

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission



Connecticut Welcomes It's First Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab
October, 2009

DATE: December 31, 2009

TO: Honorable M. Jodi Rell, Governor

Honorable Donald DeFronzo and Antonio Guerrero
Co-Chairpersons of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Honorable Joseph F. Marie, Commissioner of Transportation

Honorable Kevin J. Kelleher, Chairman, Transportation Strategy Board

FROM: Thomas Cheeseman, Chairman
Connecticut Public Transportation Commission

I am pleased to submit to you the 2009 Annual Report of the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission as required by the Connecticut General Statutes section 13b-11a(e). The common themes among the majority of the ten recommendations of the 2009 Annual Report are maximizing the utility of the existing capital investments and current public transportation services, as well as acknowledging two significant developments of the past year which will improve commuter rail service on the Danbury Branch of Metro-North. The information and testimony presented at the Commission's twelve monthly meetings and seven public hearings, together with the experience and expertise of the Commission's members, forms the basis of the recommendations presented herein. The following overview will briefly describe the recommendations of this year's Annual Report.

Overview of Recommendations

The Commission's first recommendation cautions against mandating changes to the structure of the local bus system in Waterbury in connection with the proposed Waterbury Transportation Center intermodal hub project. Relocation of the pulse point of the system from the Waterbury Green to the new site on Meadow Street will significantly compromise the efficiency of the existing route system. The mitigation measures proposed to compensate for these impacts are expensive and are likely beyond the ability of the project sponsors to control and deliver.

The second recommendation highlights the increasingly important role of bicycle use among commuters and encourages the provision of more amenities to support both intermodal trips involving bicycle use and trips made solely by bicycle.

Increasing access to information about transit services through the use of internet-based applications is promoted in the third recommendation. Many transit providers in other northeastern states have

already taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by this technology.

The Commission, in its fourth recommendation, expresses its appreciation for the advancement of the Danbury Branch signal system installation through the selection of this important project as a recipient of federal stimulus funding.

Efforts to promote and improve rail freight access into Connecticut are advocated in the fifth recommendation, with the ultimate goal being to increase the role of rail freight as a strategy to lessen the burden and congestion on Connecticut's highways.

Current efforts to quantify and address the deficiency in commuter rail parking are commended in recommendation #6, while pointing out that such parking supply concerns extend beyond train riders to commuter bus, vanpool and carpool riders whose needs also require attention.

Promotion of a bicycle and pedestrian trail in the Route 7 corridor using the right-of-way acquired for the Super 7 highway project is a local initiative advocated for further exploration in the seventh recommendation in furtherance of several policy objectives.

The Commission expresses its thanks to the Department for its prompt response to recent local efforts to reopen Wilton Station on the Danbury Branch. Renovation of the station and its scheduled reopening in October 2010 will be an extremely valuable action for commuters in the region.

The Commission's sole capital recommendation of the 2009 Annual Report is the advancement of the proposal for a bus storage and maintenance facility in Torrington to meet the longstanding needs of the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District. This project has received significant federal support but cannot advance until a twenty percent State match is authorized for an environmental site assessment and preliminary engineering work.

Lastly, the tenth recommendation of this Annual Report requests that the Department of Transportation resume the historic practice of formally responding to the recommendations of the Commission's Annual Report as was done from 1983 to 2007 but was omitted for the 2008 Annual Report. The Commission, as well as other readers of the Annual Report, found the insights and perspective of the Department on the recommendations to be very helpful.

In addition to the ten formal recommendations, two additional issues which were raised at the Commission's public hearings are discussed in this report. The issue of basic amenities to support local bus operations was mentioned at several hearings and has statewide applicability. These amenities include simple marketing measures such as the publication of schedules and route maps, the provision of adequate bus shelters, clear signage to designate bus stops, and the use of internet-based transit trip planning information, as highlighted earlier. The second issue, one of local and regional significance, is the preservation and perhaps enhancement of the current parking capacity at the Stamford rail station as planning progresses to replace the parking structure constructed in 1983.

