

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

November 2, 2006 - 1:30 PM

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room B
Berlin Turnpike, Newington

1. Approval of the October 5, 2006 meeting minutes
2. Featured speaker: Mario Marrero, Transportation Planner, Capitol Region Council of Governments
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old business
7. New business

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Minutes of October 5, 2006

Union Station, New Haven
Fourth Floor Conference Room

Chairman Tom Cheeseman called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. The minutes of the meeting of September 7 were approved subject to the addition of three items. Morton Katz noted that he had asked Deputy Commissioner Boice about the problem of the lack of snow removal from the steps at the Union Station platform in Hartford and suggested that high level platforms would eliminate this problem. Robert Zarnetske asked to include his reference to Boice that the General Assembly approved funding for the Intermodal Transportation Center in Norwich and that Boice had replied that ConnDOT was aware of this funding and would be pursuing it soon. John Zelinsky asked that the minutes reflect that he was unable to attend the August 3 meeting due to the power outage in Stamford that day caused by a fire in some overheated underground electric cables.

Featured Speaker

Heidi Green, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Connecticut, returned to speak to the Commission to report on recent positive developments since she addressed the board this past April. The mission of 1000 Friends is to channel new growth toward sites with existing infrastructure, and away from greenfield sites. Support for transit is an important factor in realizing his vision. Green noted that typically 65% of municipal budgets go to support education and that towns are forced to compete with each other for tax producing development, preferably of types which will require few services.

This December, 1000 Friends will present its policy plan to the governor or governor-elect detailing how policies on zoning, streetscapes, and livable communities can promote beneficial land use patterns. A task force of 1000 Friends has been working on this plan since February. Also on the political front, 1000 Friends will be hosting four candidate forays around the state this month to present their vision to various candidates.

1000 Friends is also working to build coalitions to support smart growth and transit initiatives, and it is monitoring the various transit proposals in Governor Rell's 'Roadmap for Connecticut's Future' Transportation Initiative to see that they advance to implementation. 1000 Friends supports corridor planning initiatives for transportation corridors and advocates comprehensive involvement by multiple State agencies including ConnDOT, DEP, OPM, and DECD. 1000 Friends is working with APTA, Norwalk Transit District, Northeast Connecticut Transit District and others to support the provision of enhanced bus service capacity and reduced headways, along with express bus service to capture commuters and feeder bus routes to train lines.

Green and her organization are working with farmland and open space preservation advocates to identify priority acquisitions and prepare a funding plan for them. Green noted that land preservation efforts are related to, and dependent on, brownfields reuse. Relatedly, she noted that the Sierra Club is hosting a conference on the topics of sprawl and transit-oriented development October 21 at the Georgetown Club in Redding.

In response to a question from Yvonne Loteczka as to whether 1000 Friends gets involved in promoting pedestrian-friendly planning and policies, Green said her group is working on this issue from a statewide perspective but does not address specific locations where this is a problem.

Robert Zarnetske expressed his opinion that there has been a lack of focus on innovative transit technologies, including fuel cell powered transit vehicles, which could promote this Connecticut industry. Given the fact that fifty percent of our overall energy use goes toward transportation, he feels that Connecticut should have a transit institute of higher profile than the small group at UConn. Tom Cheeseman noted that Connecticut Transit will be taking delivery of a United Technologies-powered fuel cell bus shortly to evaluate it. Rich Sunderhauf related that he had just spoken to UTC's fuel cell expert Brian Maruch who indicated his willingness to speak to the Commission at any time.

Ralph Capenera inquired of Green as to how municipalities might make up for the property tax revenue they forego when they don't pursue a Home Depot or other large retail development. Green outlined a multi-faceted plan including a shifting of a larger proportion of the cost of education from the towns to the State, giving a figure of \$1.9 billion in new State support. A sales tax on internet purchases and a more progressive income tax on incomes over \$250,000 would fund most of this added State support for education, which would be offset by matching cuts in the local property tax to reflect the lowered obligation for school costs.

Green feels that an important element for directing more commercial and industrial development to urban sites is to pre-remediate some brownfield sites in advance of specific development proposals so that there is some inventory of available brownfield sites for firms which contact the State about commercial or industrial sites. Typically, firms cannot wait the length of time that site remediation efforts require to plan and undertake, so they will select undeveloped greenfield sites out of timing necessity, even if a brownfield site could serve the intended use. If each major city had one or two prime brownfield sites already remediated and available, many firms would be interested in them.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Before calling for individual reports, Chairman Cheeseman noted that new ID badges for Commission members not having them can be obtained before the November meeting at ConnDOT. Members needing ID badges should contact Dennis King before that meeting to make arrangements for the photo.

Carmine Trotta of the Bureau of Policy and Planning provided updates on seven studies underway or soon to be initiated at ConnDOT.

- Buckland Transportation Study - ConnDOT is now meeting with community leaders to gather their input.
- Arrigoni Bridge Study – Just getting underway.
- Route 9/ Old-Saybrook-Hartford Rail Corridor Study – Will start in early 2007. ConnDOT is currently requesting funds from the Bond Commission for this study.
- New London-Worcester Passenger Rail Assessment Study – To begin in spring 2007.
- Danbury Branch Study Phase 2 – Currently in negotiations with consultants.
- Waterbury and New Canaan Branches Study – Scoping completed but actual study not yet underway.
- Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update – An advisory group for this study has been constituted and will meet soon.

