Task 1.1: Stakeholder Interviews

Final Report

U R B I T R A N <mark>R</mark> E P O R T



Prepared to

Connecticut Department of Transportation Submitted by

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SECTION 1: Introduction

During the first phase of the Connecticut Department of Transportation Rail Governance Study, the consulting team conducted stakeholder interviews to discuss broad policy and planning issues regarding rail station operations and governance. As stated in the work plan, the interviews were conducted to "determine their [the stakeholders'] satisfaction with the current arrangement and to collect any recommendations for changes in that arrangement." The interviews were conducted with local officials or their designated representatives who are responsible for the operation of the stations and parking at the local level; with the directors of the six regional planning agencies and/or staff in which the New Haven line stations are located; and the local bus operators which serve the New Haven line stations. The interviews were conducted from Fall 2001 through Spring 2002.

A stakeholder discussion guide was prepared for each of the representative groups; the guides are attached as an appendix to this report. Briefly, however, they covered the following topics:

- Station Leases
- A Vision of the Rail Stations
- Customer Comments
- Parking Rates, Capacity and Needs
- Intermodal Coordination

The interviews were conducted as open-ended discussions, using the guides as a starting point, but then covering a broad range of topics and issues specific to the person(s) being interviewed. Each began with an introduction to the project and project activities, as described in the discussion guide. The interviews took from 15 minutes to 90 minutes, depending upon local concerns and issues, the complexity of the local station/parking situation, and the level of rail activity in the particular community under discussion.

In all, twenty (20) interviews were conducted with local communities, seven (7) with transit operators, and six (6) with regional planning agencies (Tables 1 and 2). Three local communities – Stamford, Greenwich, and Naugatuck – did not respond to repeated calls or letters of invitation for an interview.

Table 1: Local Stakeholder Representatives

New Haven Line

Darien

Robert F. Harrel, Jr., First Selectman

Rowayton

John Aldrich, 6th Taxing District

Norwalk

Alex Knopp, Mayor

Martin Overton, Director, Dept. of Public Works Kathryn R. Hebert, Ph.D., Administrative

Services Manager, Department of Public Works

Westport

Dianne G. Farrell, First Selectman

Carl W. Leaman, Selectman

Al Fiore, Police Department

Fairfield

Joseph E. Devonshuk, Jr., Director, Planning and Zoning Commission

Vincent J. Como, Chief of Staff

Bridgeport

Stephen Tyliszczak, Special Projects

Coordinator

Brian Williams, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

James Wang, Executive Director GBRPA

Stratford

Michael Feeney, Town Manager

Milford

Frederick Lisman, Mayor

Henry Jadach, Transit District Administrator

New Haven

Brian McGrath, Director, Department of Traffic and Parking

Karen Gilvarg, Director, City Planning Dept. Bill Kilpatrick, Parking Authority

New Canaan Branch

New Canaan

Richard P. Bond, First Selectman Gary G. Conrad, Chief Financial Officer

Danbury Branch

Danbury

Joe DeSilva, Administrative Assistant Kevin Barry, Special Assistant

Bethel

Judy Novachek, First Selectwoman

Redding

Natalie Ketcham, First Selectman

 $Thomas\ L.\ Newsome,\ Recycling/Transfer$

Station Coordinator

Ridgefield

Rudy P. Marconi, First Selectman

Charles Fisher, Engineering

Wilton

Paul F. Hannah, Jr., First Selectman Tom Thurkettle, Dept. of Public Works

Waterbury Branch

Waterbury

Bernard F. Lynch, President, Greater Waterbury Chamber of Commerce (GWCC)

Lisa Kolkdziej, CED, Director of Government and Economic Affairs, GWCC

Beacon Falls

Richard F. Mihalcik, First Selectman

Seymour

Scott A. Barton, First Selectman

Ansonia

Richard Eigen, AICP, Valley Regional Planning Agency

Derby

Rick Dunne, Executive Director, Office of Development and Administration

Richard Eigen, AICP, Valley Regional Planning Agency

Table 2: Transit, Regional, and State Representatives

Transit Providers

Connecticut Transit

David Lee, General Manager Vicki Shotland, Director of Operations Bob Calling, Stamford

Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority

Jeffrey O'Keefe, General Manager Doug Holcomb, Director of Planning

North East Transportation

Harry Fillippone Joe Spina

Norwalk Transit District

Louis Shulman, Administrator

Milford Transit District

Henry Jadach, Executive Director

Valley Transit District

Joy Thompson, General Manager

Housatonic Area Regional Transit

Eric Bergstraesser, Executive Director Richard Schriner Robert Yazstremski

Regional Planning

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials

Jonathan Chew, Executive Director

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

James Wang, Executive Director

South Central Regional Planning Agency

Judy Gott, Executive Director

Herb Burstein

Central Naugatuck Regional Planning Agency

Peter Dorpalan, Executive Director

Laura Stegna

South West Regional Planning Agency

Bob Wilson, Executive Director

Sue Prosi, Assistant Director

Valley Regional Planning Agency

Richard Eigen, AICP, Valley Regional Planning Agency

SECTION 2: Summary of Findings

This section discusses the dominant themes which threaded through the interviews with the towns, the regions, and the local transit operators; how, in general, each group views the governance issues; and how the viewpoints are either similar or in conflict among the groups.

Town Interviews

There were twelve interviews conducted with local officials, of which 9 were with towns/cities on the main line, 5 were with towns on the Danbury Branch (a sixth city, Norwalk, has a station on the branch but is included in the mainline discussion), 5 on the Waterbury Branch, and New Canaan on the New Canaan Branch (Stamford, the other town with stations on that branch, did not participate).

Participants were told that the interviews were being held to examine each community's view towards the current rail station governance policy and specifically their relationship/arrangement with CDOT. The content of the interview focused on how well the current arrangement between the community and CDOT is working; whether the local community felt that changes were needed with regard to the arrangement, division of responsibilities, etc.; and whether they had any suggestions for improvements.

Governance: Home Rule or CDOT Control?

The current station governance arrangement is not at all uniform. Station leases between CDOT and the local communities still dominate for most of the smaller communities along the mainline, Danbury and New Canaan branches, with the leases covering the station buildings, platforms, and the parking areas owned by CDOT. Other parking lots at these stations are either townowned, or leased from private organizations, with CDOT sometimes participating in the leasing arrangements. CDOT operates, through a private contractor, the stations in Stamford and Bridgeport.

Some communities have more than one arrangement. In Norwalk, the city owns and operates the South Norwalk Station and leases the East Norwalk Station, while the Sixth Taxing District leases the Rowayton Station, and Merritt 7 station is privately owned by the developer of that complex while the parking there is owned by CDOT. Greenwich Station is privately owned with no state-owned parking, while the other three stations and some of their parking are leased from the state. In Wilton, the state leases to the town the parking in Wilton and Cannondale, while the stations are the responsibility of the State and/or its private leaseholders in the buildings.

The situation along the Waterbury Branch is very different from those along the main line, Danbury and New Canaan Branches. First, service along the branch is very limited, ridership is very low, and the visibility and use of rail service, in general, when compared to the other lines, is minimal. At this time and under these conditions, the railroad has a very low visibility and therefore the stations have a low priority within these communities. With the exception of Derby, the communities have minimal responsibility for the stations and parking. Waterbury, Beacon

Falls, and Ansonia do not have leases and CDOT operates and maintains the station, platform, and parking. In Naugatuck, CDOT has a license from the town to operate and maintain up to 50 parking spaces, owned by the town, for rail parking and maintains the station and platform. In Seymour, there is a lease between CDOT and the town to administer rail parking and permits at the station, but CDOT operates and maintains the platform and station. Only Derby has a lease with the State to operate both parking and the station, which is generally similar to the leases held by communities on the other lines. The community leaders along the Waterbury branch were more concerned with service levels and the possibility that CDOT would abandon the line entirely, even as the population and employment in the Naugatuck Valley continues to grow. Generally, the conversations with the stakeholders in these communities focused less on today's issues and more on the future of the line, plans for intermodal facilities in Derby and Waterbury, and upgraded facilities in the smaller communities to serve the influx of new residents who continue to work in the Southwest region.

As the above discussion demonstrates, the rail governance arrangement lacks uniformity, when comparing lines and even within a particular category, e.g. there are variations among the leases with regard to duration, responsibilities, financial arrangements, etc. As a result, the viewpoint on home rule versus CDOT control also is not uniform, although there appear to be discernable patterns among the respondents.

Communities tend to prefer the model under which they are currently operating. Those who currently hold leases with CDOT generally wanted to continue with that arrangement, feeling that local governance is more responsive to their residents and that they can respond more quickly to problems that arise. Implicit in the argument for local rule is the idea that the local communities would be able to control the parking supply and fees and, therefore, keep the stations in scale with the surrounding community. Those favoring home rule fear that CDOT control would allow CDOT to control parking supply and fees and would open up the potential for CDOT to use condemnation powers to build more parking. The financial implications of a CDOT takeover were only touched on briefly by a few of the stakeholders, but this sensitive area clearly would be a concern for some towns.

At the same time, several local respondents acknowledged the need for a regional and intermodal perspective on transportation and acknowledged that home rule does not necessarily lend itself to such a perspective. A select few among the lease-holding communities would consider turning over their leases to CDOT, but even then only if they were able to retain local input into all decision-making regarding the stations, parking, etc.

CDOT operates, through a contractor, the stations in Bridgeport and Stamford; only Bridgeport participated in the discussions. Bridgeport is extremely pleased with the CDOT takeover and they acknowledged, as did the GBRPA and GBTA subsequently, that the station is better managed, operated, and maintained now than when the City was in control. While we cannot speak to the position of the City of Stamford, others who participated in the stakeholder interviews — SWRPA, Connecticut Transit — had similar feelings to those in Bridgeport, that the station is being operated and maintained to a higher level under CDOT control.

On the Waterbury branch, those representing the interests of Derby were favorably inclined to the continuation of the lease arrangement and development of an intermodal facility under local control, while the other communities generally maintained the position that CDOT should operate and maintain the stations and improve the facilities in concert with improved rail service on the line.