Any lessening of parking capacity at this station would worsen an existing parking deficiency at Connecticut's busiest train station.

Members of the Commission welcome your comments on the recommendations contained in the Annual Report. We appreciate your consideration of these proposals and we welcome the

opportunity to meet with you to discuss actions that can be taken to implement these recommendations. The Commission looks forward to receiving the Department of Transportation's responses which are due February 1, 2009.

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**ANNUAL REPORT
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

DECEMBER 31, 2009

COVER PHOTO:

The State's first ADA-compliant taxi, operated by Metro Taxi, went into service on October 14 in New Haven. It will be available for 24-hour service. The Commission's Annual Reports of 2005 – 2007 had recommended that all larger taxi companies have at least one ADA-compliant vehicle in their fleets.

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CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

As constituted by Section 13b-11a (a) of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission is composed of eleven gubernatorial and eight legislative appointees, as well as ex-officio representatives of the Commissioners of the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, and the co-chairmen of the Transportation Committee of the General Assembly. Current members, including the designees of the State agencies, are listed below.

Christopher Adams

Chris has been an attorney in the Connecticut General Assembly for over twelve years, working closely with legislators, agencies and members of the public, taking policy initiatives, and making them work in practical ways. He is interested in transportation of all types, including bicycling (he's a licensed Category 3 racer), and he serves on the Old Saybrook Bikeways Committee. But his passion is railroad transportation. He has served on the Board of Directors of the New Haven Railroad Historical and Technical Association, and currently serves as its photo archivist. He also sits on the Board of Trustees for the Railroad Museum of New England. His background and interest in railroad history have given him some understanding of railroad operations and culture, and he's one of the few attorneys in Connecticut that has taken and passed the Northeast Operating Rules Advisory Committee exam. Chris joined the Commission in 2007.

Richard Carpenter

Mr. Carpenter is the former Executive Director of the South Western Regional Planning Agency, a position he held from 1966 until his retirement on March 31, 1999. In this position, he was involved in land use and transportation planning for that eight town region of one-third million population. Previous to being appointed to the CPTC, he was a member of the Governor's Railroad Advisory Task Force from 1974 to 1983, serving as its Chairman from 1974 to 1981. Mr. Carpenter's chief interest is the improvement of passenger and intermodal rail freight service. He served on the East of the Hudson Rail Freight Operations Task Force as the invited representative of Congressman Jerrold Nadler of New York. He is also a member of the Interstate 95 Coastal Corridor Transportation Investment Area Committee, one of five such committees working with the Transportation Strategy Board.

Mr. Carpenter is also the author of the book: "A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946 – Volume 1, The Mid-Atlantic States", published by Johns Hopkins

University Press in 2003. Volume 2, covering New York State and New England, was published in spring of 2005. In spring 2007, he completed Volume 3, which covers Indiana, Ohio and the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and which was published in December 2008.

Thomas Cheeseman - Transit District Representative

Mr. Cheeseman is the Administrator of the Middletown Transit District. He was District Manager for both Trailways of New England (1980-1986) and Greyhound Lines (1971-1979). Prior to that, he worked at United Technologies in East Hartford. From 1961 to 1969, Mr. Cheeseman served in the United States Air Force. He was past president of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation and the Connecticut Bus Association. He currently serves on numerous boards and committees throughout Middlesex County. Mr. Cheeseman was appointed to the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission in May of 2000, and currently serves as its chairman.

During 2005, Tom was appointed chairman of the Transportation Committee of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. He is serving as vice president of the Connecticut Association of Community Transportation and has just been named as the Connecticut delegate to the Community Transportation Association of America.

Morton N. Katz - Bus User

Attorney Morton N. Katz of Avon has been a consistent user of the Avon-Canton commuter bus to and from Hartford since its inception. His stop in Hartford is two blocks from Superior Court. He uses bus travel extensively to go to New York. The bus line to Springfield takes him to the bus terminal three blocks from the Amtrak station where he can catch the North Shore Limited to Cleveland. He makes frequent trips via Amtrak through the Northeast Corridor to New York, Delaware and Pennsylvania. He serves as a Magistrate in a number of G.A. Courts and is a Special Public Defender and a Justice of the Peace. Morton has twice received the Secretary of the State's Award for Dedicated Public Service.

