases, Richter noted that New Haven Line ridership over Labor Day weekend was up 11% over 2004. Other than that, there has been no significant fuel cost-inspired uptick, but ridership in general has been up all year. The New Haven Line already captures 85% of the New York City market so there is not much room to jump.

Carmine Trotta of the ConnDOT Bureau of Policy and Planning noted that Phase 1 of the Danbury Branch Electrification Study will wrap up with the October 18 meeting, at which 8 alternatives for Branch upgrading will be presented for approval for detailed study in Phase 2. Another study getting underway is that for the proposed Waterbury Intermodal Transportation Center. The Department of Community and Economic Development is chairing this study. The study will involve stakeholders meetings but no formal advisory committee, as is used on

ConnDOT studies. Phase 1 of the intermodal center study will consist of a needs and feasibility assessment. Lastly, Carmine reported that the New Britain Busway project has been broken up into 5 separate projects for the roadway segments and one project for the stations for purposes of the design contracts.

Richard Schreiner said that Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART) has seen dramatic gains in ridership recently on the Ridgefield-Katonah shuttle (now handling 130 trips per day, up from 100 last year) and the Route 7 LINK (now seeing 250 trips per day, up from 170 last year). The Ridgefield-Katonah shuttle now operates at standing room only levels on many runs. HART is also seeing increases of at least 7% for its various other services.

Rich Sunderhauf is driving the 3:30-7:30 pm shift on the Star Shuttle downtown Hartford circulator. The Star Shuttle makes seven round trips of its 2.2 mile route during this shift. Ridership levels have been inconsistent, with good days and bad days, but overall the Star Shuttle is doing well. Most of the ridership is tourists and convention attendees, but downtown residents are also very pleased with the service. The ridership trend had been clearly upward.

Old Business

Rich Sunderhauf and Rick Schreiner reported on the results of the Rodeo competition. Connecticut Transit won the 40' bus competition; the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority won the 35' bus competition; and HART took the body and chassis/small bus and van classes.

Fred Riese reported on the three fall public hearings held thus far. The chief topics at the New Haven hearing concerned downtown bus stops and buses stopping where they blocked curb cuts and signals for crosswalks making the crossings difficult or unsafe to use. Requests for fixed route service to Southington and Plymouth were the salient issues at the New Britain hearing. A proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) service from Bradley Field to tourist destinations in southeastern Connecticut (Mystic, Foxwoods, Mohegan Sun, potentially Utopia) was the chief topic in Norwich. The new federal transportation bill contained a \$2.2 million earmark to begin study of such a service. Fred reminded members of the upcoming Winsted (October 18) and Norwalk (October 26) public hearings.

New Business

Fred Riese mentioned that the Acting Governor of New Jersey is convening a task force to investigate the possible sale of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority and its assets (the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway) as a way to recapitalize the special transportation fund in that state.

The meeting adjourned at 2.28 pm.