

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of June 7, 2012

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room B  
Berlin Turnpike, Newington

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Mort Katz, Russ St. John, Richard Sunderhauf, Ed McAnaney, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Carpenter, Chris Adams, Robert Rodman. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King, Sherry Osterling. **Guests:** Mario Marrero, Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. No corrections were offered to the minutes of May 3 and they were accepted as written.

**Featured Speaker**

Mario Marrero of the Capitol Region Council of Governments mentioned that he had not spoken to the Commission in several years but that he always enjoyed discussing the Jobs Access program with the Commission and he appreciated its support of Jobs Access over the years. He also mentioned that he was very sorry to learn of the passing of previous chairman Tom Cheeseman.

Marrero has been at CRCOG for 13 years now so his tenure covers most of the 15 years since the Jobs Access program was started in August 1997, though it was then known as Welfare-to-Work. CRCOG is one of five regional agencies running Jobs Access programs.

Just last week, CRCOG signed a new funding contract with the Department of Social Services (DSS), one of the three funding agencies for the program. DSS is contributing \$925,000 toward the program, which is a 5% reduction from the previous year.

Marrero then went back to discuss the roots of the Jobs Access program in the Hartford area. Originally, Hartford's former mayor Mike Peters asked CRCOG for assistance in getting would-be employees out to job sites in the suburbs. An initial \$300,000 grant from DSS was used solely to modify Connecticut Transit bus routes to reach additional job sites. Three hundred and fifty-five riders were carried the first month. The first route adjustment provided service to the McDonald's in Avon, followed by routes to the Canton and Simsbury McDonald's. Then service was added to Foxwoods, initially with a van. That service just ended last fall, with many of the 40 remaining riders being long-term employees.

The Jobs Access program was then expanded into three pilot programs for Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven. ConnDOT and the Federal Transit Administration became involved as funding agencies, with the Jobs Access program now receiving \$2.2 million annually in Connecticut. Marrero noted that many Hartford households have no auto and, in some neighborhoods, this is true of over 50% of the households.

Five riders going to the same location at the same time was the threshold for starting a new service. The Job Developers Consortium was formed to locate employment opportunities and provide guidance to transportation coordinators. Transportation services now consisted not only of modified Connecticut Transit routes but of routes run by the Greater Hartford Transit District and the Rideshare Company. The Job Developers Consortium evolved into the Jobs Access Task Force consisting of transportation providers such as ConnDOT, Connecticut Transit, Rideshare, the Greater Hartford Transit District and New Britain Transportation, of social service agencies such as DSS and local agencies, of CRCOG and the Central Connecticut RPA, and of employment-related entities such as the Connecticut Department of Labor, CBIA, the Capitol Region Growth Council, the Capitol Region Workforce Development Board and of other local employment entities. Ridership grew to over 1,700 riders per month. For comparison, ridership in the Jobs Access program now runs over 4,000 per month for the Capitol Region.

Funding from DSS for Jobs Access has been cut 5-10% each of the last three years but overall ridership continues to grow. Some of this growth is due to higher gas prices, but the growth pattern has been going on for some time, so other factors are involved too. Currently, 98% of the overall Jobs Access funding for the Capitol Region goes to Connecticut Transit for route and hours of service extensions, while 2% goes to the GHTD and Rideshare. Rideshare is now operating only one Jobs Access van. At one time, it operated 12 vans for the program.

New federal guidelines for the program put the onus on the individual job seekers to find jobs rather than relying on groups such as the Jobs Access Task Force. The Jobs Access Task Force continues to meet every other month.

Though Jobs Access riders pay the same fares as the general public, the cost of providing different Jobs Access trips varies significantly. Jobs Access funding subsidizes the extra cost of the trips. The cost per trip for most Jobs Access services is between \$2.00 and \$5.00 per trip, with some higher and some lower. Attempts are made to keep costs low by increasing ridership on the less used routes. For DSS-funded services, all riders must be TANF recipients or TANF-eligible, while for ConnDOT-funded services, riders must simply be low income. (TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)

Marrero noted that the Bradley Flyer route operates from 4 am to midnight, with the early morning runs going through the North End until regular Connecticut Transit service kicks in. The 'L' Route from Copaco in Bloomfield to Buckland Hills avoids the need for a downtown Hartford transfer. The 'L' Route was recently cut from seven days a week to six days (no Sunday service) due to the funding cut. It operates from 6 am to 8 pm, serving shopping and employment trips.