William C. Kelaher – Rail Labor Representative

Mr. Kelaher is the Assistant International Representative for the Transportation Communication Union AFL-CIO. He represents the Railroad Clerks in New England, New York and New Jersey. He is also a former District Chairman of Lodge 227, New Haven, Connecticut that represents members of Amtrak and Metro-North in the states of Connecticut and New York. Bill resides in West Haven.

Gail Lavielle

Gail Lavielle is a Wilton resident and former commuter who believes strongly in the importance of public transportation as a key to maintaining and improving Connecticut's economic viability. Having spent more than twenty years as a finance, communications and marketing executive, she now splits her time between teaching undergraduates at UConn and public service. In addition to the Commission, she serves on several state and local boards and commissions, including the Wilton Board of Finance, the Wilton Energy Commission, and the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards.

Yvonne A. Loteczka - Mobility Impaired Transit User

Ms. Loteczka is chair of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Task Force. Yvonne was Co-chair of the Special Act 90-10 Elderly and Disabled Transportation Subcommittee. She also served on a subcommittee of the Wethersfield Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities that compiled and completed the first Directory of Services for the Disabled for the town of Wethersfield.

Kevin Maloney – Trucking Company Management

Kevin Maloney is the President/CEO of Northeast Express Transportation, Inc. which operates NEXTAir, NEXTCourier and NEXTDistribution. He presently serves on the Board of Directors of the Motor Transport Association of Connecticut and is the president of the Connecticut Messenger Courier Association. He served on the Board of Directors of the Air and Expedited Carrier Association for over twenty-five years and was its president from 1987 through 1991. He has served on a variety of air freight industry committees formed to establish standards of performance and communication for the non-integrated, door-to-door air freight product.

Edward McAnaney

Mr. McAnaney is judge of the Probate Court for the District of Suffield-East Granby. Additionally, he is a Magistrate of the Superior Court and practices law in Suffield. He has a life-long interest in railroading and is a conductor and brakeman for the Naugatuck Railroad.

Russell St. John - Railroad Company Management

Mr. St. John is the former President of the Connecticut Central Railroad, now a part of the Providence and Worcester Railroad, a regional freight carrier for whom he acts as a consultant. Russ is intimately involved in the rail freight business in Connecticut. He has worked with several groups to preserve rail freight lines in this state. Russ is active

on the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce where he serves on the Legislative Committee and the Rail Council. He currently serves as a member of Connecticut's Operation Lifesaver Program. He represents Granby on the Board of Directors of the Greater Hartford Transit District and has been interested in rail and bus commuter issues.

Richard Schreiner – Transit District Representative

Mr. Schreiner is Director of Service Development for the Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART) in Danbury. He has expertise in the areas of transit operations, transportation planning, service design, procurement, public relations and regulatory requirements. He is the former Executive Director of the Long Island Sound Taskforce (now Save the Sound), a non-profit environmental organization. Mr. Schreiner resides in Derby with his wife and children.

Richard Sunderhauf - Bus Labor Union Representative

Mr. Sunderhauf, appointed to the Commission in 1998, is active in the affairs of the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 425, AFL-CIO, which represents the bus operators and mechanics of Connecticut Transit's Hartford Division. Richard is a bus operator for that company. He is particularly interested in system and equipment improvements, increased service and ridership on public transportation, and decreased congestion on our roads. Richard resides in Rocky Hill with his wife Brenda.

Alan Sylvestre

Mr. Sylvestre brings a perspective that is informed by thirty years of using public transportation to get around the Greater Hartford area. Al is an American Planning Association-certified land use planner and works as an economic geographer at the Connecticut Department of Labor. His knowledge and experience are further enriched by his roles as board chairman and client of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, and as a music student who often finds himself having to schlep his guitar, amplifier, and books on the bus.