Those who favor home rule made the following points:

- Local control is better for providing an immediate response to all types of concerns passenger complaints, snow removal, security issues.
- Local officials will be more sensitive to station issues and customer needs. They also want to be able to react quickly to customer needs and are concerned that CDOT or its representatives would not be as responsive. CDOT may not be as concerned about adjacent neighborhood issues and may not have as much sensitivity to community issues.
- Several towns want to be in control of their parking fees. Four towns stated that they keep their parking rates as low as possible to meet their obligations so that they can promote rail use. At least one town stated it has no fees to promote parking use.
- The issue of resident versus non-resident parking was clearly a background issue in a number of locations, although only one community explicitly stated that it would not give up control if it could not control who uses the lots. Several communities said they had no problem with non-residents using their parking lots, although they were concerned about expansion and wanted some preference given to town residents if CDOT expanded the lots. Some towns indicated that they would be happy to partner with CDOT on new lots or structured parking, but even among them there was a need to keep some control over the wait lists, which may not be possible.
- Several of the stakeholders feared that CDOT control would lead to more parking, even if it meant that CDOT would have to use condemnation to obtain the land. This was deemed to be an unacceptable consequence. In fact, CDOT could already exercise this power to obtain land for parking, but has chosen not to do so.
- Finally, several communities felt they are doing an excellent job managing their stations and parking and that they have a good working relationship with CDOT, obviating the need for any changes to the current lease arrangement. There was a clear pride of ownership in several communities which extended to their residents' feelings as well.

Those who favor CDOT control made the following points:

• CDOT is doing a better job in Bridgeport and Stamford than the local communities were doing in the past, which is a demonstration of their commitment and ability to manage a station program.

- Running the stations for some towns was considered a headache and these communities would seriously consider having CDOT take control.
- A few communities felt that they would benefit financially from a CDOT takeover, as they are not covering their operating and maintenance costs with parking revenues, forcing them to fund their parking operations from general revenues.
- Some felt that unifying the program under CDOT would be the best way to address regional concerns and promote non-SOV use. They felt that there needed to be a more uniform pricing structure, uniform standards for the stations and parking lots, and a single identity program.

Whether they believe in local control or CDOT governance, or some combination thereof, all of the local stakeholders are committed to seeing the railroad grow and all of the participants want it to be well-managed and adequately funded. Everyone perceives the potential that the rail system has for attracting new riders and for supporting congestion mitigation on the state's roadways, and realizes that achieving these ends is in the best interest of each community and of the entire state. At the same time however, as local communities, each is committed to doing what is perceived as best for their own residents within this context, and therein lies the fundamental issue at stake in this process – how to develop a governance policy which balances local, state, and regional issues which can be supported by all parties.

Other Local Issues: CDOT Cooperation and Local Leases

While the issue of overall control of the station and parking program was paramount in these discussions, the stakeholders were also asked to comment upon their relationship with CDOT, and, where applicable, their satisfaction with their leases.

With only two exceptions, the towns were uniformly complimentary regarding the cooperation they received from CDOT personnel involved in the station management program. Seven of the nine stakeholders interviewed on the main line, three of the five on the Danbury Branch, and New Canaan all were positive about CDOT. Only one of the 5 mentioned CDOT's role in discussions with stakeholders on the Waterbury branch, for the most part because those with whom we spoke had almost no dealings with CDOT. Derby stated that it had a very good working relationship with CDOT. In defining what was meant by a good relationship, the stakeholders indicated that they were able to work with CDOT staff to resolve problems, and were able to get CDOT to help undertake and pay for extraordinary repairs. Several towns had some unresolved problems regarding brush growing along the tracks, debris on the tracks, and other maintenance items, but only two communities felt strongly that CDOT was not cooperative, made changes without consulting them, or took too long to undertake routine maintenance.

In Bridgeport, CDOT was praised for its attention to the station and for how much better the station is operated and maintained today versus when it was under local control. It was also pointed out that CDOT is spending much more on the station than the city ever did. CDOT's management firm was recognized for their responsiveness to local concerns and for the quality of

the day to day operation. Although the City of Stamford did not participate in these interviews, interviews with Connecticut Transit and SWRPA provided many of the same thoughts regarding the improvements since CDOT took over control of Stamford Station.

The towns on the Waterbury branch, with the exception of Derby, felt that CDOT ignores their stations and has little interest in the line.

CDOT's role in each local station program is circumscribed either by the contents of its leases, lack thereof, or its operating agreements to run the stations and parking as in Bridgeport and Stamford. The towns varied widely in their understanding of the arrangements for operating the stations and parking in their communities. Some were fully familiar with the entire lease and its contents, the financial requirements contained therein, the need to maintain a reinvestment fund, the duration, and generally all terms and conditions. A few towns knew they had a lease but were not fully aware of the contents, in some cases they were even unsure of what the lease covered (e.g., buildings or platforms, or parking), and in a couple of cases the town didn't know they had a lease. The range of understanding of the legal arrangements for the stations was surprising, but also appears to be reflective of each town's interests and abilities to manage the program. Thus, those who were most knowledgeable also appear to be those who are managing their stations and parking best, although this will be studied in more detail in later tasks. Conversely, a lack of knowledge about the leases appears to correlate with less attention to the stations, again based upon a comparison of these interviews to a visual inspection of the stations by the interviewer.

The general point of view on the leases, from the town perspective, is that they are okay, although they might need minor reworking to clarify either the maintenance responsibilities between CDOT, the local community, and MNCR; or how financial accounts and records are kept and reported. The lack of uniform leases, as well as the wide range of understanding of the leases on the part of the local communities, has created a system in which it is hard for the communities to define the division of responsibilities for maintenance and operations of stations, platforms and/or parking lots. There is a feeling that CDOT has no overriding policies and procedures for undertaking and paying for repairs or upgrades, and instead treats these activities on an ad hoc basis as they are brought to their attention by the towns. As an example, cited by one local official, why would CDOT paid for a floor in one building but not in another? There was a concern that some towns are maintaining a reinvestment fund and using it appropriately under the terms of the lease, while others constantly rely upon CDOT for funding of activities that should be the responsibility of the town. Questions were raised concerning the accounting of revenues and costs and how towns report their financial positions to CDOT, and how this in turn relates to the aforementioned decisions.

Even as CDOT staff was praised for their working relationship with the towns and for their cooperation concerning repair needs and costs, it was apparent that there was a concern that this was based upon individual relationships and not upon a uniform policy and procedure. Furthermore, due to the lack of clarity and/or uniformity and the need for more direction with regard to financial reporting, CDOT may be paying for many things that the towns should pay for under the lease. This point of view was largely held by those who feel they do understand and follow the lease, and have appropriate financial systems in place, and reflects, in part, their frustration that others do not do the same and take advantage of CDOT's largesse.

Regional Agency Interviews

Six regional planning agencies or Councils of Government participated in the stakeholder interview process. All six spoke about service planning issues and the long range need for better rail service. Those representing communities on the branches were more concerned with service planning issues and specifically with more trains and faster service, and less focused on station governance issues. Those representing communities along the main line were more focused upon governance issues and the role that governance can play in improving the quality of the stations and parking, the quantity and location of parking, travel demand management, etc.

Branchline Discussions

As stated above, HVCEO and CNRPA staff spoke about the need for more rail service, noting the population growth in both regions and travel patterns which continue to congest Route 8 and Route 7, the two adjacent north-south highways lining them to work locations from Bridgeport to Greenwich.

The Central Naugatuck RPA was very concerned about CDOT's commitment to the Waterbury branch, as reflected in the low number of trains and generally poor condition of its stations. They feel more attention needs to be paid to the line to upgrade its current condition, market the present service, and eventually to expand the service. The rail line is an important regional asset to the Valley and its long term economic development, as demonstrated by the Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation's on-going study for an intermodal center in Waterbury. Station and parking governance are only issues in so far as they want CDOT to be active in upgrading the entire line.

Additional service and faster train times on the Danbury branch, in both directions, is the key to the future use of the rail line and to congestion mitigation efforts along Route 7, and is the primary focus of HVCEO. HVCEO sees the need for more parking along the line, although only Branchville at present is constrained. There are four stations in the HVCEO Region. Three of the four are new facilities, which are managed by the local community through leases with CDOT. There are no apparent governance issues at these stations. The fourth station, Branchville, is in Ridgefield and is of concern to the region — its parking lot is in poor condition, generally over capacity, and expansion of the facility is constrained by its location alongside Route 7. Ridgefield is doing a village plan for Branchville, which will include recommendations for the station. The town is interested in a parking deck, which likely would require CDOT financing; the town recognizes that this in turn would end the current free parking, and therefore is not sure of what action it wished to take. This was cited as an example of the type of issue that needs to be addressed in the consideration of governance alternatives.

The Valley Regional Planning Agency (VRPA) is in a different position than the other two, as they are the sub-lessors to the City of Derby, who in turn is the lessor to CDOT, for the Derby Station and parking. Thus, they have a direct role in the day to day operation of Derby Station, and also represent, as the RPA, the interests of Ansonia, Seymour, and Beacon Falls regarding rail service in the lower valley. As with the CNRPA, their focus was not on governance issues, other than to say they were happy with the arrangement in Derby and that they would like to see

better facilities and more CDOT attention paid to the other stations. Rather, the focus was on more service; they feel that the biggest single issue is the future of the line and the constant fear that it will be terminated in the near future. Because parking is free in Derby, they do not have a reinvestment fund, and all day to day maintenance is either paid by the City or done via CDOT grants. On a broader context, they were one of the stakeholders who felt that a lot of the arrangements made with CDOT for repairs at other stations are done on a personality basis, and not via a contractual relationship within a lease.

The three agencies representing the Branch lines were far more concerned with the train schedules, the number of daily trains, and parking than with the long term governance of the stations along the lines. Those on the Waterbury Branch did perceive a lack of attention from CDOT, but observed that developing a policy on governance is irrelevant without a service. HVCEO similarly is interested in more service and more parking; they, however, were comfortable with the current local governance arrangements, although they were concerned with long term issues at Branchville.

Mainline Discussions

As opposed to the hundreds of riders who use the branch services each day, ridership along the mainline numbers in the tens of thousands on a daily basis. Communities along the mainline, and the Regional Agencies who represent them, have a very different agenda, focused on developing the infrastructure to better serve present riders, to accommodate additional riders, and to provide congestion mitigation for the adjacent highway network. As perceived by the three regional agencies representing communities along the mainline, station and parking governance is an integral part of any long term strategy for enhancing rail service. The following findings are based on the discussions with South Central RPA, Greater Bridgeport RPA, and Southwestern RPA.