Tom Cheeseman asked Carmine about a rumor he had heard that ConnDOT may join onto a New Jersey Transit order for rail cars from a different vendor in place of the M-8s ordered from Kawasaki. Carmine said he was not aware of that rumor or such plans. John Zelinsky mentioned reading an article on this subject that indicated the New Jersey Transit double-decker cars would be in addition to the M-8s, not in place of them. [Note: Subsequent to the meeting, Peter Richter confirmed that New Jersey's Transit's vendor, Bombardier, had contacted ConnDOT offering to add cars for Connecticut onto the New Jersey Transit order at a favorable price. Richter indicated that ConnDOT will listen to such an offer but currently has no funds available for these cars, which would indeed be in addition to the M-8s and would be of interest to Connecticut if ConnDOT could secure some slots at Penn Station, which is capable of accommodating these double-decker cars.]

In reply to a question from Richard Schreiner about the Danbury Branch Georgetown Station study, Trotta said the study is looking at transit-oriented development proposals that could complement a new station at Georgetown. This station would not replace the existing Branchville Station.

Bill Kelaher reported that all Connecticut rail worker bargaining units continue to operate without contracts. The various bargaining units have gone anywhere from two to seven years without contracts. Sixty percent of Metro-North employees are going into

their fourth year without a contract. They are still seeking to be released from mediation by the Mediation Board.

Kelahr has heard no news on Amtrak's previously announced plans to close stations in Worcester and Meriden. Five manned stations on Metro-North are being closed. Four of these are on the Harlem and Hudson Lines but one in on the New York portion of the New Haven Line near Pelham. Kelahr also mentioned that hand held ticket printing machines have been tested but were no longer being used. He was not aware of the reason their use has been discontinued.

Rick Schreiner distributed updated schedules for HART's Jobs Access routes. HART is also currently in the process of purchasing both large and small buses.

Russ St. John mentioned that rehabilitation work on the Willimantic Branch is moving right along for completion next spring, though P&W is planning at least some limited service on the line before that time. He also reported that 8 of 10 undercuts on the Worcester line have been completed in this project to provide adequate clearance for Plate F and autorack equipment over the line.

St. John and Fred Riese reported on the Bellows Falls Tunnel project in Vermont. A clearance of 19'6" is expected to be completed by the end of December. The original plans for 20'6" clearance had to be scaled back due to some funding being used to reinforce a bridge just north of the tunnel which was discovered to be structurally deficient. Riese also reported that the first test runs of autorack equipment on the Freight Railroad Improvement Project (FRIP) in Rhode Island are currently underway.

Chairman's Report

Tom Cheesemen attended a Transportation Strategy Board meeting this past Tuesday at which three transit districts presented their estimates of funding needs to the Board. Statewide, there is a deficiency of \$12 million between the Governor's budget level and what is needed for services. In addition, several capital projects are not moving forward because the State does not have the required 20% match for projects which already have been approved at the Federal level.

At Middletown Area Transit, adjustments in the cost of certain passes will go into effect on November 1 though the base fare will remain at \$1.25. Also, Middletown Area Transit has received 'friendly agency status' so that MAT fareboxes will be able to accept Connecticut Transit, DATTCO, and Meriden Transit District passes, so as to facilitate transfers.

Old Business

There was a brief discussion of how the members prefer to receive the minutes, whether by mail, e-mail or the internet. Mailing of the minutes has recently been

resumed because some members do not have computer access. Other members felt that, for them, mailing was duplicative and unnecessary.

Richard Sunderhauf noted that Connecticut Transit president David Lee has expressed his willingness to host a Commission meeting at the Hartford Division facility in 2007.

New Business

Leo Petry of Rideworks said that October 12 will be Ride the Bus to Work Day in New Haven. People who filled out survey forms will receive free bus tickets. Thus far, 200 pairs of tickets have been given out, with a good response from both employers and employees.

The September 27 Commission public hearing in Plainville encountered the situation of finding the Council Chambers at the Municipal Building locked. No custodian was on duty and the police had no key to the chambers. Eventually, an alternate room was used for the hearing, but Chairman Cheeseman was disappointed by this situation. Terry Hall noted that the fall public hearing schedule is not on the website, which is still displaying the spring hearings. Remaining hearings for 2006 are Litchfield (October 10) and Danbury (October 24).

Tom Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm.

The next Commission meeting will be November 2, 2006 at ConnDOT headquarters in Newington at 1:30 pm.

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Thursday, October 5, 2006

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven, Connecticut

VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair
Tom Cheeseman
Morton Katz
William Kelaher
Yvonne Loteczka
Terry Hall
Richard Sunderhauf
Richard Schreiner
John Zelinsky
Russ St. John
Kevin Maloney
Robert Zarnetske
Ralph Capenera

GUESTS

Heidi Green, 1000 Friends
of Connecticut
Leo Petry, Rideworks

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

Carmine Trotta
Dennis King