Jack Testani

Jack and his wife Suzanne have resided in Trumbull since 1989. Jack is employed by Icon International where he has served as Senior New Business Director since 2002. He is also chairman of the Trumbull Republican Town Committee, again serving since 2002 in this position, and was formerly a member of the board of directors of the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation. Jack is active in several local youth sports leagues either as a coach or a volunteer. These include Trumbull Youth Lacrosse, Trumbull Little League, AYSO soccer, Pop Warner football and Jump Rope for the Heart. Jack and Suzanne have two sons.

Robert Zarnetske

Mr. Zarnetske is an attorney in Norwich. He is a member of the Norwich City Council and was the former City Manager of Norwich. He serves as the secretary for Southeastern Area Transit (SEAT). Before returning to Connecticut in 2003, Bob spent more than ten years in Washington where he served as the Acting Assistant Director of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics at USDOT. Bob also served as a transportation policy advisor to U.S. Senators Paul Sarbanes and Christopher Dodd. Bob resides in Norwich with his wife and two children.

John Zelinsky

Mr. Zelinsky is a member of the Stamford Board of Representatives, on which he has served for 30 years. He serves as chairman of the Operations Committee and is a member of the Legislative and Rules, Public Safety and Health, Transportation, and Steering Committees. Mr. Zelinsky is a past commissioner and chairman of the Stamford Human Rights Commission, and he serves on numerous local civic, political, and charitable organizations. He is an Independent Insurance Agent and a real estate broker.

Ex-Officio Members

Peter Richter

Until his retirement on June 30, Peter Richter represented Commissioner Joseph Marie of the Department of Transportation. Mr. Richter served as Assistant Administrator of the ConnDOT Office of Rails.

Senator Donald J. DeFronzo

Senator DeFronzo represents the 6th Senatorial District which encompasses New Britain, Berlin and a portion of Farmington and also serves as a co-chairman of the Transportation Committee.

Representative Antonio Guerrero

Representative Guerrero represents the 29th House District, which encompasses Rocky Hill and portions of Newington and Wethersfield, and serves as co-chairman of the Transportation Committee.

Frederick L. Riese

Mr. Riese is the designee of Commissioner Amey Marrella of the Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Riese is a Senior Environmental Analyst with the Office of Environmental Review. He has served on the Commission since its inception in 1984, acting as Interim Chairman from 1997 through early 2002. He had previously served for five years on both the Connecticut Public Transportation Authority and the Governor's Railroad Advisory Task Force.

Philip L. Smith

Mr. Smith, a resident of Bridgeport, represents Secretary Robert Genuario of the Office of Policy and Management. Mr. Smith was appointed Under Secretary for Policy and Management on March 17, 2003. His areas of responsibility include transportation, housing, economic development, and labor and employment issues. Prior to his appointment as Under Secretary, Smith served as Director of Federal Programs at the Department of Economic and Community Development and Director of Strategic Planning and Coordination at the Department of Labor.

Connie Mendolia

Connie Mendolia is an environmental analyst in the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Pollution Prevention. She works on a wide variety of issues with a focus on planning, outreach, and assistance. Connie was a member of the Connecticut Climate Change Coordinating Committee responsible for developing Connecticut's Climate Change Action Plan. She promotes the use of mass transit as a better way of commuting to work and developed the DEP's Commuter Connections website and bulletin board to promote transit use and ridesharing.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION IN 2009

Chairman Tom Cheeseman served in his eighth year in that capacity in 2009. Morton Katz continued to serve as Vice Chairman, while Frederick Riese continued as Administrative Vice Chairman. Two new members, Gail Lavielle and Jack Testani, joined the Commission in 2009.

Monthly Meetings

As set forth in Connecticut General Statute's section 13b-11a (j), the Commission met on the first Thursday of each month. In 2009, five of these meetings were held at Union Station in New Haven, five were at the Connecticut Department of Transportation headquarters in Newington, and two were at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford.

