

## AGENDA

### CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Thursday, December 6, 2007 – 1:30 P.M.

UNION STATION, NEW HAVEN  
FOURTH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

1. Approval of minutes of November 1, 2007
2. Featured Speaker: Michael Krauss, Director, Regional Growth Connection
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old Business
7. New business
8. Discussion and voting on recommendations for 2007 Annual Report

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of November 1, 2007

Connecticut Department of Transportation Headquarters  
Conference Room B, 2800 Berlin Turnpike  
Newington

**Attendance:** Tom Cheeseman, Kevin Maloney, Russ St. John, Chris Adams, Rich Sunderhauf, Yvonne Loteczka, Rick Schreiner, Richard Carpenter, Morton Katz, Terry Hall, John Zelinsky **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat, Fred Riese. **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Karen Burnaska, Leo Petry, Stephen Troster.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:37 pm. The minutes of the meeting of October 4 were approved as written with one abstention.

**Featured Speaker**

Karen Burnaska, Transit Coordinator for the Transit for Connecticut Coalition, explained that the Coalition consists of 27 organizations and has the dual purpose of publicizing the benefits of bus transit and advocating for increasing funding for bus transit services. The organization was spawned by the desire of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT), the Business Council of Fairfield County, The Work Place, and Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) and the Regional Plan Association to follow up on a 2006 survey of statewide transit needs that had been done through CACT. The founding members of the Coalition applied for a grant from the One Region Fund in December 2006. Two of the member foundations within the One Region Fund, specifically the Fairfield County Community Foundation and the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, provided funding for the Transit for Connecticut Coalition to do a subsequent, more in-depth look at statewide transit needs. The Connecticut Fund for the Environment was selected to administer the grant.

Transit services offer environmental, social and economic benefits. Air quality improvements and reduced roadway congestion are examples of environmental benefits. Access to recreational, social, religious and cultural events are the social benefits of transit, while access for workers to reach sites of employment is the foremost economic benefit.

The *Bus Service Needs Analysis* report prepared by the Coalition is a 5-year capital and operating investment plan that has the potential to increase bus ridership by 80%, including providing service to the 50 towns that currently have no transit service. The main improvements addressed in the report are increases in the frequency and hours of service, expansion of weekend service, improved shuttle connections to train stations, expanded express bus service, more interregional services such as the Coastal Link, and expanded paratransit service.

The 2007 legislative session saw major advances for transit here in Connecticut. Three million dollars were provided to operate bus service expansions that were approved in 2005. In addition, \$5,000,000 for increased bus service was approved for FY'09. The bonding package included \$20,000,000 for bus projects including \$14,000,000 for bus storage and maintenance facilities in Torrington (for Northwestern Connecticut Transit District) and Willimantic (for Windham Regional Transit), up to \$5,000,000 for clean diesel bus retrofits, and up to \$1,000,000 to buy vehicles for elderly and disabled paratransit services for systems participating in the State Matching Grant Program for Dial-a-Ride.

The Transit for Connecticut Coalition is holding five public forums to gather input on its *Bus Transit Needs Analysis* and on the transit services the public sees as needed. The New Haven forum on October 2 was attended by over 100 people, and the Hartford forum on October 23 drew in excess of 80 people. The original planning goal was 50 people per forum. Attendees in New Haven wanted more cross-town service, more frequent service on existing routes and more shuttle and trolley service. The Hartford forum attendees advocated more Dial-a-Ride services for seniors, fixed route service for Enfield, and more Sunday service. Three more forums will be held in Bridgeport (November 2), Norwich (November 15), and Waterbury (Nov. 30). The public input on transit needs from the five forums will also assist ConnDOT in deciding how best to use the additional \$5,000,000 in bus transit funds contained in the FY'09 budget.

Russ St. John mentioned the need to better market transit services. Burnaska said the Coalition's proposal contains almost \$1,000,000 for a marketing and a public image campaign. More information about public transportation needs to get out to the public.

In response to another question, Burnaska said the \$14,000,000 in bonding funds for the Torrington and Windham bus facilities did remain intact in the final bonding package. The bonding package language does not specify how this money is to be split between the two projects.