- All three stated that the rail system, in its entirety, has to have a broader focus, e.g. has to be less constrained by the individual communities that it serves, and who control many of the stations and parking areas along the line. CDOT has to look at its policies from a multi-regional/State perspective, and has to develop policies and programs which can work in concert with all other modes as part of the congestion mitigation strategies being developed throughout the state. Two of the three felt that the towns do not see, or do not consider the regional good when making decisions regarding their stations and parking, clearly an impediment to achieving a systematic approach.
- In order to effectively carry out the above mission, CDOT needs to address parking supply and demand, pricing, and any other factors which influence ridership patterns and mode choice. Parking supply has to be addressed regionally and not on a town to town basis, and should not be constrained by local decision-makers, recognizing that these local decision-makers must be a part of the process, and must be a partner in the program.
- All three feel that there needs to be uniformity in the system at all levels signage, materials, visual elements, etc. The system has to be perceived as a just that, a system, and the stations, while retaining local character, should incorporate unified design

standards and should all be maintained to the same high standards.

• Ultimately, all three feel that CDOT has to run the entire rail program in order to effectuate the changes described above. Whether CDOT has to own and operate every facility, either on its own or through contractors; or whether there are other mechanisms, including restructured leases with local communities, is undefined as of this time, and should be the focus of this project. According to two of the three, the leases themselves lack clarity, and need better definitions of the responsibilities of each party. Furthermore, two of the three feel that there are a whole range of financial issues that can be improved upon, starting with the leases, but also including how accounts are kept by the individual communities, and how costs and revenues are reported. All three recognize the difficulties inherent in moving to a centralized governance system, but also feel that it would be the best mechanism for achieving the desired ends.

Each of the stakeholders recognizes the difficulty inherent in these policies vis-à-vis the current views and interests of their constituent communities, yet each felt strongly the need to move in this direction. CDOT has to be perceived as a partner with the regions and local communities, and not as a bully; when given the chance in Bridgeport and Stamford, it was pointed out that CDOT has done an excellent job in operating those stations. Clearly, the regional staffs represent the bridge between the general position of the local communities, and the position of CDOT, described in the next section. This position will likely be critical in the months to come as various governance options are developed, reviewed, and commented upon, with the hope that a consensus will be reached that can be supported by all parties.

Transit Operators

The transit operators had little to say regarding the governance of the rail stations. Other than in Stamford, where the intermodal center includes the bus station; and in Westport, which has a morning and afternoon peak shuttle program, most stations have only a few routes going in and out, or by, a rail station. None of the operators had difficulties with the local communities or CDOT with regard to stop locations, placement of signs or shelters, or access and egress. The sole issue that affects their operations is enforcement, either enforcement of no parking at the bus stops, or no parking in moving lanes around the stations, tying up not only buses but all vehicles. There was no consensus on whether enforcement would be better with a local or state-run system. The operators in Bridgeport and Stamford did think CDOT was doing a much better job managing those stations. All of the operators endorse taking a broader, regional view of public transportation.

Summary

The stakeholder interviews provide an excellent perspective on the view of local communities and regional agencies with regard to station and parking governance, and provide direction concerning the issues which need to be addressed as alternative governance policies are developed.

All of the parties generally agreed that most of the communities do a reasonable job of managing their station, some better than others, some worse. Furthermore, each of the parties acknowledges that the leases can be improved to provide better direction. Finally, some of the towns and all of the Regions as well as CDOT recognize the need to be more cognizant of regional issues, and the need to use the railroad more effectively in support of congestion mitigation and economic development.

While several of the Regional agencies see local control as an impediment to creating the railroad the State needs in the future, many of the local communities feel that they can continue to maintain the current relationship, albeit with strengthened leases, to achieve the same goal. Reconciling these viewpoints to strengthen the railroad represents the challenge of this project.

SECTION 3: Interview Summaries

The remaining sections of the report describe each of the conversations conducted during this task, from which the preceding recommendations were taken.

Local Community Interviews

Twenty community stakeholder interviews were conducted with the individuals shown in Table 1.

New Haven Line

All towns except Greenwich and Stamford participated in the stakeholder sessions.

New Haven

The current lease agreement was initiated in 1982. The City wrote the lease terms. They are in their fifth amendment, with the last three written by the state. The third amendment added an additional five-year term to the lease.

Overall, the City and Parking Authority representatives expressed satisfaction with the current lease arrangements. It was expressed that there is a good working relationship with the State. There is a provision in the lease to handle any management concerns and complaints. There have been no complaints in the history of the management. Much thought went into the content of the contract. Monthly meetings are held with the State to discuss the operations and quality of the operations.

Before discussing specific issues and topics, some background concerning the Union Station garage was provided. Although the State funds the garage, the City designed it. Net revenue is remitted to the State and the State has responsibility for capital repairs. The City and the Parking Authority operate and maintain Union station along with several other parking facilities in the City. Wages are the major cost in operating parking garages. The Parking Authority is not large enough to afford losses. The operation and maintenance needs are revenue driven. Currently rates are kept at cost.

Parking expansion was discussed. The TIP includes the design and construction of a second garage for Union Station. The expansion has been talked about for 7-8 years but although funds were allocated, the actual funding was not available. An RFP had been issued for the design and construction. If the parking was privatized it could open opportunities for a private lender as opposed to using State funding. It was commented that the City could take responsibility for seeing the garage built. The existing contract with the State states that the City has the right and responsibility to pursue the construction. The City already contributes with their bond funds.

Union Station operates and funds the maintenance using the revenue the garage generates. No additional funds are required to operate and maintain the facility. The garage and building is a million-dollar operation. The building is fully leased. Rates are kept low to support the use of

rail by commuters. To handle the overflow, there is an agreement with the Coliseum parking for 500 monthly rate spaces. Since the interview, parking has ceased at the Coliseum and has been replaced by overflow parking at the Temple Street Garage.

Over the next five years, parking will be the biggest issue to address. Parking has to become user-friendlier. The Coliseum is only a band-aid to a long-term worsening problem. Although there is a waiting list for parking it may not be representative of all people who were turned away. As an example, day-trippers are not accounted for with a waiting list. The current projections indicate that as soon as a new garage is built the facility will be at 50-75% capacity. If the Gateway connection is made it will provide access to more people and bring the garage almost to capacity.

There are other projects/scenarios in discussion. If West Haven or Orange gets a rail station there will be an impact on New Haven but the demand or reduction is not known.

The discussion raised another question, why is not the City or State looking at commercial development with parking. Swiss Bank and the commercial development in Stamford were used as an example. It was expressed that mixed use should be considered for integrated development.

The City has attempted to add spaces by selling vouchers. There are 70 spaces on Union Avenue and 20 spaces on South Orange adding 90 for station parking. The cost is \$2.50 to park all day.

The rail station could use a sit down restaurant but there is no room to plan for one without reducing office space.

The area around the station is highly congested. It was commented that the area needs to be managed better, especially during peak periods. There is a mix of taxis with no staging area, buses, and vehicle traffic making it difficult to move in/out of the station area. The front would need to be redone to cut in for taxis and buses. At one time students from Yale developed a design. It utilized property across the street from the rail station but it allowed for traffic to turn around and moved it away from the front of the station building. There are only 10 spaces for taxis. It would also be desirable to have a separate drop off/pick up location. If a garage were built it could have bus accommodations and the separate drop off/pick up location. In the short term, South Church may be a solution

Milford

The outgoing mayor in Milford felt that the Milford Transit District does an excellent job operating and maintaining the rail station and parking lots for the town. The town's biggest problem is that the station is very busy and parking is becoming a problem in the downtown area as a result. While they want to keep the station in the center of town, businesses are concerned with the growth of the parking needs for it. There is a sentiment expressed in the community to look at restricted parking for residents only, as a lot of commuters originate in Orange, Woodbridge, and West Haven, where there are no stations. The town is looking at changing the time limits for street parking in the immediate area as well as in adjacent neighborhoods, and

also is increasing its enforcement of parking regulations. The spokesman for the town acknowledged the importance of Milford as a regional station for commuters from towns without one, and understands the importance of allowing non-residents to park there, citing in particular the need to relieve traffic on I-95. The town wants people to use the train from Milford and wants to solve its parking problems. They may consider a deck in the future, but feel that such a plan is tied into the location of the Orange/West Haven station, which could shift people and relieve some of the pressure. Still, he estimates a need for 150 more spaces even if the new station is built in the near future.

The station was not seen as a significant contributor to the economy of downtown businesses. It was felt that most people simply drive to and from the station without spending time or money in the adjacent area. At the same time, it was felt that the downtown location is contributing to the strength of the housing market in the general area, and cited new apartments being constructed in the downtown area which will be attractive to commuters.

CDOT using condemnation to obtain space for a new lot or deck would be a problem for the local community. CDOT building a deck on existing property or through a land purchase would not be a problem, nor would CDOT running the facility and setting rates.

Overall, the Mayor stated that the situation in Milford with CDOT is "great" and that CDOT is generally cooperative, although we needed to talk with the Milford Transit District for their viewpoint. The town is committed to the regional perspective and would most likely accept a "tasteful" deck if the process was done "with sensitivity."

Stratford

According to the Town Manager, the lease is okay but lacks clear guidelines defining responsibilities. Even though the responsibilities seem to be spelled out, e.g. platform to the state, station and lot to the town, things happen which the town is unhappy about. As an example, he cited vending machines – the state gets the revenues from them, but the town is asked to maintain them. Recycling bins were another issue — they were put in by the state without consulting the town, and the town now has to maintain them. These should be a platform item, since that is where they are located. Lighting over the platforms has been an issue, but was resolved with CDOT taking the responsibility. The town has asked for the railings to be fixed on the platforms, but was still waiting at the time of the interview. The platform stairs are crumbling and also need attention. The trestle bridge is an eyesore. He is asking CDOT to repaint and they have said no, indicating that this should be a cost borne by the reinvestment fund. The city contends that it is a CDOT bridge and therefore their responsibility. Having these items addressed properly is frustrating to him, as are his dealings with CDOT. He is unsure of the appropriate contact person(s) for each issue, and unhappy with the CDOT response. Communication is poor – when trains are shifted to the other side during maintenance, the town should know in advance to prepare riders, as well as the coffee shop owner in the station, who is greatly affected. He feels that Stratford is a low priority station for CDOT. He is very pleased with the help he gets from GBRPA, including the work on a new station design and parking facility. GBRPA is taking the lead on a plan so that they can go to CDOT.