Most of the Commission's meetings during 2009 included presentations by invited speakers. At the February meeting, Mariam Kluger and Carrie Vibert of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of the General Assembly provided a very detailed analysis of the findings and recommendations of its report on *Taxi and Livery Vehicle Regulation* in Connecticut. ConnDOT's Jim Redeker, Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Public Transportation, shared his approach to public transportation issues and discussed a range of timely initiatives at the Commission's March meeting. In April, ConnDOT's Assistant Public Transportation Administrator Peter Richter discussed the effort to prepare a new State Rail Plan to guide state and federal investment in Connecticut's rail system.

In May, Donald Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association and a member of the Governor's Stimulus Funding Work Group illuminated the functions, constraints and guiding philosophies of the latter group and highlighted some individual projects which would be supported by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. ConnDOT's Administrator for Transit and Ridesharing Michael Sanders addressed the June meeting to discuss the progress of the New Britain Busway project, for which he has responsibility, and to talk about fuel cell and hybrid buses. Sandra Fry, transportation planner at the Capitol Region Council of Governments, discussed the Northwest Corridor Study which evaluated transit solutions to better serve Hartford and Windsor at the August meeting.

At the September meeting, Gloria Mills, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation, outlined the public transportation elements of the just-passed State Budget. A transit-oriented development plan for Union Station and the surrounding area of New Haven was presented at the October meeting by Michael Piscatelli, Director of Parking and Transportation for the City of New Haven. Lastly, Margaret Smith Hale and others from the Independent Transportation Network of Connecticut briefed the Commission about the volunteer-based system of demand

response transportation their organization operates for senior citizens and visually-impaired riders at the November meeting.

The Commission was fortunate to have such knowledgeable and interesting speakers during the year and is very appreciative of their presentations to us.

Public Hearings

The Commission conducted seven public hearings during 2009 to gather public input from transportation users and providers, local officials and planners, non-profit organizations, and other members of the public. In the spring, the Commission held hearings in West Haven, Norwich and Norwalk. Storrs, Windsor, Torrington and Plainville hosted Commission public hearings in the fall. These hearings, a requirement of C.G.S. section 13b-11a(b), provide information which is then used both in the formulation of the Annual Report, and also to resolve conflicts, issues and questions raised at the hearings, either by providing the information at the hearing or by facilitating the contacts necessary to achieve a resolution.

A mixture of local, regional and statewide issues was raised at the Commission's seven hearings. Issues of statewide relevance that were raised at multiple hearings included the maintenance and expansion of Dial-a-Ride transportation services, shelters and other amenities for bus riders, better marketing and increased visibility of bus services, a wide range of opinions on the use of tolls on state highways, the need for more parking at rail stations, better inter-regional connections between bus systems, the promotion of transit-oriented development, and better accommodation for bicycles and their riders for both trips made completely by bicycle and those involving bicycles and other modes.

The importance of demand response or Dial-a-Ride paratransit services was voiced at many of the public hearings. The difficulty of providing trips at peak demand times due to system capacity constraints was highlighted. This forces travelers to use time slots with earlier arrivals or longer waits following medical or other appointments. For paratransit services funded under the State Matching Grant Program, some areas of the state were relatively unaffected by the delay in the adoption of a new State budget, while in other areas, services funded under this program had to be suspended for up to three months. The use of volunteer drivers to serve some paratransit trips is increasing.

Multiple hearings drew testimony on the need for improvements in various amenities for bus riders. The need for bus shelters to provide weather protection for riders was mentioned. Many bus systems do not have any standardized signage or any signage at all, to mark bus stop locations. This not only makes bus travel more difficult for individual travelers but also lessens the public visibility and awareness of the bus system overall. A related need is that for modest additional funds to publish schedules,

brochures and route maps and to otherwise market bus systems. Speakers at several hearings noted the low level of public awareness of the local bus system among the general populace.

The Transportation Strategy Board's *Connecticut Electronic Tolling and Congestion Pricing Study*, for which public hearings were being conducted concurrent with the Commission's spring public hearings, inspired a wide range of comments regarding tolls. It is fair to say that there was no consistent theme to these comments. Sentiments both for and against tolls, as well as concerns about the local traffic impacts of particular tolling options, were expressed at the spring public hearings.

