

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

July 10, 2008 - 1:30 PM

Legislative Office Building
Hearing Room 1A
Hartford

1. Approval of the June 5, 2008 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: TBA
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 June 5, 2008

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Thomas A. Cheeseman Russ St. John, Richard Schreiner, Terry Hall, Richard Sunderhauf, Richard Carpenter, Yvonne Loteczka, Edward McAnaney, William Kelaher **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat (OPM), Connie Mendolia (DEP), **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Al Sylvestre (CTDOL)

Chairman Tom Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:30 pm. The minutes of the meeting of July 09, 2008 were approved as written with the corrections concerning the date of the Ct Transit Roadeo.

Featured Speaker

Cliff Cole, government Affairs officer for AMTRAK was to have been our guest speaker. He was not able to attend due to an incident in Albany, N.Y. that caused him to cancel. Chairman Cheese asked William Kelaher to speak on his behalf concerning the pending Acela Express and Regional temporary service cancellations affecting Boston – New Haven – New York service beginning June 14 through June 17.

William advised that for four days, beginning June 14, through June 17, Amtrak will replace the movable span of the 90-year old Thames River Bridge, located between Groton and New London, Conn. To accommodate this project, service cancellations will be made affecting travel between Boston, New Haven and New York. He handed out copies of a proposed schedule.

He further advised that this is the final stage of a multi-year project designed to improve the reliability of the bridge, reduce the chance of operational failures and minimize train delays. During this four day track outage, ‘Amtrak will also perform a maintenance “blitz” between Boston and New Haven that will provide passengers with a smoother ride and significantly improve the reliability of the railroad.

In addition, there will be a single round trip from Boston to Springfield to New Haven to New York on each of the days in question. Service between New Haven and Springfield will not be affected. Amtrak has notified several bus and commuter service companies about the upcoming rail outage.

Another major concern expressed by Mr. Kelaher was the problem with parking in Old Saybrook. Due to the fact that there is no service north of Old Saybrook, drivers from Providence south, would have to drive to Old Saybrook and attempt to board the trains there. With the current parking conditions as they are in Old Saybrook, parking is going to be a major challenge.

There will be no rail service in New London or Providence during the time frame in question. It was further noted, however, that Shore Line East Service would not be affected.

In a response to a question from Russ St. John, Mr. Kelaher advised that he did not have an answer as to why buses or some other alternative form of transportation was not used in lieu of train service.

Terry Hall advised that there are examples of Amtrak not offering alternative forms of transportation in the past. Mr. Hall noted that there were problems with service in both California and Oregon. He believes that because of the call from Congress for a more fiscally efficient Amtrak, any services outside of the “norm” are not considered by Amtrak.

Chairman Cheeseman questioned as to what happens if there is a problem and they are unable to get the project completed by Monday evening? Mr. Cheeseman found the lack of contingency plan, reprehensible and totally unacceptable and advised that he will be making calls and sending emails to the appropriate entities.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf operators were bidding the new runs that will start sometime in the beginning of July. He also advised that the Hartford roдео team would be ready for the event on Sunday June 8, 2008.

Rick Schreiner spoke of a conference call that he participated in on where the cost of the CTC project in Danbury, was lowered from 130 million to 75 million with the omission of the portion of the project that would have added footings for catenary on the Danbury line. According to Rick this number was acceptable to CDOT. He also noted that CDOT has anticipated advertising the project in 2010, awarding the project in 2012 and completing the project in 2013. In the interim, Hart and Norwalk transit will be meeting over the next several weeks to address the market from Ridgefield to Wilton to Norwalk in terms of increasing the use of public transportation.

He further noted that the Phase 2 study starting to roll. There is a meeting on June 17, 2008 to address the study and that he had finished a planning project that he had been working on, entitled “the History of Bus Service in Greater Danbury”. This project was start last July.

Russ St. John reported that the repairs to the Thames River Bridge would have little effect on light freight because there are alternatives routes that allow companies to use rail lines that run through Willimantic. Heavy Freight cars or Commuter trains could

use these lines because they are only 80 lb per yard rail on the line. The industry standard is 107 thru 130 lb per yard rail lines.