Stratford does the station and parking maintenance, but the actual cost of the effort is sometimes a problem to them vis-à-vis their revenues. The town has done a pedestrian plan to deal with the myriad of problems in the immediate area, and will do improvements in and around the site. This will also address traffic signals and crosswalks. The cost will be paid for from the reinvestment fund and a grant to the city. The city re-stripes the lot every other year, and will resurface shortly. The lessee maintains the cleanliness of the interior space, and does routine maintenance.

Customers complain about the lack of parking, and there is a wait list of over 500 names. The lots are open to anyone and not restricted to Stratford residents. People also complain about the limited station hours.

The town would like overhead canopies on the platforms, and extended platforms which handle more than four cars. They have the long term planning going on now for a garage and improved station facility, and if it is funded by CDOT they would not mind "dumping the whole headache"

Bridgeport

A meeting was held at the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency with the GBRPA Executive Director and staff from the City.

The City wanted the State to take over the Bridgeport Intermodal Center, which was a drain on the City's budget. The City had been doing very little to maintain the station; CDOT is now spending about \$ 1,000,000 a year versus the \$ 250,000 spent by the City in the past. The State contracts operation of the station to a private management company.

The result of the CDOT takeover has been a dramatic improvement in the facility. There is currently a plan to do a design/build program for the station, but the State is expected to run that facility as well. At present, the state is leasing the railroad station, and garage from the City, but the title will be transferred when the new building is done.

The only Bridgeport involvement under the new arrangement is that the Bridgeport police backup the Metro North police. Uneco is the station management service that contracts with ProPark to run its parking systems. ProPark plows the lot, the station is cleared by Uneco, and the City does the surrounding streets.

The expectation is that the garage will fill soon, because there will be a deficit of 500 spaces on surface lots when the new bus transit facility is constructed. The garage can support two more levels and about 550 more spaces. They are currently building a second level walkway from the garage to the platform as part of the overall development plan. This is Phase I. Phase II is the bus facility, Phase II the new rail station, and Phase IV joint development. The financial arrangements are still being worked out for the plan. Overall, the City is pleased with the working relationship with CDOT on the project. The role of Metro North in the intermodal design is an open question.

The City still is in contact with CDOT regarding garage issues, although they are now a user and not the owner/lessee.

In sum, the city is much happier with the new arrangement and attention being paid by CDOT and the management firm, thinks the station is better run today than in the past, and is pleased with the cooperation taking place for the new intermodal design program.

Fairfield

The meeting was held with the Chief of Staff and Planning and Zoning Director for the town. The town is satisfied with its lease, and with the cooperation of CDOT. As an example, they cited the purchase of land for the parking lot. They understand having the lots available to anyone, but did at one time consider making the Fairprene lot a residents-only lot since the wait list for permits is so long (1600 people, 30 months). CDOT is very good at doing routine maintenance and taking care of the platforms. They paid for the re-flooring and painting of the station as well, items that could have been the responsibility of the town under the lease. CDOT put in the bus shelters at the remote lots as well, although Fairfield pays for the shuttle buses. They have had an excellent relationship with CDOT personnel over the years.

Fairfield maintains separate rail accounts in the town budget, as well as a reinvestment fund as required by the lease.

Fairfield wants to keep the governance of the station the same as it is – it is simple and effective in their minds. One complaint they had was that MNCR charges too much for flagging, which is detrimental to doing projects such as simple roofing repairs or painting.

The third station issue is currently being resolved between the Town and CDOT. Ultimately, the town expects that it will be run by CDOT, particularly if there is a parking structure. They do feel they could operate it if all the parking were surface. In either case, the town wants to be a partner in the station operation, and particularly with regard to the parking permit process. A survey distributed to permit holders and those on the wait list indicated that about 2/3 of those responding want the town to run the new station.

The town gets complaints about the lack of parking. They get far fewer regarding the condition of the station since it was cleaned and painted, and since new fixtures and flooring were installed. The town now contracts for its cleaning services. The police department handles parking enforcement.

Southport Station has very few issues. The station has a separate permit list. The Trinity Church lot is currently under-utilized, which may be a function of how permits are controlled, and the situation is being looked at. There were no other issues cited about Southport.

Westport

According to those at the meeting, which included the First and Second Selectmen, a representative from the Police Department (who runs the station), and the Public Transportation Bureau Chief, it was their impression that CDOT wants to take control of the stations and parking. This was the first issue brought up by the town representatives – that the State wants to

run the stations to provide better quality control, and that the State feels that this is the only solution to improve the supply of parking along the entire line. Furthermore, the feeling was that CDOT would be exempt from local zoning and would therefore be in a position to deck parking lots without local permission.

Westport feels that they do a good job with the two town stations and that they have an excellent relationship with CDOT regarding maintenance, operations, and policy. They feel strongly that if other towns ran their stations and parking like they do CDOT would have far fewer issues to contend with. Westport understands the desire for uniformity among the stations and supports that policy, albeit with concern regarding home rule issues. Westport, ultimately, is satisfied with the status quo, and feels the working relationship is excellent, the division of responsibilities clear, and their ability to have input into the ADA design process excellent. They feel that the rail group at CDOT does not get enough money to carry out their mission. There were some concerns about the maintenance of the rail bridges and the retaining wall, and they wanted to ensure that their conditions were properly studied.

They just signed a new lease with CDOT in the past year, and clarified the financial record keeping so that there is a better mechanism for separating funds.

Westport had a simple message — we are happy to share control but are adamantly against relinquishing control. Local care and responsibility should come first for rail station users. At the same time, they raised a concern about the fees charged for parking at other stations, questioning why the charges are so high when it doesn't take a lot of money to properly operate and maintain a station/parking area. They feel that some towns are "milking the cow", and that they are not necessarily serving regional transportation objectives but rather their own town financial interests. Westport does not believe in uniform fees unless they are low; furthermore, they feel that in most cases fees are not the barrier to rail use. The free lot a Bridgeport helped relieve the pressure on demand in surrounding towns and even they felt the impact. The town is fine with non-residents using the lots. The town position on parking is to have no more blacktop, and instead to encourage the use of the shuttles and park and ride lot.

Norwalk

The meeting in Norwalk included the Mayor and representatives of public works. The City had met with Public Transportation Bureau Chief recently regarding the governance issue; from that discussion, they were led to understand that CDOT wants to take control of the entire station program, which would include the purchase of the South Norwalk station from the City. Subsequent to the meeting, however, it appears that CDOT could not afford to purchase South Norwalk Station, so the issue is still open for discussion. There are other issues as well, including how MNCR costs are allocated to the local stations, and the potential that MNCR costs may escalate sharply with new work rules.

Norwalk has recently formed a parking authority to oversee all of its parking properties, both rail and non-rail related. Therefore, any change to the current arrangement for rail parking, both at South Norwalk and East Norwalk, would have to be studied to determine the impact on the overall parking program.

Currently, the revenues collected for parking or other ancillary activities (subleases) have to be allocated to the station for which they are collected. Thus, monies collected in South Norwalk go to operating South Norwalk, and those for East Norwalk for East Norwalk. The City would like to be able to use the funds flexibly for both stations. The City representatives were asked about using this concept in the larger sense, e.g. moving parking revenues from town to town under a centrally controlled system run by CDOT. Without further study, they were not inclined to view this action positively.

The discussion turned to the equalization of parking fees across all stations, or at least the rationalization of fees. There was agreement that this has some merit; within the City, the price for parking is clearly too low in Rowayton, thus attracting people from all over who might otherwise use a local station. Furthermore, the low fees have created a pressure to build more parking in Rowayton, and CDOT has mandated 40 more spaces despite local opposition; with better control of parking fees, the pressure for expansion in Rowayton might be shifted to other stations and could be tied into a regional transportation management approach.

There is an issue concerning the current lease arrangement at East Norwalk, and specifically the secondary lease arrangement concerning the use of, and payment for, the lot at St. Thomas Church, as well as a question concerning future arrangements for non-state/satellite lots if CDOT took control of the station program. CDOT would have to determine how they would contract for secondary lots, and how liability would be covered in such arrangements. At present, the issue of liability, maintenance, and lease costs is an issue that he City is trying to address. They pay the church \$10,000 a year for the use of the lot, and do the routine maintenance of the lot as well. The total rent is \$20,000 of which half is paid by the state and the half paid by the City is to come from "excess revenues" of which there are none. When the City wanted to raise the permit fees at East Norwalk, the commuters rejected the idea out of hand. Finally, the City believes, in the reading of the lease, that the entire \$ 20,000 should come from the state, as the contracting partner for the agreement. The City is not on the lease, which is between the State and St. Thomas Church. The City, furthermore, is doing maintenance there, but this is not spelled out in the lease as their responsibility. When considering the cost of the St. Thomas lot, the City recognizes that the cost is far more than the lease cost, as it pays for such things as liability insurance and maintenance, plowing, etc. All of these issues have been raised with CDOT.

With regard to the state lot at East Norwalk, the City is happy with the current shared responsibilities and finds both CDOT and MNCR responsive.

The City owns and operates South Norwalk Station. They have a person on-site at all times (24 hours a day) and would need assurances in any state plan that this would continue. The city is happy with the arrangements and gets any support it needs from CDOT and MNCR.

The Parking Authority can issue bonds and therefore it would help if the revenues from the stations could be channeled through the authority, building a stronger revenue stream. This cannot be done under the current agreement, which requires that the revenues be allocated to individual station accounts. If CDOT would allow for a broader interpretation of the rules regarding revenue accounting, then the City would be in a better position to build more parking

for both rail and non-rail use, and for building mixed use lots as well that could benefit both the rail customers and community. The Authority could still maintain separate line item accounts suitable for CDOT review.