Better inter-regional bus connections were highlighted as needs at the Plainville and Norwalk hearings. The difficulty of making connections from the Bristol and New Britain areas to Meriden and Middletown was called out at the Plainville public hearing, while the importance of the bus service links between Danbury and Norwalk was discussed in Norwalk. A need for bus service from Storrs into Hartford was raised at the Storrs public hearing. This need had been expressed by numerous speakers during a 2008 Commission hearing in Willimantic.

The desires to use transit as a principal mode to serve new development in downtown Storrs and in employment areas across Windsor were prominently featured in the hearings at those two locations. Windsor officials discussed the major planning efforts which have taken place to design a transit network better able to serve its major employment sites, while also designing future development so that it can more efficiently be served by public transportation.

The need for additional parking at rail stations was raised only at the Norwalk hearing but continues to be a pressing issue all along the New Haven Line and Shore Line East corridors, as well as at some branch line stations. The desire for bicycle racks at train stations and commuter lots, more bicycle lanes on major roads, accommodating bicycles on peak hour trains, and more public education about bicycle safety were also expressed at the Norwalk hearing.

Several issues of more local scope were also raised at individual hearings. Foremost among these was the call at the Norwalk hearing for the reopening of Wilton Station on the Danbury Branch. At the same hearing, several speakers expressed their opposition to the routing of the Norwalk Transit District's Route 12 bus over Flax Hill Road, feeling that road was not appropriate for such use. A call for the extension of bus service on Route 6 from Bristol westward to Terryville and Plymouth, and also south on Route 10 into Southington, was heard at the Plainville hearing. This need has long been a priority in the Central Connecticut Planning Region. Lastly, the need for a new bus storage and maintenance facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District was again strongly expressed at the Torrington public hearing.

More detailed discussion of these issues and other testimony can be found on pages 28-57 of this Annual Report.

Other Activities and Events

During the past year, many Commission members took part in transportation-related events or served in various capacities related to the Commission's goals.

Chairman Tom Cheeseman attended the Community Transportation Association of America convention in Providence, RI in May.

Gail Lavielle serves on the Governor's Rail Station Access and Parking Task Force, as well as on the committee constituted by the towns of Redding, Ridgefield and Wilton to develop the Norwalk River Valley Trail.

Russ St. John continued to serve as Connecticut's railroad representative on the Operation Lifesaver Committee, whose goal is to upgrade public awareness of, and safety at, rail at-grade crossings. Russ also serves on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Service study advisory committee.

Richard Schreiner currently serves on the ConnDOT-sponsored advisory committees for the Danbury Branch Electrification Study and the Governor's Rail Station Access and Parking Task Force. He attended the Northeast Passenger Transportation Association (NEPTA) annual meeting in Hartford this year.

Kevin Maloney attended national meetings of the Air and Expedited Motor Carriers Association in Las Vegas, the Express Carriers Association in Chicago, and the Connecticut International Traffic Association in Windsor Locks.

Bill Kelaher is on the steering committee for Amtrak's Operation Red Block Program, a drug and alcohol awareness and prevention program for Amtrak personnel.

Yvonne Loteczka serves on the Capitol Region Council of Governments' Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. Yvonne also attends the meetings of the Greater Hartford ADA Forum.

Mr. Carpenter serves as a member of the Transportation Strategy Board's Interstate 95 Corridor Transportation Investment Area Board. Mr. Carpenter has completed Volume 3 of A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946, covering Ohio, Indiana and Lower Michigan, published in December 2008. Volume 2, covering New England and New York state, was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in spring

2005. Volume 1, released in August 2003, covered the Mid-Atlantic States. He is currently working on Volume 4 of the Railroad Atlas covering Illinois, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

During 2009, Frederick Riese served on ConnDOT-sponsored advisory committees for Phase II of the Danbury Branch Electrification Study, the expansion of Interstate 84 from Waterbury to Danbury, the Route 8 Needs and Deficiencies Study, and the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Study.