Susan Simmat advised that there was a special session to be held on June 11, 2008. In response to the governor's concern to the cost override of the rail maintenance project an RFP will be issued for a consultant to study the original design and budget for the rail maintenance facility. In response to a question from the Chairman, Sue advised that, the intent is not to delay the project. She will continue to update the Commission members.

William Kelaher was pleased to announce that pending ratification on June 27, 2008 all rail operations in Connecticut would be in agreement with labor rail unions in the state. He also announced future plans to have rail service to both the new Yankee Stadium and the Meadowland from New Haven. This endeavor will evolve 3 different companies. Bill noted that the train would be direct to these locations only. After receiving feedback from a meeting held last week, he also noted that the West Haven Train Station was on schedule and appears to be moving forward

Terry Hall further advised that New Jersey Transit equipment would be used on the planned route to Yankee Stadium and the Meadowlands because of the multi purpose locomotives that are currently operated by N.J.T. In addition, Terry advised that he had received information that spoke to the use of Multi-Level cars for the route. He has also heard that the public mock-up viewing of the M-8 car seats in both New Haven and Stamford was well received by the public. Terry spoke in Mystic at a ceremony recognizing the Mystic Train Station.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman noted that due to operational concerns in Middletown and ongoing negotiations with local 671, he had to cancel his trip to New Orleans however, he has someone attending the CTAA conference and will brief the commission members at the next meeting. The Chairman and others will be honored by CACT along with others with the Founders Award for 21 years of service in Middletown. Chairman Cheeseman advised that he was humbled by the award and took heart in being able to render service to others.

The Chairman reminded members of the commission of his previous statements concerning the impact of intrastate bus companies that had received numerous violations continued to travel from Boston to New York, Because of this, bus companies such as Peter Pan and Greyhound had cut back on their service. In lieu of the cutbacks, Coach USA and Dattco decided to operate non-stop service beginning on May 22, 2008 from Boston to New York.

The Chairman advised that he was attempting to negotiate with the two companies in support of bus service the smaller towns previously served by Greyhound and Peter Pan. In the interim, Peter Pan and Greyhound have established a new operation called

“**BOLT**” that will provide non-stop service between Boston and New York. Reservations can only be booked on-line and costs are usage sensitive. Prices can range from \$1 to \$40 depending on time of booking and passenger capacity.

The Chairman noted that the MDT is still in negotiations with Local 671. He advised that progress appears to be slow. The Chairman also advised that the MDT RFP, to return to the private sector, will be available Monday June 16, 2008 and is expected to be awarded August 15, 2008.

Fuel contracts expire in October. The new contract is expected to put a large bite into the MDT budget of an additional \$250,000 covering the expected increase in the cost of fuel. Met has requested an additional 6% increase which he hopes will be addressed during the special session.

The Chairman expressed concern that whatever numbers, in terms of cost, we deal with today will be obsolete tomorrow. The Chairman

Old Business

Russ St. John advised that there will be free parking available for members, attending the Public Hearing, who which to park in the Pro Park lot on Spruce Street. Their tickets will be validated at the meeting. Chairman Cheeseman advised that if there are any ADA needs for the Public Hearing on June 17, 2008, please let him know.

New Business

Dick Carpenter discussed the rail freight project known as “The Patriot Corridor”. He believes that it is extremely important that the State of Connecticut consider becoming an intervener/participant involving an application that is being submitted to the Surface Transportation Board (STB), a required regulatory step, by Norfolk Southern and Pan Am that would create a joint entity known as Pam Am Southern and an Intermodal Terminal at either the New Haven rail yard or the Waterbury freight yard. This participation by the State of Connecticut would give Connecticut a right to be involved in any decision the STB makes regarding the Patriot Corridor. After much discussion, Mr. Carpenter made a recommendation, seconded by Mr. Ed McAnaney, requesting that the commission send a letter to CDOT recommending Connecticut’s role as an intervener. The motion was carried.

Connie Mendolia (DEP) advised that the Environmental Impact study for the New Haven rail yard is being reviewed by DEP and comments are due on July 9, 2008. CRCOG is having a meeting on bus circulation in downtown Hartford and the role of Union Station on June 18, 2008 at the Hartford Public Library.

Chairman Cheeseman officially welcomed Edward McAnaney and adjourned the meeting at 3:01 PM.