The City also thinks that the Merritt Seven station arrangements need to be looked at and considered in the long range planning for rail service. The station was privately built by the developer of Merritt Seven, and maintained by the developer with CDOT assistance. The city has no role there. Parking is free.

The long-term vision for Norwalk calls for a station to be located in the East Avenue/Wall Street area, and another for Reed-Putnam; both would be on the Danbury branch. Also, the City most likely wants to retain control over the station program to keep them in character with the adjacent land uses, particularly in residential areas.

In summary, there were three main issues raised and discussed: the issue of cross subsidization between stations, which would be more efficient and cost-effective; the operating costs and arrangements at East Norwalk including the understatement of total costs and the proper allocation of payments between the State and Norwalk; and the ability of the parking authority to use the rail revenue stream to strengthen its ability to raise funds and ultimately to build mixed use parking structures. In addition, Norwalk feels strongly that it "stepped up to the plate" when a new South Norwalk Station was built and assumed both the potential risks and rewards, and therefore it is not sure that it would willingly relinquish control of the budget, local decision-making, and long-term planning without significant guarantees from CDOT and without a demonstrated benefit to its local plans and Parking Authority program.

Rowayton

Rowayton Station has recently seen a CDOT proposal for an additional 40 parking spaces, but the issue of parking expansion has been contentious in the District. The neighbors around the station area are against expansion, and against additional lighting which they say affect their homes. The district has hired a traffic consultant to review the issue for them. The District representative estimates that the waiting list for spaces is about 40 to 50 cars. There are many in the District who would like to restrict permits to Rowayton residents (or at least the majority), but this is not permitted. This also makes expansion, which would not be guaranteed for Rowayton residents, a larger issue. Overall, the local residents feel CDOT is pushing more parking down their throats, and that the plan to expand by 40 spaces is a harbinger of bigger plans. The District wants a greater say concerning the size of the station for the future, as well as the access and egress pathways. Off-site pedestrian walkways, including the need for more sidewalks and the upgrading of existing stairs and paths, are a big problem for this station, which has one of the highest pedestrian access volumes.

The district representative had some concerns/issues regarding the lease relative to operational and maintenance responsibilities, but overall was satisfied with the arrangements. He felt that CDOT is responsive on day to day issues, even as they are perceived less favorably with regard to expansion. With regard to a minor issue, he wanted to know who was responsible for maintaining the vegetation around the electrical towers.

The District pays for the parking attendants from the parking revenues, and pays for routine maintenance from the same fund. The station is considered revenue neutral to the District, and the District does maintain a reinvestment fund.

They have had some problems with enforcement of parking violations, and with speeding and reckless driving in the lots, which they are discussing with the Norwalk police, since this is not part of the attendant job description.

The District clearly wants to keep control of the station through its lease with CDOT, and would not favor a plan for a state takeover. The District is making plans for upgrading of the site, and specifically identified the following: a new sprinkler system in the station building, better landscaping, new gutters, improved drainage to prevent water from flowing down onto the pavement and icing in winter, better signage, speed bumps in the lot, and a berm in the center of the northside lot to eliminate middle parking. The District was not clear about which items they would have to pay for and which might be CDOT projects.

Besides the concern over more parking and growth, the residents have the following concerns: congestion on Rowayton Avenue, complaints about the wait list for parking permits and the method used for getting a permit, and the condition of the underpass, sidewalk, and stairs.

Darien

According to the conversation with the First Selectman, CDOT taking control of the station would be a mistake. He felt strongly that the town can be more responsive to the concerns of the community and rail commuters. He felt strongly that the Town would rather be responsible for solving any immediate problems that occur. He felt it would be better to reshape the lease than to change the relationship entirely. According to their lease, the town provides CDOT with a percentage of their revenues, and is under no obligation to have a reinvestment fund, which is different than most other leases. The town feels this gives it more flexibility with regard to the finances for the station; e.g., they do not have an obligation to use all of the revenues they keep for the station and can use it for other purposes. Another issue raised is that who is responsible for capital projects is not always clear and is more often based upon discussions with CDOT than upon specifics of the lease. This is not perceived as bad, particularly since the town feels that CDOT is generally responsive to capital improvements.

The entire Noroton Heights parking field is leased from CDOT, while selected lots in Darien are town-owned. Thus, annual permits in leased areas can go to out-of-town residents as well as town residents, but Leroy West and Squab Lane at Darien Station are reserved for Darien residents only.

Overall, the lease arrangements run well, even with some unclear definition for maintenance items, such as light bulb replacement. At Noroton Heights, the Town was unsure who was responsible for cleaning graffiti from the Plexiglas, although subsequently they were given the assignment.

Overall, the cost of the stations and parking areas seem to be about a wash for the town, with perhaps a small profit in good years. Because there is no reinvestment fund, the Board of Finance has been asked to keep a small surplus fund for train station operations, but seldom has done so.

Any future agreements should be clearer with regard to maintenance and capital projects such as pavement repairs. The town would like to see a completely new Noroton Heights Station built. Parking is the biggest challenge to the town, and they do have an agreement with the adjacent parking lot owner at Darien Station to purchase his property at some time in the future. With CDOT money, they would consider decking Noroton Heights' parking, but they would want to negotiate keeping a portion of resident only parking available. There is a three year wait for permits.

The use of the new parking card system has increased revenues dramatically, and also cut maintenance manpower and costs. The cards are all sold by private vendors, which further cuts down personnel costs.

Danbury Branch

All towns along the Danbury branch participated in the stakeholder sessions. The Merritt 7 Station was discussed in the Norwalk interview.

Danbury

Representatives of the parking authority, finance, and public buildings spoke briefly about the Danbury Station. The discussion was brief, as the City and most people are happy with the new station and its operations. Most negative comments in the City pertain to travel time issues, people hanging around at the station, and diesel fumes from idling engines. The relationship with CDOT was considered to be good.

Danbury station hours are limited and the city cannot pay the money needed to keep the building open longer. There was a bike police presence at one time, but even that has been reduced and is now part of the general downtown patrol. The hours of operation and people hanging out at the station are two of the more frequent complaints. The parking authority is thinking about occupying the empty space in the building.

The city is responsible for keeping the property maintained, and it is one of the priority locations for winter plowing. The city uses a contractor to clean and maintain the building.

Bethel

The representatives at the meeting were generally happy with the current arrangements regarding the rail station. The town felt that the revenues received from the parking should be used to maintain the station, and they have had no problem themselves in providing the maintenance, either via city staff or through outside contracts. They have a subcontractor in the building selling coffee and other sundries in the morning who is also responsible for general cleaning at the end of each day, including the bathrooms. The station ticket office is unmanned.

The station building is open in the morning for the inbound trains, and locked thereafter. People do complain about these hours. The town has tried in the past to keep the station open for off-hours and weekends but the volume of use, staffing and security caused them to discontinue the attempt. They have paid for seasonal workers from November to March to keep the building open for longer hours in response to a local snow ordinance.

The town put in cameras for surveillance, with the camera connected into the town system, and this has cut down significantly on a rash of vandalism that they had been experiencing. Parking permits are available to anyone who wants one regardless of town of residence, and there is no wait list for a permit. The cost of a permit is \$ 175 per year. The station is "running at a profit"; a recent five year audit, just completed, showed an overage of \$ 27,000, which will be set aside for the reinvestment fund.

It was felt that the town could operate and maintain the station more efficiently than the state, assuming that the balance sheet continues to show a profit and that CDOT assists with any 'extraordinary' repairs. The town has a good relationship with CDOT and found CDOT personnel to be good to work with concerning maintenance and repair issues. The key for the town, down the line, will be the level of CDOT involvement with any major repair items.

There appears to be an issue regarding the old station in the center of town, and the responsibility for maintaining it. Necessary repairs to the roof, and who should bear the cost, were mentioned.

Some displeasure was expressed concerning the design of the station building and access paths, particularly as it relates to ADA access. Another area of concern was the maintenance of the property around and along the tracks. The track bed itself needs more cleaning of loose debris, and the natural growth needs to be cut back more often. Old rails and ties are still on the property, and there is a ditch with standing water which needs improved drainage. The town says CDOT will not let anyone near these areas, both at the new and old station building, without proper training, which keeps them from addressing these issues.

With regard to improvements to the station and service, they would like to find a cost-effective way to keep the station open for more hours, and are looking at options to do so. They feel that the situation is unlikely to change until there is more service, and faster service, on the line, at which time they expect a significant increase in use. They would like to see at least one peak semi-express train which would reduce travel times to the South West Region and New York City. The residents who do bring up issues to them most frequently comment on the cleanliness of the stations, and in particular the bathrooms, and the level of lighting around the station in the evening. The town is working with its subcontractor on improving the cleanliness of the station.

Redding

The Redding Station was constructed about two years ago, and the town and town residents are very happy with it. The town has an issue regarding its lease and the financial arrangements used for an overflow lot owned by Bridgeport Hydraulic. The town taxes Bridgeport Hydraulic for a parcel of land abutting the station, and then the Town in turn pays Bridgeport Hydraulic the same amount to lease the land for parking. The town would like to take the entire lease amount from

the railroad account, but CDOT has to date allowed only half from that account and half from the town general revenues. At the same time, the town uses general funds to maintain the lot and not money from the rail account, and would like to be able to reimburse the rail account accordingly. In short, there are some technical financial issues that the town has with CDOT that the town feels should be done more fairly. The town is working on developing a reinvestment fund for the station. At the same time, the town has not completed a full analysis of its costs to develop a separate operating cost line item for the rail fund for use in offsetting revenues and developing the reinvestment fund mechanism.

Generally the lease works well and the responsibilities are clear, but there are some murky areas, such as the responsibility for station lighting. In any case, CDOT is very cooperative. The responsibility for the roof at some point in the future seems to be another gray area. The town would like to have more approval over what goes on a platform – they feel that things get installed without them being asked, such as newspaper tubes. They wanted to know if Metro North, who they thought was responsible for these activities, has to go to the town Planning and Zoning for signs and other items or is the property state-owned and thus exempt. CDOT personnel received high praise from the town and were felt to be very responsive to their concerns.

Parking costs \$ 125 per year. There are 66 spaces and they sell 85 permits. There are 13 daily spaces for \$ 2.00 each. The police handle the parking. They estimate that 25 percent of the permits are sold to out-of-town people. The state mandates the rates.

