

## **AGENDA**

### CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

**June 7, 2007 - 1:30 PM**

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room  
New Haven

1. Approval of the May 3, 2007 meeting minutes
2. Featured 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 May 3, 2007

Connecticut Transit Hartford Division Facility  
Conference Room

**Attendance:** Tom Cheeseman, Linda Blair, Russ St. John, Robert Zaretske, Rich Sunderhauf, Kevin Maloney, Rick Schreiner. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese. **ConnDOT staff:** Jon Foster, Riccardo Almeida, Dennis King. **Guests:** Michael Riley, David Lee, James Branford, James Brislin.

David Lee welcomed the Commission members and guests to the Connecticut Transit Hartford Division facility. He also mentioned that the new fuel cell hybrid bus operated by Connecticut Transit is one of only four such buses in the country and the only one outside of California.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting. The minutes of the meeting of April 5 were approved, with Jon Foster of ConnDOT offering one correction that the 10 VRE cab cars will remain cab cars after their rehabilitation, rather than being converted to coaches as stated in the minutes.

**Featured Speaker**

Chairman Cheeseman introduced Michael Riley, President of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association. Mr. Riley provided an extensive update on various transportation-related proposals currently before the General Assembly.

One bill related to trucking would allow municipal chief elected officials to designate the routes that trucks could use in their towns. Riley questioned why any elected official would want this authority as its use would invariably alienate some constituents. Other bills would exempt biodiesel fuel from the fuel use tax, and exempt biodiesel used by trucks from the gross receipts tax, as well as exempting biodiesel vehicles from property taxes.

A proposal to remove Connecticut State Police troopers from duty at weigh stations was killed. Also killed was a bill to institute a \$250 fine for cell phone use while driving a vehicle, with the revenues so raised to go to the towns. Sen. Prague has proposed a bill to erect tolls on interstate highways at all Connecticut borders despite the fact, according to Riley, that no state has yet successfully put new tolls on already established highways. Three other bills mentioned by Riley would decrease the maximum speed limit in Connecticut, would institute a \$90 fine for idling for more than three minutes, and would replace the gross receipts tax on diesel fuel with a flat fuel tax. As Riley noted, the latter move follows a recommendation in the 2006 CPTC Annual Report.

Riley next outlined the major points and projects of the Transportation Infrastructure Improvements bill proposed by House Speaker James Amann. The main projects and programs in summary form are:

- Developing new commuter rail stations for the New Haven Line at both West Haven AND Orange, rather than just one of them.
- Expanding the Commercial Vehicle Information System Network by adding pre-clearance of safe trucks at inspection/ weigh stations.
- Expanding Shore Line East service with increased parking, bridge repairs, and locomotive and rail car purchases, up to \$24,000,000 total.
- Improvements to bus service including cleaner buses, expanded parking for express buses, improved headways, new and expanded facilities, and bus rapid transit.
- \$75 million for Fix-It-First road repairs.
- \$75 million for Fix-It-First bridge repairs.
- \$20 million to support transit-oriented development along the New Haven Line, Shore Line East, the proposed Springfield Line commuter rail service and the New Britain Busway.
- \$11,200,000 to repair the Maybrook Rail Line.
- \$10,000,000 for a Connecticut Bikeway Grant program to be administered by DEP for planning, land acquisition, design and construction.
- \$6,100,000 for elderly and handicapped demand response transportation.
- \$25,000,000 for a rail station improvement program.
- \$30,000,000 for construction of a Waterbury Intermodal Transportation Center.
- \$35,000,000 for constructing a parking garage at the Stamford Transportation Center.
- \$700,000 for a Route 2 and 2A alternatives study.
- \$275,000,000 for the Interstate Highway Program, Urban Systems Projects, contamination remediation at maintenance sites, reconstruction and improvements to the warehouse and State Pier, airport improvements, and other purposes.

Riley mentioned that CMTA has supported all passenger rail improvements for the New Haven Line. It has not been as supportive of funding for Shore Line East or the proposed Springfield Line commuter rail service which it sees as ‘sucking up a lot of dollars’ to move far fewer people.

Riley also explained that Governor Rell wanted to see the Connecticut State Police reassigned out of the weigh stations and onto the highways, leaving the DMV inspectors to operate the weigh stations. But the State Police union got the bill to accomplish this killed. He cited the weigh station in Union on Interstate 84 as being a state-of-the-art facility which incorporates the pre-clearance feature. However, the pre-clearance system there has been repeatedly broken.

