

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

May 3, 2007 - 1:30 PM

Connecticut Transit, Hartford Division
100 Leibert Road, Hartford
Conference Room

1. Approval of the April 5, 2007 meeting minutes
2. Featured Speaker: Michael Riley, President, Motor Transport Association of Connecticut
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
7. Old business
8. New business

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of April 5, 2007

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Terry Hall, Russ St. John, Kevin Maloney, Linda Blair, Rich Sunderhauf, Bill Kelaher, Yvonne Loteczka, John Zelinsky **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmot (OPM), Frederick Riese (DEP). **DOT Staff:** Albert Martin, Peter Richter, Dennis King. **Guests:** Jean Stimolo (Rideworks).

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:33 pm. The minutes of the meeting of March 1, 2007 were approved with no corrections and one abstention. Chairman Cheeseman related that scheduled speaker Mike Riley needed to present testimony at the General Assembly this afternoon and therefore could not attend today's meeting.

Comments from the public

Jean Stimolo of Rideworks has been working with ConnDOT on a major campaign to promote telecommuting. Currently, over 158,000 Connecticut residents telecommute to work, with 86% of those doing so to jobs in Connecticut. This removes an estimated 60,000 cars per day from Connecticut's highways. Stimolo reported good feedback from both employers and employees to the campaign.

Comments from operating entities

Fred Riese reported that he had attended the New England Rail Forum in Worcester on March 29, along with Commission member Russ St. John. Wall Street analyst Tony Hatch gave a very encouraging keynote talk on the future of the railroad industry based on financial indicators such as the return on investment for the industry and the level of capital expenditures being made to expand the capacity of the industry's infrastructure. Mr. Hatch also stated that the trucking industry is operating pretty much at capacity now, in large part due to a shortage of drivers, rising fuel costs and the limitations of the highway system which are already causing significant losses to efficiency due to congestion. Fred also mentioned the Frank Rogers, Providence and Worcester's Vice President to Marketing, expressed his willingness to address the Commission.

Fred also related that he and another DEP representative had met with P&W's VP for Operations David Fitzgerald and legal counsel Marie Angelini, and Valley Railroad's President Bob Bell and Manager of Operations Rob Bradway this past Tuesday to pursue an agreement to formalize P&W's access rights to the southernmost portion of the DEP-owned, Valley Railroad-leased track in Old Saybrook immediately north of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. The Federal Railroad Administration has mandated that an agreement be drawn up to cover P&W's access there as a condition of the Record of Decision for the electrification of the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and Boston. Currently, P&W uses this track under a handshake agreement with Valley. Amtrak, as project sponsor of the Northeast Corridor electrification, has already compensated DEP for the access rights via a lease of property for trail use and physical

improvements in the form of a pedestrian bridge. Fred reported that general agreement was realized at the meeting on 9 of 10 articles in the draft agreement, with the remaining sticking point being the designation of responsibility for maintaining the subject 800' of track to Class II standards. Fred expressed optimism that this hurdle could be overcome.

Lastly, he noted that the draft South Central Regional Long Range Transportation Plan which he had recently reviewed referred to the need for a statutory change before articulated buses, such as those proposed for use on the New Britain Busway, can be operated in Connecticut. He inquired of Rich Sunderhauf if he knew why this statutory change is needed.

Richard Sunderhauf confirmed that this change in statute is needed but had no specifics. On the subject of new bus technologies, he did note that Connecticut Transit's new fuel cell bus will be introduced April 10 at a ceremony at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. This will be the first hybrid fuel cell bus in revenue operation on the East Coast, or anywhere outside of California.

Rich also reported that contract negotiations with Connecticut Transit are proceeding. New run bids are also underway at Connecticut Transit.

On April 29, Connecticut Transit's Berlin Turnpike T Route will be extended to Stew Leonard's and Best Buy with a new stop added at Walmart. At the other end of the T Route, service will be extended to Blue Hills Extension and the Griffin Office Park. The process of converting Connecticut Transit bus routes from letter to number designations will begin April 29 with the first two routes being converted. This will affect not only Connecticut Transit but also the private contractors who run much of the express route bus service.

Rich also related that a new shuttle service funded by Hartford merchants, mostly restaurants, will begin April 13. Two shuttle routes will serve Parkville and the South End, operating 50 weekends per year and using many retired CT Transit bus drivers.

Russ St. John described the National Railway Equipment Company's ultra-low emissions locomotive which was on display at the P&W's engine house in Worcester during the New England Rail Forum. The 2100 hp version of this locomotive (a 1400 hp version is also available) uses three Cummins diesel engines rather than a single large engine. Thus, only as many engines as necessary to meet any power requirement need be running. The smaller engines can use antifreeze instead of water as a coolant and need not be kept at constant idle when not in use. Compared to standard locomotives, they are also very easy starting.

Rich Sunderhauf updated the Commission on the issue of the ZZ Shuttle, a Sunday fixed route service begun by the Greater Hartford Transit District using paratransit drivers. The Amalgamated Transit Union had objected to the use of paratransit drivers operating a fixed route service due to the difference in their wage levels. Rich reported that the ZZ Shuttle will now be run by Connecticut Transit.

Bill Kelaher reported that a tentative labor agreement for unionized Metro-North workers had been initialed by the coalition of unions and Metro-North. The one exception is the

track workers represented by the Teamsters, who constitute about 5% of the total coalition workers, and who are holding out for some additional contract language. The ratification vote on the contract is scheduled for April 23, with MTA's decision on the new contract set for April 25. However, if the Teamsters should strike, all of the unions would honor their picket lines. The new contract will run through 2010.

