

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of July 12, 2012

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1-C
Hartford, Connecticut

Attendance: Members: Richard Schreiner, Russ St. John, Richard Sunderhauf, Robert Rodman, Mort Katz, Yvonne Loteczka, Chris Adams, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Joe Martin (Providence and Worcester Railroad), Stephen Troster, Glendine Henry (DSS), Kim Dunham, (GHTD), and Bradshaw Smith.

Vice chairman Richard Schreiner called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. The minutes of the meeting of June 7 were accepted as written.

Featured Speaker

Joe Martin, Account Executive at the Providence and Worcester Railroad, was the featured speaker, filling in for Frank Rogers, Providence and Worcester's Vice President for Marketing who was unable to attend due to illness. Mr. Martin began by giving a very brief overview of the P&W noting that it operates a 550-mile system, is headquartered in Worcester, Massachusetts and has a very substantial presence in Connecticut including an engine house in Plainfield.

Martin noted that 2011 was the first profitable year enjoyed by the P&W in the last few years. 2012 is a good year so far for the railroad though business is down about 5% from last year. Major classes of freight moved by the P&W include aggregates, lumber, plastics, liquified propane and renewable energy products including ethanol. Martin noted the Plainfield Renewable Energy project now under construction for which P&W will be transporting generators and transformers. However, there is currently no rail siding planned at this facility for fuel delivery or ash removal.

Three specific rail lines in Connecticut were next discussed by Martin. The Waterfront Street track on the east side of New Haven Harbor will be re-installed soon. Several major customers in that area are planning to utilize that track. Martin would like to see more of the petroleum products coming in via New Haven Harbor move out by rail. Martin also mentioned Nucor Steel in Wallingford which receives 100,000 tons of steel billets annually which are railed to New Haven and then trucked to Wallingford.

The Willimantic Branch was placed back in service a couple years ago following a \$10 million rehab project. The line provides P&W with important access

to the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific via the New England Central with whom P&W interchanges at Willimantic.

Lastly, Martin mentioned that the Wethersfield Secondary Line from Middletown to Hartford is currently operating only as far north as Rocky Hill where P&W is serving a new customer, Seven D Wholesale Lumber.

In response to several questions from Commission members, Martin mentioned that Frito-Lay in Killingly receives its frying oil via rail but does not receive the potatoes by rail, though P&W would like to see that happen. He also said that Dow Chemical at Allyn's Point is the third largest shipper on the P&W system. Their business is steady but not growing. Another point Martin mentioned in answering questions is that most of P&W's track, at least in Connecticut and Massachusetts, is rated for 263,000 pounds rather than for 286,000 pounds. Bridges are the main limitation preventing the higher rating. Other final points mentioned by Martin were that traffic interchanged with Canadian railroads is an important and growing market for P&W; that CSX is the largest single interchange partner with P&W, with Worcester being the interchange point; service levels on Pan Am are improving as is P&W's interchange experience with that carrier; and that the improved clearances on CSX's Boston and Albany Mainline could potentially lead to more business.

Comments from the public

Terry Hall discussed Amtrak's plans to achieve higher speed service on the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak has developed a conceptual 30-year plan to progress toward high speed service between Washington and Boston. Terry mentioned that the ongoing New Haven Line catenary replacement project is an important component of Amtrak's plans to improve service. Restoration of a third Northeast Corridor track east of New London probably will be one of the earlier projects to provide more capacity on the corridor. Electrification of the Springfield Line could be another element to increase speeds and capacity.

Terry explained that Amtrak's terminology of higher speed service means improving 135 mph capability to 165 mph, principally in the southern half of the Northeast Corridor. High speed service means 220 mph.

To relieve overcrowding on Northeast Corridor trains, Amtrak is looking to add two cars to each Acela Express train, especially on the southern half of the Corridor. Amtrak currently has twenty sets of Acela Express equipment, of which 17 are in operation at any one time.

Comments from Operating Entities

Following on Terry Hall's remarks, Fred Riese mentioned that the tentative dates for the Federal Railroad Administration's public scoping meetings on the NEC

Future project to increase speeds and capacity on the Northeast Corridor are August 13 for the Boston meeting and August 14 for meetings in Providence and New Haven.

Rich Sunderhauf informed the Commission that six Connecticut Transit buses and drivers from the Hartford Division are being used to provide commuter service along the Waterbury Branch of Metro-North while track work is being undertaken on that line. Rich also reported the HART Transit dominated the results of the ROADEO competition, winning both the body-on-chassis and 40-foot bus categories. Greater Bridgeport Transit won the 35-foot bus competition.

Chairman's Report

Rich Schreiner read the Chairman's report into the record. Kevin reported that the overwhelmingly good news is that the Legislature's business is finished for the year and the CPTC remains as a Commission. Why the Legislature did not act on the Governor's bill is a subject for some conjecture; however, you should know that we had a handful of champions in our pocket who were going to rise to our defense when it came to the floor for a vote. What happens in next year's session is anyone's guess, but clearly we will remain a viable entity for the remainder of 2012. Consequently, we should begin planning for the fall hearings in anticipation of generating our annual report.

Lastly, Kevin is in the process of coordinating a meeting with Commissioner Redeker. Since we will be around for at least a while, Kevin wants to begin a dialogue with him about how the Commission can be more responsive to his needs and vice-versa. Kevin hopes to have that conversation before the August meeting.

Fall Public Hearings

Fred Riese announced that the fall public hearing sites would be Storrs, Bridgeport, Windsor Locks and Winsted.

Old Business

Rich Sunderhauf attended the dedication ceremony for the new Norwich Intermodal Transit Center on June 9. He mentioned that 16 separate funding sources were accessed to finance this new facility.

New Business

Terry Hall reported that he had recently taken a round trip between New London and New Haven on Shore Line East. Two cars of the train did not have functional air conditioning and were closed to the public. On the eastbound leg of the trip, the train was experiencing some mechanical problem and did not perform very well. He believes these problems will affect ridership on Shore Line East.

Yvonne Loteczka reported that she had taken a test ride in a new MV-1 handicapped-accessible taxi vehicle. She found it to be very spacious. These vehicles will be available to everyone, not just riders with disabilities. She thought the new vehicles worked very well. Dennis King mentioned that 56 of these vehicles are now in service in Greater New Haven. Rich Schreiner added that the MV-1 uses a Ford drivetrain.

Rich Schriener closed the meeting at 2:20 pm.