

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, January 5, 2006 - 1:30 PM

Department of Transportation, Conference Room B

Newington, Connecticut

1. Approval of the December 1, 2005 meeting minutes
2. Speaker to be announced
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 December 1, 2005

Union Station, New Haven
Fourth Floor Conference Room

Chairman Cheeseman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of November 3 were approved as written with one abstention.

Featured Speaker

James Cameron, Vice Chairman of the Metro-North Shore Line East Rail Commuter Council, spoke on the effectiveness of transit security measures to protect against terrorist attacks. He became interested in this topic in the wake of the Madrid train bombing and the London subway bombings. Mr. Cameron offered the conclusion that it is near impossible to safeguard a railroad to the same degree as you can an airport or a plane. The best you can do is to provide some level of deterrence to an attack.

Cameron mentioned that Shore Line East has tried on-train inspections with metal detectors. This avoided impacting train schedules but the drawback was that any perpetrator and device would be already on the train. Connecticut State Police riding on Metro-North trains may provide some level of public assurance but are probably not effective as a deterrent. New York has used random bag checks, which Cameron sees as more effective as a deterrent.

There has been some controversy over a Transportation Security Administration grant of \$37.5 million to enhance transit security in the Tri-State region. Connecticut's share of this grant was \$510,000 or slightly less than 1.5% of the grant. Some Connecticut observers felt that the state did not get a fair share of the money, but it was pointed out that most of the transit ridership as well as most of the more visible security targets are in New York, and to a lesser degree in New Jersey, rather than in Connecticut.

Cameron admitted to being pessimistic about security on mass transit. He believes we have been lulled back into a sense of complacency. He sees another attack in the U.S. as inevitable. As far as transit is concerned, Connecticut has the weakest security measures. He cited a 'midnight raid' by a Channel 8 news team into New Haven Yard as evidence that our rail yards are not secure. Confessing that he did not have the answers to adequate security, Cameron felt greater surveillance and random bag checks were two effective tools.

Reports from Operating Entities

Peter Richter, Connecticut's assistant rail administrator, reported that on-time performance for the New Haven Line and Shore Line East were running at 98.2% and 90.3%, respectively, with the November figures being 95% for the New Haven Line and 94.7% for Shore Line East. Ridership continues to grow. Shore Line East carried an average daily ridership of 1,771 in October, up 9% over October 2004. Metro-North is beginning a Family and

Friends Program, offering a free 10-ride ticket with the purchase of a monthly pass, or a free round trip ticket with the purchase of a 10-ride ticket. This promotion is to encourage ridership in December at off-peak hours when extra capacity is available.

Regarding infrastructure improvements, Richter said the New Haven Yard inspection shop with 12 maintenance spots will be operating in the third quarter of 2006. Twelve Virginia Rail Express (VRE) cars are now in service but 14 others will need to undergo COTS (clean, oil, test and stencil) rehabilitation work. Kawasaki and Bombardier have submitted bids to do this work. The recent creation of a Specification Review Committee has added an extra step to this program. The Committee's response is expected in January. It is currently a difficult market to find vendors interested in doing this type of work.

The procurement of the 342 new M-8 cars is on schedule. The specifications for these cars will be released in a few days for response in the spring of 2006. For the M-2 cars, the critical systems replacement effort is progressing. Ninety-two M-2's have been rehabilitated thus far. These cars are going much further between mechanical incidents which is improving overall car availability on the New Haven Line.

Richter next discussed the hiring of Eugene Colonese to be the new Rail Administrator at ConnDOT. Mr. Colonese has thirty years of experience at Metro-North and brings a wealth of knowledge to the job. Jim Cameron expressed his opinion that the selection of Mr. Colonese deserves 'three thumbs up'. Richter has been named Assistant Rail Administrator, removing the interim qualifier from his title. Mr. Colonese will start his new position in January.

Continuing, Mr. Richter said many new off-peak trains have been added for the Christmas season. More late evening trains have been added since October and have been well received. However, this does have a negative impact on the time windows available for maintenance of way work at night.