In the New Britain area, New Britain Transportation runs Jobs Access service for New Britain, Plainville and Bristol including evening service from 6:00 to 10:00 pm. Even later service is run in Hartford and New Britain from Thanksgiving Friday through Christmas Eve to accommodate holiday shopping and retail employment. Marrero mentioned that the lack of grocery stores in Hartford also leads to more ridership.

Marrero said the other four service regions of the state are also doing well with their Jobs Access services.

### **Comments from the Public**

Jan Lindberg mentioned that the new Norwich Intermodal Center will be dedicated this Saturday. Chairman Maloney said he would have more on that topic later.

Terry Hall reported that the Niantic River Bridge replacement is coming along nicely. Some of the new track is already in place. The new bridge offers slightly more vertical clearance under the span for boaters. Terry also mentioned that Amtrak is gradually rolling out its new electronic ticketing program. It will debut on the Northeast Corridor later this year.

Terry also reported that there will be a public hearing in Hartford tonight on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Line rail service. Other hearings on the Springfield Line project will be held in North Haven and Enfield.

### **Reports from Operating Entities**

Rich Sunderhauf reported that a stationary fuel cell at Connecticut Transit's Hartford Division facility is being installed. Installation of the 400-kilowatt fuel cell, manufactured by Untied Technologies, began in April. Rich also mentioned that the ROADEO will be held this Sunday.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney reported, as Jan Lindberg had earlier mentioned, that the new Norwich Intermodal Center will be dedicated Saturday with Governor Malloy and Lt. Governor Wyman among the dignitaries present. Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) will be the main tenant of the \$22 million intermodal center, which will actually go into operation next Monday. Local taxi companies will also serve the intermodal center.

Maloney also noted a story first mentioned to us last month by Colin Pease that the Florida East Coast Railroad intends to begin operating a privately-run passenger rail service from Miami to Orlando, commencing in 2014. The \$1 billion project envisions operation of 12-14 trains daily between those cities, with the possibility of future service to Tampa and Jacksonville. The initial service will use 200 miles of existing track between Miami and Cocoa Beach and 40 miles of new track inland to Orlando.

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese mentioned that there has been recent progress at DEEP in getting a revised lease agreement in place for the Valley Railroad to operate on its DEEP-owned corridor. Revision of the lease agreement with Valley Railroad is a necessary pre-condition for getting a formal access agreement for the Providence and Worcester to use the Valley Railroad corridor at the Old Saybrook Wye.

## **New Business**

Fred Riese discussed several matters under New Business. First, the end of June will see the retirement of Steve Warren from Connecticut Transit and of former CPTC member Susan Simmat from OPM.

Fred also mentioned that the Commission will need to consider the fall public hearing schedule at the July 12 meeting. He will present a list of tentative sites at that time.

Next he mentioned that ConnDOT has gone out for public scoping on the new garage for the Stamford Transportation Center. ConnDOT is evaluating options for a public/private partnership to construct a garage of at least 1,000 spaces that would include transit-oriented development at a site within ¼ mile of the station. The original portion of the parking garage at the Stamford Transportation Center will be demolished as part of the final project.

Lastly, Fred mentioned that a meeting for the NEC Future study, which is a Federal Railroad Administration-led effort under the National Environmental Policy Act to develop and evaluate options to increase train speed and capacity on the Northeast Corridor will occur in Hartford on June 26. The NEC Future study effort will result in an Tier I Environmental Impact Statement identifying corridor needs and several options to address them, and subsequently a Tier II EIS to identify impacts of a specific program of improvements.

Kim Dunham of the Greater Hartford Transit District mentioned that the District has purchased two accessible taxi vehicles which will be running in the Hartford area soon.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.