Regarding responsibilities, as long as the town has a competent person to run the station program, they are happy to continue to do it. At present they have expanded the duties of the transfer station/recycling coordinator to cover the station, and his department handles the station. They see little benefit to having CDOT take over the station. The town likes to keep control and feels it can better respond to safety and maintenance issues. The town personnel are immediately available and the town highway department is there to plow and de-ice quickly. The local neighbors also worry that the State would not keep the property up as well, and work better with the town government when small improvements are discussed such as landscaping and lighting.

Ridgefield

Branchville Station is located in the town of Ridgefield, and is leased by the Town from CDOT. In turn, the Town has a lease with the Whistlestop Café, which is located in the Station Building, which the tenant agrees to maintain for the Town.

The town leases the parking from the state, and recognizes that the pavement needs to be repaired and re-striped, which will happen in FY 2003-2004. There are no parking fees at Branchville, and all revenues for the station are taken either from the general fund or from the tenant. The only costs they put in to the station are for plowing, sanding, and minor repairs. They feel that parking fees will discourage commuters from using the station.

As noted, all of the operating and maintenance expenses for the station building are borne by the tenant. The Town monitors the condition of the building through the Health Department, as food

is served on the premises. The Town is responsible for the lots, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping. They need to improve the site and want CDOT to contribute. According to the Town, they have had no contact with CDOT for some time.

There is a village plan for Branchville being completed which will address the town's direction for the station. The feeling is that the residents of Ridgefield want the Town to retain control, and would like to see improvements, particularly with regard to parking.

Wilton

There are two stations in Wilton, at Wilton Center and Cannondale, and the First Selectman felt that parking and stations are not big issues in the community. Furthermore, at the moment there is enough parking, and more is being added in Wilton on a site on the west side of the tracks.

There was some confusion regarding the ownership, leasing, and responsibilities of the town, CDOT, and MNCR for both stations. While it was stated that MNCR owns and operates the stations, and that the town has no responsibilities for the stations themselves, in fact the town has a lease dated June 8, 1998 for the parking lots on both properties which runs 10 years. CDOT has responsibility for Wilton Station. In addition, the town has an agreement with a third party at Cannondale to run a retail shop in the station. It appears from the discussion that the Town does little with regard to the stations and parking lot, assuming that others are responsible. Furthermore, the town has no fees for parking at either location.

The Town representatives were not aware of any particular local issues, although they agreed that both stations could be better maintained and in particular Wilton Station could look nicer. There is a plan for the reconstruction of the Route 7 and Route 33 area which will affect the station, and the Town thinks that it may include multi-level parking at Wilton Station. This would be fine with the First Selectman, and he has talked to CDOT to see if money will be in the project for rail improvements.

A regional issue involving rail parking has emerged, as New Canaan has apparently cut back on out-of-town parking at its stations, putting more pressure on parking in Wilton. Because the New Canaan branch has better service, this has created a lot of ill-will.

Wilton has no desire to take control of its stations, although in fact by the lease it has far more responsibilities than are being carried out. The stations look to be white elephants for the town, at least if parking continues to be free. The bigger concern is getting better service on the branch.

New Canaan Branch

Only New Canaan was represented for the New Canaan branch, as Stamford did not participate.

New Canaan

According to the first selectman of the town, the agreement for Talmadge Hill and New Canaan stations are very straight-forward and work well. At Talmadge Hill station, CDOT owns only

the platform, while the rest of the station area, e.g. the surface parking, is owned and maintained by the town. New Canaan station is owned by CDOT, as are the immediate parking facilities. The feeling is that the station and parking areas at New Canaan station, recently reconstructed, are well maintained.

The town was concerned about liability issues and responsibilities for some activities and areas. As an example, the town evidently cleans the platforms while CDOT maintains them; sometimes the distinction between the two seems blurred. More importantly, the town feels that MNCR does not keep the track bed clean. With the new high platforms, more trash is collecting than in the past. There are also spikes, and ties left behind.

Taxi activity on-site is an issue to the town. While the town can control activity, they do not feel that it is working well. They would like some help from CDOT's compliance division for complaints and inspections. There is a dispatcher on site and they are hoping to see some improvement in the near future. To control who can pick-up at the station, the town has instituted rules regarding vehicle color and identifying name, pictures of the driver in the vehicle, etc.

The town was complimentary of CDOT personnel and the responsiveness to their needs. The state spends most of its money on maintenance and operations, and will participate in some minor capital projects. The state recently paid for and constructed a new shelter at Talmadge Hill. The feeling is that it may be time to construct a new station at Talmadge Hill, with a full length platform and overhead protection. They cited West Redding and Wassaic as models.

They would like CDOT to stay in the loop regarding station operations, and would like the state to inspect the stations on a regular basis. Their basic position is that unless CDOT is unhappy, they are not, and they do not feel any change in procedures is needed. They like having local control over day-to-day activities and feel they can be more responsive to the local community.

They are concerned about parking issues if the state were to take over, specifically that lots now designated for New Canaan residents only would be open to everyone. Parking is the number one problem; by the 6:20 AM train all the meters are occupied, and the remaining parking is restricted to town permits. They give out about 2 permits per space. All spaces are generally filled by 8:30 AM. Talmadge Hill has 91 meters for general use, and the rest of the lots are permit controlled. The town is considering a plan to deck the "lumberyard" lot; one of the issues is that if CDOT helps in the financing of the deck, then the spaces would be open to non-residents. Local residents have fought any expansion at Talmadge Hill; better striping may provide an additional 70 spaces in the multi-tiered lots.

Waterbury Branch

All communities except for Naugatuck were represented during the stakeholder process, although Waterbury was represented by the Chamber of Commerce and Ansonia by the Valley Regional Planning Agency.

Waterbury

The Chamber of Commerce was designated by the Mayor as the representative for these discussions. The first issue that was raised concerned the parking lot and the lack of clear directions regarding what is city parking for the station and what is SNET parking. The lot itself is unpaved and poorly marked. There is no lease between the City and CDOT for the station or parking lot, and the City has no responsibilities regarding them. The Chamber representatives stated that they could not speak to policy issues and the City's attitude towards the station or rail service except in general terms. In that regard, the basic desire is to have more service on the Waterbury branch, and to construct a new intermodal terminal for buses and rail in the city. There is a study underway for such a facility, and site locations as they impact on local businesses and the transit network are currently under review. This is a Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation study. The vision is to use this project to stimulate economic development in the immediate area, as well to form a better link between Waterbury and the entire Valley region.

On the whole, the community has little awareness of the existing rail service. The community feels that CDOT has little interest in rail service on the Waterbury branch, and this is reflected in the level of service, condition of the station, and lack of marketing. At the same time, the City sees rail as a significant underutilized resource which, if developed properly, could stimulate the economy of the city and region.

Beacon Falls

Beacon Falls is a small station on the Waterbury Branch with a high platform, three shelters, and a state parking lot. The town has no financial interest in the station and spends nothing on it, although they do plow snow from the lot in the winter. There is no lease with the town so there are no requirements by CDOT. At the same time, the First Selectman reported that the town is not happy with the station, and as people are moving in to the community who commute to Norwalk and Stamford, the feeling is that there needs to be more service and better stations on the line. The Town wants a better sheltered waiting area, preferably an enclosed station building.

The Town did not know why a portion of the lot has been partitioned off, and said that they have received customer complaints about parking as a result. Parking is free.

As far as the future, the Town would like to see the lot paved and striped, better lighting, and the construction of a small building, which they would be willing to maintain. They would also like to be able to sublease a concession stand in the building.

Seymour

Seymour has a small facility and a lease for just the parking facility and not the station structure or platform. Also, in lieu of a lease payment to the State, they administer the parking program. They also do not have to reinvest any surplus in improvements. The town had not been aware that they had to keep up the parking area but once they found out they have done so. They feel that the station contributes little to the community and therefore the station should be kept up by

CDOT. They thought that the parking was all on town property, but the lease shows otherwise. The signage for parking says two hours, but people can get a pass either for a day or for a year for a nominal fee. This is not widely known. There are few complaints about the station; the only significant one was about a vagrant who has since passed away. CDOT agreed to paint and clean the building, and the town has agreed to maintain the area, do landscaping, and keep the pavement in good condition. Over the next five years, the town would like to have more service, but otherwise they have no plans for the station.

Derby and Ansonia

A joint meeting was held at the Valley Regional Planning Agency with staff of the agency and a representative of Derby. Ansonia asked to be represented by the VRPA Executive Director. Derby holds a lease with CDOT for the station and parking, and in turn the city sublets the building to the Valley Regional Planning Agency, which occupies offices there. There is not written agreement between the City and VRPA. VRPA then has a sublease agreement with a vendor operating a coffee shop in the building. The State has a small Department of Motor Vehicles office in the building as well, which is perceived as a benefit to the Valley community. One congressman pays a small sum to use one of the conference rooms once a week for three hours

VRPA is responsible for maintenance of the interior space, although CDOT helps pay for any significant repairs such as carpeting, a boiler, or other capital replacements. Therefore, VRPA is truly doing routine operations and maintenance on a day to day basis. The coffee shop staff maintains the waiting room in exchange for free rent. This is deemed mutually beneficial, as it gives the station an on-site presence, provides customers with some amenities, and keeps the area clean on a regular basis. They feel that the platform needs better maintenance. Overall they are pleased with the response they get from CDOT staff, but feel that a lot of the arrangements are done on a personality basis and not via the contractual relationship.

The City is happy with the lease arrangement with CDOT. The City plows, maintains plantings, and maintains the parking lot, although CDOT provides grants when major repairs are needed. Parking is free. There are 96 CDOT spaces in the lot, and parking is plentiful.

There are no revenues so there is no reinvestment fund. The City does spend some money on maintenance and upkeep, but there is no rail line item in the City budget. CDOT provides grants when non-routine items are needed, as described above.

The City may have some desire in its long range planning to use this location to create a full scale intermodal center. At present, the site is used by the railroad, CT Transit, Greater Bridgeport Transit, and Valley Transit, and also houses the DMV office. Depending upon the development of such a plan, the RPA may or may not stay in the building. The overall plan would stress transportation, and would not be perceived as a major retail or office site, as that would compete with the city's plans for Main Street redevelopment.