Twelve hundred additional truck parking spaces are needed in Connecticut along our interstate highways. Virtually every parking space is filled every night. ConnDOT is looking to see if existing parking areas at rest areas can be realigned to coax out a few more parking places. Additionally, ConnDOT’s on-going Rest Area and Service Plaza Study will look at possibilities to add new rest areas, but Riley admitted that this will be difficult. He thought public/ private partnerships, possibly siting facilities on ConnDOT land, might hold some promise for relief. At present, truckers often have no place to go when they run out of hours or are tired. Also, even though idling exemptions are allowed for cargoes that need to be heated or cooled, or for

drivers in cold weather, local police sometimes issue tickets anyway just to get rid of trucks parked off State highways.

### **Comments from the Public**

James Brislin of Enfield spoke concerning the Hartford area bus service. He contrasted bus service in Hartford with that of Washington, DC and St. Louis, where he has previously lived. He is a transit user who formerly worked at the Phoenix in Hartford and now works for Aetna in Middletown. He needs to use three buses to get from Enfield to Middletown. He conjectured that he could get to work more quickly by hitchhiking. Brislin believes that our bus routes reflect the old economy, not the new knowledge economy. He recommended that there be both express bus service up and down the Interstate 91 corridor stopping at major exits and local corridor service to link all the exits. He advocated that maps of the bus system routes be displayed at as many public locations as possible and that they show not only the streets the buses operate on but surrounding streets as well for the benefit of those not familiar with the local roads. He lamented that the last bus from Hartford to Enfield is at 6:00 PM. This does not accommodate night life in Hartford. Evening bus service is needed from Hartford to the suburbs if Hartford's rebirth is to happen.

### **Reports from Operating Entities**

Richard Sunderhauf reported that route changes in Hartford went into effect last week on Connecticut Transit. Also, the Amalgamated Transit Union and Connecticut Transit reached a tentative contract agreement, with a ratification meeting scheduled for this Sunday.

Rick Schreiner mentioned that HART's operations were severely impacted during last month's nor'easter rainstorm. Route 7 in Ridgefield was under water, buses could not reach New Milford, and virtually every route had to be diverted. HART vehicles were used to evacuate a flooded trailer park.

Jon Foster of ConnDOT reported that the New Haven Line achieved 97.2% on-time performance in March, and is running on-time 97.1% year-to-date. Shore Line East had on-time performance of 95.1% in March and 96.5% YTD. Ridership is up on both services. For Metro-North, ridership was up 3.8% in March (3.5% YTD) and for Shore Line East, ridership was up 4.1% in March and 7.5% YTD. Twenty-three VRE coaches and one cab car have completed rehabilitation. These cars are being well received by the public.

\$7.5 million previously appropriated for new buses and another \$3.0 million proposed for buses will allow for substantial increases in service statewide. Riccardo Almeida of ConnDOT distributed a list of the new bus services that will be operating with the new equipment. Some of these services will go into effect on July 1, 2007, while those that require new equipment will go into effect when the equipment arrives. Among this new equipment are six 60' articulated buses which will be used in Stamford. In addition, a new electronic system to process reimbursements is being instituted. This will expedite reimbursement payments to the transit districts.

Russ St. John reported that two outages of service on the Providence and Worcester system were caused by the big rainstorm but repairs to both were made the same day.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Cheeseman will be attending the Community Transportation Association of America convention in Reno, Nevada May 20-24.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **New Business**

Fred Riese reminded members of the upcoming public hearings in Stamford (May 15) and Enfield (May 29).

Linda Blair said she and Elaine Kolb were involved in an operator training session for lifts today with Pat Smith and others at Connecticut Transit and that the session went well.

Linda also recently took a ride on a train of reconditioned VRE cars. The securement locations were in the middle of the train while the rest rooms were in the first car of the train and were therefore not accessible to her. Also, the securement location is supposed to position the wheelchair parallel to the line of travel of the train, either forward or backward. Currently, this is not the case on the VRE cars.

Linda also reported that a Metro-North conductor she talked to had complaints about the new M-7 cars being used on the Long Island Railroad. The door handles are too low, the basic hardware is of poor quality, and the cars in general have quality problems. This could have an impact on the M-8s currently being built for Connecticut. We should check to make sure these problems are not replicated on the M-8s.

Jon Foster said the VRE cars don't go to Grand Central Terminal as Linda indicated her trip on that train did. He suggested that the cars she rode might be Bombardiers. But when assured it was a VRE equipped train, not a Bombardier one, he said he would check on these matters.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.