Richter sees the firing of Amtrak president David Gunn and his replacement by Acting President Thomas Hughes as a mixed bag for Connecticut. The transit community looked on David Gunn with great respect. But his attitude toward commuter rail was "at best, murky." Richter sees Hughes as more agreeable to working with commuter rail operations like Shore Line East. Mr. Gunn had a very proprietary attitude toward his right-of-way when it came to commuter railroads. Mr. Hughes has had a long career with the Boston and Maine and the Bangor and Aroostook, and was serving as vice president of the Amtrak engineering department. Richter also mentioned that the future of the Shore Line East management agreement with Amtrak may be settled very soon.

The last topic addressed by Mr. Richter was that of Shore Line East stations. The new Guilford station opened this past Monday, November 28. It is the only Shore Line East station with a pedestrian overpass, allowing the station to serve both sides of the track. The new Madison and Westbrook stations are still to be done, which will occur over the next two years. Both stations were set back by changes in their locations. ConnDOT is again looking for more parking at Shore Line East stations. Richter says his long-term goal for Shore Line East is to see it as a two track railroad, rather than limited to the current south track.

Carmin Trota of ConnDOT Policy and Planning said the department would look for money from the non-Interstate 95 funding in the Governor's Transportation Initiative in January to do environmental studies and preliminary engineering work on the Springfield Line commuter rail service. On the Danbury Branch Electrification Study, Trota mentioned that a public hearing was held Tuesday in Wilton, and a second one will be held tonight in New Milford to gather public input on the conclusions of Phase 1 of the study. Phase 2, a detailed analysis of five alternatives, will begin in the spring. Lastly, Parsons Transportation Group has been selected as the consultant to do the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Study.

Russ St. John informed the Commission of the passing of longtime Providence and Worcester Railroad president Orville Harrold last week. Yesterday, the P&W Board named Scott Conti to be a director of the company and elected him to succeed Orville Harrold as president. Frank Rogers has been promoted to the office of vice president.

Bill Kelaher said the labor situation on Metro-North continues as it has been with 70% of the employees now going into their third year without a contract. These unions have asked the Mediation Board to release them from mediation. Kelaher also mentioned that December 15 is the contract expiration date for 34,000 New York City bus and subway drivers and token clerks represented by the TWU.

Rich Sunderhauf reported that the Asylum Hill and Downtown loops incorporated into many Connecticut Transit routes in Hartford failed to generate appreciable ridership and were being deleted from most routes.

Wrapping up the reports from operating entities, Richard Schreiner said HART is working with the New York and Connecticut departments of transportation to add more shuttle service to the Harlem Line. The possible addition of shuttles to other Harlem Line stations will be evaluated in an upcoming study.

Chairman's Report

The Kennedy Center and the Regional Growth Connection have held Transit 101 workshops in Middletown, Meriden and Westbrook to better acquaint potential riders on how to use transit services. Another Transit 101 session has been scheduled for New Haven at the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority. Tom also mentioned that the Middletown – Meriden bus service celebrated its 5th anniversary by giving out free bags of M&M's to riders on the anniversary day.

Old Business

The proposed 2006 schedule of Commission meetings was corrected to move the March 2 meeting from Newington to Middletown.

New Business

Rich Sunderhauf noted that since other Connecticut bus systems now use the Connecticut Transit logo and brand name, complaints from Waterbury, Bridgeport and other areas come in to the Connecticut Transit call center in Hartford, even though Connecticut Transit does not run these services.

Linda Blair reported that yesterday she attended the Institute on Planning for the Achievement of Transportation Coordination in Human Services held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. ConnDOT Commissioner Stephen Korta and Michael Sanders were among the speakers explaining the need for coordination between systems and providers of human services transportation. Some federal money is now available to promote such coordination. Funding restrictions on various providers limiting the uses of their equipment to specific purposes are a big part of the problem.

Annual Report Recommendations

Fred Riese presented fourteen draft recommendations which were reviewed, discussed and voted for inclusion in the 2005 Annual Report.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.