The biggest single issue is the future of the Waterbury Branch itself, and the constant fear that the service will be terminated in the near future. The feeling is that fear alone depresses ridership and the potential of the line. Other local problems include better security and enforcement to

reduce loitering, particularly after 6 PM when the station building is closed; and track trash and brush that needs cutting along the tracks.

Just as in Beacon Falls, the City representative spoke of the influx of residents who work in South Western Connecticut, and the increase in white collar commuters who might use an improved rail service. The city is considering more residential development around the station, which would further enhance the plan for an intermodal terminal.

Regarding Ansonia, the only issue raised was the desire to have an indoor waiting area at the Station, and better signage and trailblazing to make the community aware of rail service in general.

Transit Provider Interviews

There were six transit provider interviews. One, with Connecticut Transit, covered operations in both Stamford and New Haven. One, in Danbury, was a joint meeting with the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials. The other four were in Norwalk, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and at Valley Transit. All bus operators were represented.

Milford Transit District

The Milford Transit District is actually the agency in the Town of Milford responsible for overseeing the transit station, and thus represents the lessee in the town's agreement with the state. Thus, the conversation included not only questions regarding how well the station meets the operating needs of the buses, but also questions concerning the lease arrangements, satisfaction with the lease and the relationship with CDOT, etc. The interview was conducted with the MTD Executive Director.

Generally, the lease arrangement works well. There was some concern over the use of the reinvestment fund and specifically if CDOT was gong to exercise its contractual right to take excess revenues from the fund. It was felt that the amount of money in the fund fluctuates greatly from year to year based on weather conditions and repair needs and that it would not be a good idea to reduce the balance without better projections of need. At the same time, CDOT has been very responsive to the needs of Milford and has granted them money as needed for making changes, adding parking, etc.

The lease period is quite long – the current ten year period goes through 2008 and the town can exercise its rights for four additional ten year extensions. The MTD has the responsibilities for to maintain the station and parking, and, unlike other station leases, also has the responsibility for maintaining the platforms (but not for the advertising on the platforms) and for the lighting.

Milford is generally happy with the arrangement and the "hands-off" approach by CDOT, and with its relationship with CDOT personnel.

It was acknowledged that the lots are in need of repaving and that they might need state aid to do the entire job.

One area that does not get enough attention is the maintenance of the right of way. It was felt that getting Metro North to respond, to cut brush back or remove garbage is difficult.

As this project is taking place, Milford is undergoing ADA reconstruction. The Town would like to see a ticket window added at the station after the reconstruction.

MTD has a tenant, the local taxi operator, which they are not entirely happy with. They had been in charge of maintenance of the interior of the building in exchange for a low lease rate, but that has not worked out, and they are currently being replaced. They have thought about running the station themselves but are concerned about adding staff to provide good coverage.

The only outstanding need is for more parking. There is a wait list of about 400 persons, which is about a two year waiting list. To build more parking, the state would have to contribute to the project, but the negotiation of this work takes a long time, longer than they would like. Meanwhile, they would like to deck one of the lots (Lot 3). They have set their parking rates to offset the cost of operations and maintenance and to maintain a reasonable reinvestment fund. Overall the station cost center contributes positively to the city finances, e.g., it does not require outside funds from the Town to operate or maintain.

From a bus operations point of view, the MTD buses do not come in or out of the station, but rather stop on the Green, about one block south of the station. This is satisfactory to the MTD.

Patrons of the station were disappointed with the prior station operations, run by the taxi company, as well as the lack of parking. Security has not been an issue raised by the public.

Connecticut Transit

Connecticut Transit is responsible for bus operations to and from the New Haven Station, to the bus terminal at the Stamford Intermodal Center, as well as for services to Glenbrook, Springdale, Darien, and Greenwich Station, each of which is served by one of the CT routes.

Greenwich has CT timetables in the station and the station also sells CT bus passes. Darien, which is the terminus for a route, also has CT timetables. The buses basically pass by Glenbrook, Springdale, and Greenwich, with marked bus stops adjacent to the station properties. At Darien, the buses have laid over in the northside parking lot adjacent to the station, which has been a cooperative agreement with the Town. Furthermore, CT Transit did have input into the station plans and geometrics for the ADA reconstruction. Buses at New Haven stop on Union Avenue at bus stops designated on both sides of the street. They do not circle within the site, which is not a problem. CT Transit also is running a parking shuttle to the Coliseum, which does turn around on the station property, and this had not been a problem. CT Transit has timetables inside the station.

Stamford is the major hub associated with a rail station in the system. The bus facility is located under I-95 adjacent to the train station, and connected to the station by a well-lit tunnel occupied by CT offices, a security office, and some commercial ventures. The area has been dramatically improved in the past couple of years, and the change-over from city operation to the state has

done wonders for the situation. There is an excellent relationship with the contract operator of the station, and Bob Tower, the facility manager, is excellent. Other immediately noticeable changes include new lighting in the bus bays, repainting, and a ticket outlet/sales office. Basically, CT Transit was asked for a list of things they wanted done, and CDOT has addressed it quickly. The State is putting the capital funds to the station that the City was not providing.

The cleaning is tip top, including the seeping of the bus bays. Trash is regularly picked up and the passageway is always clean. The security is excellent, with cameras in the bus bays monitored by MNCR. The chain of command is in place, and the operation is the best that the CT manager in Stamford has seen in his 18 years. The state has really taken control and is very customer oriented.

Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority

The Bridgeport Station is being run by CDOT under contract to a private management firm, the same one as in Stamford. This takeover is fairly recent, and the results have been positive. The previous administration had a poor idea of strategically planning for intermodal connections, and with the change the development plans for the area are now far more inclusive of all modes. The GBTA also serves Stratford Station and Fairfield Station, though from the adjacent streets rather than on-site, although Stratford is receptive to the idea of a shuttle. One concern of the GBTA is how buses will be considered in the new Fairfield Station plan, which to date has not involved them.

GBTA is currently assessing how it can deliver better services to each station. They would like to see better language regarding bus operations and facilities built into all new leases, and incorporated into all new designs. They are heavily involved in the new designs for the Bridgeport Intermodal center and specifically in the bus terminal design. They put about 3000 riders through the station area each day and estimate that 30 to 40 percent use the train. The current bus facility is unacceptable, not only with regard to age and design, but also with regard to responsibilities for maintenance, security, etc. They want the new bus facility being designed to have the same agreement as that for the rail station. They see Stamford as a model for an integrated operation. Right now, the train station is well run and the bus station is poorly run. No one has kept the bus station condition up to par.

Besides having the vision of a new integrated bus/rail facility, GBTA wants to consider express services to Monroe and Trumbull, and subscription shuttles. They see these as important new linkages that will help keep the demand for parking reasonable. They also think there should be integrated parking pricing policies for the rail program, and more consistency in the fees charged.

Waterbury – North East Transportation

Given the low level of service and low ridership at Waterbury Station, the two representatives of North East Transportation, which operates the bus system for the Waterbury Transit District, had limited comments about conditions at the station vis-à-vis bus service.

The bus system serves the station from adjacent streets. The coordination of the bus and train schedule is frankly poor, as the buses are oriented to their local market and not to the very few train riders that use the station. Until there is a rail market, there is no need to worry about serving the station. There is talk in the community of an intermodal facility, but the current location that has been selected would be a problem for bus routings.

In Naugatuck, the buses run about 1-2 blocks from the station on parallel streets. Again, the lack of rail service makes the stations a non-issue for the operators.

Norwalk Transit District

The Norwalk Transit District operates the bus service to and from the two Westport Stations, all four stations in Norwalk, and to/from the Greenwich Station.

In Westport, shuttles serve both Greens Farms and Westport Station. At Westport Station, one of these shuttles originates at a park and ride on Imperial Avenue. NTD also has a regular daytime route that serves the station. The biggest problem that NTD has is with circulation and layover positions at the Westport Station. They would like better control over pick-up and drop off locations. Currently, in the morning shuttles can be found dropping passengers on station place, and laying over either along side the post office or in the northside parking lot. They are continually working with the police to get more control. They are not sure that this is a function of the governance of the station, or that CDOT could have more of an impact than the Town in such issues. The southside stop along side the platform is narrow and frequently blocked by cars waiting to pick up people. Generally, the working relationship is good – the real issue is the geometries and street patterns around the station.

Westport has a very low parking permit fee and a long parking wait list, but there has never been a discussion of cross-subsidizing the shuttles with higher parking fees. The won is contributing a matching dollar for each fare on the Imperial Avenue shuttle, recognizing how this lot serves them as a pressure valve for the station parking demand. Approximately 30-40 riders park at the lot each day.

The NTD feels that there needs to be better communication when trains are going to run late—the only way they can find out now is via on-platform announcements.

In Norwalk, the buses pass both Rowayton and East Norwalk Station on the adjacent streets, Rowayton Avenue and East Avenue. The geometry of the lots keeps buses from going into either. They have no problems with regard to operations at either station.

Similarly, there is no problem at Merritt 7, where there is free parking and shuttle service to get people from the station to adjacent work sites.

The South Norwalk facility is the most heavily utilized in the City. There are parking issues for the buses in the access roadway. Too often, the drop-off and pick-up location are blocked by cars and corporate shuttles, preventing the buses from getting to their stops. They have asked for enforcement, but it is inconsistent. Generally, they get short-term help but no longer term

commitments. Ultimately, the problem may be more related to the design, which did not set aside clearly designated bus stops. They are happy with the signage and availability of their schedules at the station.

The station is well managed and maintained, although some minor repairs don't get done as quickly as they might. If there was enough volume of work, the City might consider having a contractor to do these repairs.

In Greenwich, NTD operates shuttles for commuters to and from the station. They interface with the town on the bus stop locations, and keeping them clear of cars, and the town is cooperative.

Finally, the general issue of overall station management strategies was discussed. While it was felt that most stations were up to standard and in good repair, it was felt that the balkanization of the system does impact commutation. People shop around for the best permit prices, which affects the demand for parking, the congestion on the roadways, and the loads on the trains. It probably doesn't affect how many people use the trains, only where they commute from. The possibility was raised that centralized control could rationalize rates, reorganize supply, and maybe manipulate mode shares.