Yvonne Loteczka mentioned that a problem she has encountered is the lack of a human to answer the phone after 4:00 pm when information is needed about an ADA ride. If she has to inquire about a late arriving ADA trip or if she wants to cancel a trip, there is no one she can reach after 4:00 pm. She can leave a message but has no assurance as to when that message is heard or acted on. Burnaska acknowledged this in an impediment and that public transportation must be efficient, reliable and safe if it is to be used.

Regarding this situation, Tom Cheeseman informed the discussion that the Greater Hartford Transit District is getting a new contractor to coordinate the service, a development which should solve the problem. Also, the Transit District has a shortage of vehicles and just plain needs more vehicles to reliably meet the ADA service needs.

Terry Hall cited North Carolina, California, and Metro Atlanta as areas where multimodal connectivity in transit between bus and rail is being pushed and where connecting services are included on the transit schedules.

Burnaska mentioned that the Waterbury public forum had been rescheduled from November 13 to November 30 at the Chamber of Commerce at 10 am. She acknowledged the help of AARP who provided refreshments for all five of the Coalition's forums.

### **Comments from the Public**

None.

### **Reports from Operating Entities**

Russ St. John mentioned that the enlarged Bellows Fall, VT rail tunnel officially opened October 19. The tunnel now provides clearance for tri-level auto racks, which transport 18 or 21 automobiles. The Bellows Falls tunnel in on the New England Central Railroad, which interchanges with the Providence and Worcester, so the bigger tunnel means autos arriving at the Quonset Point port facility in Davisville, Rhode Island can now reach the rest of North America via connections with the Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and CSXT from the New England Central. The Bellows Falls tunnel enlargement will allow P&W more interchange possibilities and the chance to go after more business.

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned that service changes on the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit go into effect on November 18. At this time, many Hartford area bus routes will be switched from letter to numerical designations. The remaining letter routes will be converted this coming spring.

Rick Schreiner reported that Housatonic Area Regional Transit received the first ten of its new Gillig buses last week.

Fred Riese reported that the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Route 11 expressway project had finally been released on October 24. He also mentioned that ConnDOT has initiated the scoping process for the expansion of Interstate 95 to six lanes from Old Lyme to the Thames River. Scoping is undertaken to identify issues of concern in advance of the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

### **Chairman's Report**

Tom Cheeseman noted Donna Carter's testimony at the New Haven Transit for Connecticut Coalition forum. Carter discussed the electric trolleys purchased five years ago by the Greater New Haven Transit District. Though they are designed for a life of 10 years, they are encountering numerous maintenance problems. The batteries, which were supposed to last the 10 year life of the vehicles, have already been replaced once and are now in need of a second replacement at a cost of \$70,000 per vehicle. GNHTD owns four electric trolleys. Donna Carter cautioned that one of the problems encountered with alternate fueled vehicles is the lack of mechanics with the expertise to maintain them.

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese summarized the testimony at the Bridgeport and Torrington public hearings. Lloyd Mellad spoke about problems in taxi regulation in Fairfield County at the Bridgeport hearing. The principal topics at the well-attended Torrington hearing were the proposed bus maintenance facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District, Jobs Access transportation, and taxi driver working conditions presented by a number of drivers from Bridgeport who attended the Torrington hearing.

### **New Business**

Terry Hall reported that an Amtrak funding bill sponsored by Senators Frank Lautenberg and Trent Lott calling for \$3 billion in annual funding for Amtrak has cleared the Senate and now goes to the House. All attempts to attach riders to this bill in the Senate debate failed. The proposed funding level would be a substantial increase from the current level of approximately \$1.6 billion annually.

Leo Petry, the Customer Service Supervisor for Rideworks, mentioned that the enhanced Shore Line East Christmas season weekend service schedule will be in effect from November 17 through December 30 to accommodate extra shopping trips.

In response to a question, Karen Burnaska said that State bonding package provides funding to implement Phases I and II of the Shore Line East expansion plan.

Fred Riese reminded members of the annual work session on November 15 at Union Station in New Haven, and he encouraged them to come with ideas or even draft language for recommendations for the Annual Report. The work session will begin at 5:00 pm

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.