

## **AGENDA**

### CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

**Thursday, March 2, 2006 - 1:30 PM**

City Hall, Council Chambers, 145 Dekoven Dr.  
Middletown, Connecticut

1. Approval of the February 2, 2006 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: Heidi Green, from "1000 Friends" to speak on Transportation Issues
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old business
7. New business
  - 1) Review of ConnDOT's responses to Annual Report recommendations
  - 2) Discussion of spring public hearing sites
  - 3) Other New Business

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Thursday, February 2, 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  
Ann Katis (for Richard Schreiner)

GUESTS

Elaine Kolb  
Ralph Cannici

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

Dennis King  
Carmine Trotta

# CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Minutes of February 2, 2006

Union Station, New Haven  
Fourth Floor Conference Room

Chairman Tom Cheeseman called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm. The minutes of the meeting of January 5, 2006 were approved subject to one correction offered by Linda Blair to clarify that the bus drivers attending the three training sessions she was to present at, as discussed under New Business, provide general commuter service rather than solely “transport disabled individuals.”

## **Featured Speaker**

There was no featured speaker present for this meeting.

## **Comments from the Public**

Elaine Kolb introduced Ralph Cannici, a retired Connecticut Transit New Haven Division employee with whom she had worked to develop the driver training program used in that division to train over 160 drivers in proper procedures for transporting handicapped riders. This program has been very successful because it incorporates role playing, putting the drivers in the position of handicapped riders to give them their perspective. Cannici noted that there had been some initial resistance from drivers to participating in the training but that changed over time, especially as the drivers themselves used the wheelchairs.

Relatedly, Linda Blair reported that she participated in three training sessions for bus drivers held at Westport, Mass., Berlin, Conn., and the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville. She discussed the legal requirements to provide service to disabled riders.

## **Reports from Operating Entities**

Richard Sunderhauf first mentioned that the Hartford Division on Connecticut Transit does also have a driver training program for serving handicapped riders.

An increasing problem drivers and riders are experiencing on the buses is the malfunction of the electronic fareboxes. They are breaking down with increasing frequency, and each breakdown is a major service interruption as the bus then needs to be changed out of service. These fareboxes are now 10-12 years old. They are not as reliable as the old mechanical fareboxes.

Bill Kelaher noted that Amtrak is converting its Meriden station to an unmanned facility, closing the office there. Amtrak’s manned stations in Connecticut will now be limited to New Haven, Berlin, Hartford and New London.

The Metro-North employees are now going into their fourth year without a contract. Kelaher contrasted this with how quickly MTA negotiated a new agreement with the Transit Workers Union (TWU) in New York City after their 2-day transit strike. He said MTA only reacts to pressure. Though MTA and the TWU did negotiate a new contract, it was ultimately voted down by seven (7) votes out of over 30,000 votes cast.

Carmine Trotta of ConnDOT's Bureau of Policy and Planning mentioned that a new study of the New Canaan and Waterbury Branches of Metro-North will get underway very soon. The Commission will be invited to participate on the study's advisory committee.

Fred Riese reported that Providence and Worcester will be moving about 40,000 tons of coal, or approximately 400 cars of coal, from Provport to a power plant just west of Binghamton, New York. The initial 40,000 tons is a test burn of South African coal. If this coal meets the plant's operational and environmental specifications, 300,000 tons per year from this source could follow. The coal movement involves five railroads but will stay under P&W power the entire trip. The coal will move from Providence to Worcester, where P&W has its scales to weigh the cars, then to New London, where a New England Central Railroad crew will meet the train and operate it north to Brattleboro, Vermont. At Brattleboro, the train will be turned over to the Vermont Railway for the trip to Whitehall, NY. At Whitehall, the Delaware and Hudson will pick up the train for the trip to Binghamton, where a Norfolk Southern crew will move the train west for its final three miles.

Fred also mentioned that a proposed new wood chip fueled powerplant in Plainfield is on a site adjacent to the P&W, possibly offering another opportunity for rail movement of fuel to the plant or ash from it.

Fred related that in a recent filing to USDOT, President David Fink of Pan Am Airways noted that sister company Springfield Terminal Railroad has been providing substantial cash infusions to support Boston-Maine Airways Corporation, which flies under the Pan Am name. This is money that then becomes unavailable for investment in railroad infrastructure and maintenance.

On two administrative topics, Fred noted that he, in consultation with Russ St. John, would develop a list of public hearing sites for consideration at the March meeting, and he also encouraged members to submit their reimbursement request forms for the second half of 2005.

### **Chairman's Report**

Funding to implement the Section 13b-38bb municipal Dial-a-Ride grants was supposed to be ready in FY 2006. Chairman Cheeseman explained that rulemaking to administer this program took time, so the State funding will now be available as of July 1, 2006. Participating municipalities must provide a 50% match. Coordinated service plans will receive priority. In Tom's Midstate Region, 8 of the 9 towns will participate in a coordinated system.

The other major issue facing transit districts is fuel costs. An anticipated 5% adjustment this year did not materialize. Tom knows of three transit districts that will be drastically hurt by the rising fuel costs, while other districts may also have to reduce services.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **New Business**

Copies of ConnDOT's responses to the CPTC's Annual Report recommendations were distributed at the meeting. Since members had not had time to review them, it was agreed to consider the responses at the March 2 meeting, which will be held at Middletown City Hall.

Terry Hall advised the Commission that Amtrak carried 1.5 million Connecticut passengers in 2005, up 67,000 from 2004. By ridership, New Haven is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest station on Amtrak's system, and the fourth busiest on the East Coast, trailing only Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington. Parking is the big constraint at New Haven, hindering ridership growth.

Springfield Line ridership grew by 19% in 2005 over 2004, following an 18% ridership bump in 2004 from the 2003 levels. Similarly, Springfield Line revenue was up 15% over 2004, which in turn followed a 19% rise from 2003. In response to a question as to how the Governor's recently announced Transportation Initiative 2 might affect the schedule for implementation of commuter rail service on the Springfield Line, Carmine Trotta replied that it really won't impact the schedule, which is currently moving ahead as rapidly as possible.

Lastly, Linda Blair mentioned she is going to New York City tomorrow as part of a group to review ADA considerations for the new M-8 rail cars to be built for the New Haven Line. She promised to give a report at the March meeting.

Chairman Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 2:42 pm.

### **NOTE:**

Members and potential guests are encouraged to note the location of the March 2 meeting on the agenda. That meeting will be held at Middletown City Hall, 145 Dekoven Drive.