Chairman's Report

Middletown Area Transit is now operating its service in-house. After some initial bumps, Chairman Cheeseman reported operations are now going very smoothly.

Tom attended the New England Public Transportation Association conference in Providence last Friday. FTA Administrator Jim Simpson reported that Region 1 Administrator Dick Doyle has rescinded his announced retirement for another year. Cheeseman also reported that last month's CPTC speaker, David Ishihara, resigned his position as the Department of Homeland Security's Director for Connecticut to take a position with that agency for security at the Port of Boston.

From the State Capitol, Tom reported that a bill to provide transit districts with \$12 million of operating assistance over the next 5 years is still alive. Also, the possibility of \$100 million for capital projects is still very much alive.

Report from ConnDOT

Bureau Chief Peter Richter introduced Deputy Commissioner Albert Martin who began his appointment on March 16. Deputy Commissioner Martin said he was pleased to have this opportunity to meet the Commission and looked forward to working with the group.

Peter Richter first provided the February performance and ridership numbers for the New Haven Line and Shore Line East. For the New Haven Line, February's on-time performance was 96.6%, while the year-to-date figure is 97.1%. Ridership for February 2007 was up 2.2% from February 2006 and is up 3.3% on a year-to-date basis. One hundred and twenty-two cars have now completed their critical systems replacement (CSR) overhauls. As of the third week of March, the new running repair shop at New Haven Yard was fully operational and fully staffed. The first conceptual discussions about a running repair shop at New Haven took place in November 2004. Twenty-six months later, the shop was open.

On Shore Line East, February 2007 ridership was up 6.37% over the February 2006 level, with YTD ridership up 8.07%. On-time performance was 95.2% for February and 97.2% YTD.

Bus ridership on Connecticut Transit has been stable at the beginning of 2007. The recent increases in gas prices may give ridership an upward bump soon.

Speaker Amann's transportation bill (HB 6366) included not only the proposed Phase 1 expansion of Shore Line East with weekend service and expanded mid-day and evening weekday service, but also Phase 2 expansion to run service to New London.

Governor Rell has asked Senators Nickerson and McDonald to look into alternatives to the \$1.00 per fare surcharge on New Haven Line tickets to be implemented in 2008 to help pay for the M-8 cars. A public hearing on the surcharge and alternatives will be held at the Stamford Government Center tonight. \$141 million of the \$667 million cost of the M-8s would be funded by the fare surcharge.

Richter continued that ConnDOT and Metro-North staff are working hard overseeing the assembly of the M-8s in Illinois and Japan. We remain on schedule for the delivery of the first M-8 prototypes in the last quarter of 2009.

Twenty of the 23 Virginia Rail Express (VRE) cars have completed their refurbishment programs. After completion of the remaining three VRE cars, the next step will be to refurbish 10 VRE cab cars as coaches, for a total of 33 new cars. The April timesheet schedules will reflect 950 additional seats being placed into service. Refurbishment of the 10 cab cars will add another 700 seats.

In reply to a question about the Department's response to CPTC Annual Report Recommendation #2 concerning the likely timing for rail station improvements at Waterbury, Richter replied that the Department will prepare an RFP for all improvements at Waterbury Station including demolition of the derelict parking structure, security, clean-up, and landscaping. These improvements will be completed before ConnDOT undertakes a marketing effort for the Waterbury Branch service.

Lastly, several Commission members expressed their disappointment with the Department's response to recommendation #9 which proposed the designation of a free 'live' cell phone parking lot at Bradley Field for very short term parking for drivers coming to pick up arriving passengers. ConnDOT's response alluded to the inclusion of parking revenues in the Bradley lease agreement under which the airport is operating in a self-supporting fashion. Commission members pointed out that no parking revenue is obtained from vehicles double parked on the terminal access ramps or circling traffic awaiting arriving passengers. Removal of this traffic to a free lot with 'live' parking only (vehicles occupied or attended) would improve security, reduce congestion, and result in no revenue loss. The lot could be anywhere within a 5 minute drive of the terminal. Richter said he would follow-up on this issue.

New Business

Chariman Cheeseman mentioned that a new member has been appointed to the Commission. Tyler Smith of Greenwich is an appointee of Governor Rell.

Terry Hall attended the Region 1 meeting of the National Association of Railroad Passengers in Boston last Saturday. A major topic of discussion was the connection between North Station and South Station which was not constructed as part of the Big Dig project but was planned to be constructed at a later date. Proposed buildings in the connecting corridor are now threatening the feasibility of future construction of this connection.

Terry also informed the Commission that Amtrak's Thames River Bridge project is progressing toward a replacement of the moveable span in May 2008. The support columns of

the bridge had to be stabilized since they did not extend to bedrock. The project will necessitate a 4-day outage of rail traffic over the bridge while the center span is replaced. River traffic under the bridge will be closed for 10 days due to the project.

Lastly, Terry mentioned some discussion took place about Westerly, Rhode Island becoming a hub for commuter rail services provided by MBTA and Shore Line East. Peter Richter said he has been in touch with Rhode Island DOT about the scope of a study they are undertaking to look at options to extend passenger rail service. MBTA service already extends south of Providence to Wickford Junction. An eastward extension of Shore Line East service from New London has been considered at a very conceptual level.

Fred Riese asked for volunteers to moderate the Commission's four spring public hearings. The moderators will be John Zelinsky at Stamford (May 15), Yvonne Loteczka at Enfield (May 29), Russ St. John at Groton (June 20) and Linda Blair at Milford ((June 26).

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

NOTE: The Commission's meeting of May 3 will be held at the Connecticut Transit bus facility in Hartford. The facility is at 100 Leibert Road, just off Interstate 84 at Exit 33, Jennings Road.