Al Sylvestre serves on the Capitol Region Access to Jobs Task Force which meets bi-monthly to decide on funding transportation alternatives for individuals making the transition from welfare to work.

1. WITH THE RECENT RELEASE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT EVALUATION FOR THE PROPOSED WATERBURY TRANSPORTATION CENTER, THE COMMISSION AGAIN EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN THAT THE WATERBURY FIXED ROUTE BUS SYSTEM WILL SUFFER SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS TO ITS RIDERSHIP, SCHEDULES AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY IF THE PULSE POINT FOR THE PROPOSED SYSTEM IS RELOCATED FROM THE WATERBURY GREEN TO THE PROPOSED WATERBURY TRANSPORTATION CENTER ADJACENT TO THE TRAIN STATION. THE PROPOSED SITE IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE EFFICIENT OPERATION OF THE WATERBURY BUS SYSTEM, AND THOUGH THE WATERBURY TRANSPORTATION CENTER WAS CONCEIVED AS AN INTERMODAL TRANSIT CENTER, THE ABILITY OF THE BUS SYSTEM TO OPERATE OUT OF THIS NEW PULSE POINT LOCATION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AT BEST A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION.

The Commission supports the concept of linking transportation modes so as to facilitate trips involving multiple forms of travel. However, in the case of the Waterbury Transportation Center (WTC), the long, narrow nature of the project site and its location well removed from the existing system pulse point at the Waterbury Green do not function well for the bus system, which provides in excess of 5,000 trips daily and is by far the most important public transit mode in the city of Waterbury.

The narrow shape of the proposed site along the Waterbury Branch train tracks does not allow for efficient circulation of buses in and out of the site, particularly at the morning and afternoon travel peaks, when 22 to 25 buses must be accommodated. Nor does the proposed WTC location mesh well with the route structure of the Waterbury bus system. As noted in the environmental impact evaluation, relocation of the system pulse point from the Waterbury Green to the WTC site will make it impossible to adhere to the existing 30 minute and 60 minute route schedules. The proposed solution of lengthening the route schedules by ten minutes to 40 minutes and 70 minutes is seen by the study as requiring eleven new buses and a 30% increase in operating costs for the system. The Commission does not believe that it is realistic to expect such additional resources to be available nor would it be an efficient use of such resources merely to duplicate the service levels which currently exist.

Furthermore, while the Green is the #1 destination of bus riders due to the employment, services, senior housing and other amenities around it, there is no significant trip destination at the proposed WTC location. Only four of the seven daily trains on the Waterbury Branch of Metro-North operate during the hours when the CT Transit Waterbury Division bus service operates. Whether or not a new intermodal transportation center is built, the option of running a shuttle bus service between the Green and the existing train station or new intermodal center would be a more efficient solution to provide a bus/train connection for the relatively small number of travelers

desiring this link. The use of such a shuttle would avoid any disruption to the existing Waterbury fixed route bus system, disruption which could ultimately lose more riders from the system than the intermodal connection would add to it.

Lastly, as one of the project goals for the proposed WTC is to “Restore the Waterbury Green to its original civic function”, it is pointed out that bus riders are not typically ‘hanging out’ on the Green but rather are at the Green only for as long as it takes to catch a bus or make a transfer to another route. Relocation of the pulse point of the Waterbury bus system to achieve the goal of lessening loitering on the Green would ultimately be a tragic and ineffective miscalculation which would not achieve its intended purpose. It would, however, compromise the ability of the bus system to serve the legitimate travel needs of city and area residents.

2, NOTING THE INCREASING USE OF BICYCLES AS NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION, THE COMMISSION APPRECIATES THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT, REGIONAL BUS OPERATORS, METRO-NORTH RAILROAD AND SHORE LINE EAST TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRATION OF BICYCLES AND TRANSIT. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THESE ACTIONS BE CONTINUED AND THAT ADDITIONAL MEASURES BE TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE THE UTILITY AND USE OF BICYCLES.