Valley Transit District

Valley Transit District operates demand responsive service, and its focus is mainly upon the Derby Station. The VTD has no issues with the way the buses operate at the station, and feel the station works well as an intermodal center, with GBTA and CT Transit also having buses there. If a train runs late, they try to adjust the schedule to make a pick-up, or they will call a cab. The big issue is more train service.

Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART)

HART staff spoke about their current services to the stations in Bethel and Danbury. In Bethel the bus does go into the station site itself, and provides some level of connectivity with the trains, although the schedule is not specifically designed for that function. They have no problems at Bethel, and their schedules are posted in the station. In Danbury, the trolley goes into the site, but the regular bus routes do not, passing instead on the surrounding arterials. Because the bus schedule is oriented to local travel patterns as well as to the times of the downtown pulses, and because many of the peak trains leave or arrive when there is no bus service, the opportunities for transfers are minimal. HART has considered work and residential shuttles to and from the station, but feels that these depend upon an expanded branchline schedule. HART is also interested in the concept of station cars, and identified Branchville, where they do not run service, as a possible demonstration site.

Overall, there is a very low level of interest in the bus as an access/egress mode to the train, and this is expected to be the case until such time as rail service is increased.

Regional Agencies

There were five interviews with the Regional Planning Agencies affected by the project. The meeting with the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials also included staff from Housatonic Area Regional Transit, as noted above. The meeting with Valley Regional Planning Agency was held in concert with the interviews for Derby and Ansonia, and was reported earlier as well

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials

According to Jon Chew, Executive Director of HVCEO, the biggest issue is the need for more parking, and his hope is that the new Coastal TIA, working together, will have the leverage to get something done in this area. He thought that the Danbury station plan had parking expansion built into it, but since it is not being used to capacity this is not an issue at this time.

Branchville Station is an issue in the region, as it is overcapacity and often has cars illegally parked in the surrounding area. It was felt that a deck would be a good idea for the station, and that this should be addressed in the on-going village plan study being conducted in Ridgefield. The Town has expressed interest to HVCEO in the deck concept, but has not endorsed it as of this meeting. Any added capacity would require intersection improvements with Route 7, and the overall plan would most likely require CDOT funding. This in turn would change the current free parking policy, which might be an issue for Ridgefield.

Overall, with the exception of Branchville, the conditions and use of the stations and/or parking lots does not restrict use of the trains. The key change to increase rail use is more train service in both directions. Long term planning should look at service north of Danbury.

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA)

GBRPA is very active with regard to rail issues, particularly with stations and parking, in its region, which includes Stratford, Bridgeport, and Fairfield. James Wang, Executive Director, was very clear regarding the agency position on station parking and fees, stating that there is a need to rationalize the permitting process and the parking costs, and that CDOT should have this responsibility. CDOT should unify the parking policy for the line and should use the policy for shaping demand. While CDOT has taken control in Bridgeport, control is an open question in Stratford and Fairfield, though the construction of new stations and/or structured parking lots would change the relationship in those towns as well.

CDOT has changed some of its service patterns to balance loads better, and the Bridgeport expresses have been successful.

Stratford leases its station from CDOT, collects its revenues, and per this conversation, does not spend it adequately on maintenance of its facility or parking lot. Instead, the money is shifted to the general fund and the Town apparently then asks CDOT for assistance for undertaking projects. GBRPA's role in the region is planning from the regional perspective and aid to its member communities in supporting a regional program. GBRPA is helping Stratford in this

regard by sponsoring a station location study, including preliminary engineering and the development of a funding package. If a station and parking structure are built, it is assumed that CDOT will be the responsible parties for them.

The big issue that GBRPA is involved in with Fairfield is the construction of the third station. According to the agency's plans, the region could use 1200 more parking spaces, and this station could provide many of them. The site selection is still on-going, as is how the new station will be managed. Fairfield is better about using its revenues to support improvements to the Fairfield and Southport Stations, but they still ask CDOT for money for many improvements that might be their responsibility under the lease. GBRPA gets involved in discussions about funding and site studies. On a day to day basis the town will call the agency for advice, and the agency also speaks with CDOT at times to keep projects in the Region moving.

In Bridgeport, the City is in the midst of the major intermodal project, which will substantially change the physical environment when completed. Presently, the state has taken control of the station from the City, although the City still owns it, and is having it managed by a private firm. GBRPA was involved in the negotiation that shifted responsibility to the State, and it is estimated that the State is now spending about four times the amount that the City spent on the station in the past. CDOT will have total responsibility for the station once the intermodal project is completed. Again GBRPA endorses CDOT control and rationalization of the permits and pricing, and feels that CDOT control of the stations program would have a great regional benefit. GBRPA feels that Bridgeport is in agreement, Stratford may be given its station issue, and that Fairfield is still undecided.

South Central Regional Planning Agency (SCRPA)

According to the staff, who have been participating on the Coastal TIA, the towns in Fairfield County don't want CDOT to run the stations and parking. On the other hand, SCRPA feels otherwise, and that the rail program needs more consistency under a single entity. SCRPA feels that Fairfield County wants local preference, and that they generally are not fond of CDOT. SCRPA expects that any new stations, like West Haven or the new Fairfield Station, would be CDOT run. Overall, SCRPA feels that this study is unnecessary and that CDOT should simply exercise its powers to get control for the regional/state good.

With regard to more specific locations, New Haven Station is badly in need of more parking, but plans for a new structure are being delayed while the issue of management is addressed between the City, the Parking Authority and CDOT. In the meantime, available funding for the project sits. The design build concept is in limbo. They feel that CDOT would like to takeover and run the station, and that this would be more efficient. They think that the station generates a profit for the Authority that the City is reluctant to give up. They also think that CDOT feels that this surplus is actually in large part the result of under-spending on maintenance.

In order to get the New Haven issue resolved, CDOT may be forced to look at condemnation, but the towns in the region would not support that approach.

The Region would be best served by consistency in the approach to rail service, under CDOT

management. They want to see unified service, lots, signage, processes, etc. They understand that the various municipalities think that CDOT or a state-contractor will not provide enough local attention, but do not agree with that position.

Two planning concepts were also mentioned briefly – a seamless fare policy and service program, and more through trains from east of New Haven to Fairfield County.

Central Naugatuck Regional Planning Agency (CNRPA)

Most of the people on the Waterbury line, the focus for this discussion, are oblivious to the train, given its limited schedule. While the line is not heavily marketed in the area, the fact is that the lack of service is the biggest impediment to its use. There has been a general neglect of the line, and the stations have been consistently downgraded to basically shelters and parking. While the line will probably not go away, there is little to suggest that it will see a dramatic increase in service. Waterbury Station is not the building anymore, but rather a poorly maintained shelter and platform. Naugatuck Station is now a museum, and the active station facility is two shelters and a platform with a ramp. Beacon Falls is a shelter and small parking lot.

The Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation is doing a study in Waterbury to develop an intermodal center, but the location under consideration may not be a good one vis-à-vis the bus system. The plan was still under discussion.

Overall, the current way that the line and stations are being run is not conducive to generating an interest and use of rail. Each town would like to see more rail use – Waterbury as a centerpiece for its intermodal/economic development plan, Naugatuck to attract tourists to its museum, and Beacon Falls to serve its new residential growth. This is not a big commuter line due to the level of service and lack of marketing, as well as the time it takes to get to the main line.

The lack of amenities, poor signage, and low use of the parking lots raise issues about safety and security in the minds of many who might otherwise use the train.

South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)

The first issue raised by the staff of SWRPA concerned a general lack of uniformity in the way things get done at the stations. Basically, they were concerned that too much appears to be done independently via deal making, rather than by prescribed arrangement in the leases. Furthermore, the leases are all very different and individual, so that it is difficult to say who is responsible for what at each location. Furthermore, some stations are leased to the towns, some are owned by CDOT, and two are privately owned. Furthermore, some leases include the stations and parking while some, like Wilton and Cannondale, do not.

The feeling is that it would be far easier and more effective is the overall program was unified. However, the diversity of opinions in each community would make it difficult to move to such a policy. Also, there is a fear that the State could and would use eminent domain to create more parking, which may be a perception rather than a reality, but does influence local thinking. Overall, SWRPA hears very little regarding town lease issues, and is far less involved with the

individual station operations than their counterpart in Bridgeport. SWRPA has sponsored, and is sponsoring at present, studies of rail parking needs in the Region, currently looking at the stations in Darien and Norwalk. They thought that Greenwich has a lot of issues with their stations that need to be addressed. The Town has continuously asked for STP money to expand its parking and landscaping.

The system of trail blazing to the stations, and way finding guidance from the stations via transit connections was raised as an important issue in the Region, and one that generated a task force to study the situation with the Greenwich Shuttle. SWRPA feels that there needs to be far more real time information provided about schedules and delays, parking availability, and traffic congestion to guide commuters to appropriate locations.

Staff raised a question regarding the impact that a state takeover of the stations could have on town budgets. Is the revenue loss more than compensated for relinquishing operations and maintenance, or would the towns lose money? This is tied to the appropriate use of the excess revenues in towns with a reinvestment fund, but in other towns like Darien the lease does not call for such a fund. The towns in the region also have concerns about the use of their lots by out-of-towners, but universal access may be needed in the context of a regional approach. Finally, under a coordinated state scenario, could the state encourage more cross-subsidization of transit access modes by adjusting its pricing schemes, and would the operating costs for the stations go down under central control? The idea of value pricing of station parking was raised as a way of creating a better revenue stream and reallocating parking demand to meet larger regional goals. Pricing changes in Bridgeport certainly impacted parking utilization in the surrounding communities and relieved some of the demand pressures in Stratford and Fairfield.

A question was raised concerning people's sensitivity to parking pricing and if it could even be used to shift demand, but the idea of having a unified pricing scheme for all stations under one controlling body would at least afford the opportunity to try. Linking pricing, supply, and service would certainly be the best way to manage the railroad.

The focus should be on methods to promote well-maintained, safe stations; to utilizing parking capacity most effectively and to have the ability to create more parking rationally; and to provide uniform services, signage etc that signal that this is a system and operated like a system.

Traffic and Transportation

Bridge and Civil Engineering

Architecture

Parking Services

Construction Inspection

Environmental Services

Transit Services

Structural Engineering

U R B I T R A N <mark>R E P O R T</mark>

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