The Federal Highway Administration states that integrating bicycles and transit "... enhances travel potential for both modes of travel by offering a number of advantages that each mode alone cannot provide..." The Commission's 2008 Annual Report noted encouraging developments toward this integration. Bicycles are now permitted on off-peak trains on the New Haven Line and its branches and on many reverse commute peak trips. They are also permitted on Shore Line East trains. Folding bicycles are generally permitted on trains at all times, peak as well as off-peak. Virtually all local buses are equipped with bicycle racks. These developments represent a solid start toward the goal of integrating bicycles with transit.

However, much more remains to be done. Bicycle storage locations at park and ride lots and transit stations continue to be inadequate. Current secure bicycle parking facilities, such as exist at Union Station in New Haven, should be expanded, and additional facilities should be developed. Moreover, the installation of bicycle racks on transit buses has proven very popular. This idea should be expanded and a policy developed to include the installation of such racks on state-sponsored vanpool vehicles. Finally, dedicated non-motorized transportation facilities such as walkways and bikeways continue to be inadequate to meet current demand and the inclusion of such facilities in all road projects should be at least considered.

Such efforts do have some cost, but compared to other transportation projects, they are relatively inexpensive. According to a recent Transportation Research Board study, rail providers considered improvements for bicycle access to be an insignificant capital cost. The same study indicated that basic bicycle amenities at park and ride lots or transit stops averaged only a few hundred to a few thousand dollars per location. Fortunately, for projects which prove to be more expensive, the General Assembly this session passed Public Act 09-154, An Act Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Access. The hallmark of this legislation is a requirement that 1% of transportation funds be devoted to programs that improve bicycle and pedestrian access, including but not limited to the creation of bikeways, sidewalks, and other facilities devoted to non-motorized transportation.

With these opportunities in mind, we encourage the Department to redouble its efforts to integrate bicycles and transit, and we look forward to working together to identify areas where additional attention can have the greatest possible impact.

3. THE COMMISSION BELIEVES THAT INTERNET APPLICATIONS SUCH AS THE GOOGLE TRANSIT TRIP PLANNER CAN BE VALUABLE TOOLS FOR CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE BUS RIDERS. SUCH APPLICATIONS CAN INFORM TRAVELERS OF THE SPECIFIC ROUTES AND SCHEDULES NEEDED TO COMPLETE A DESIRED TRIP BY TRANSIT. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT CONNECTICUT'S TRANSIT PROVIDERS FOLLOW THE LEAD OF CONNECTICUT TRANSIT IN DEVELOPING THE NECESSARY DATA BASE OF ROUTES, SCHEDULES AND STOP LOCATIONS, AND MAKE THIS INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC EITHER THROUGH THE GOOGLE TRANSIT PARTNERS PROGRAM'S TRANSIT TRIP PLANNER OR THROUGH OTHER PLATFORMS.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA), New Jersey Transit, the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA) and the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) are among the agencies that have signed on as Google Transit Partners and which have developed transit trip planners providing routing information and options to travelers through the Google platform. Though point-to-point trip specific routing is not yet available for Connecticut, Connecticut Transit is well advanced in its efforts to provide such information for its operating divisions. For its Hartford Division in particular, such travel planning information may be close at hand.

Connecticut Transit first began discussions with Google in May 2008 concerning participation in Google's Transit Partners Program. Connecticut Transit began to submit the necessary schedule and routing information shortly thereafter, but progress was delayed as Google made changes to the format of its system. These changes were completed by summer of 2009 and development of the Transit Trip Planner for the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit resumed. Testing of the Planner for the Hartford Division is proceeding, and the current expectation is that the site will be ready to go live for public access by the beginning of 2010. Connecticut Transit intends to place the operations of all eight of its divisions on the Transit Trip Planner eventually so that similar information will be available for the New Haven, Stamford, Waterbury, New Britain, Bristol, Meriden and Wallingford systems as well. However, the scheduling for the implementation of the other divisions is solely at the discretion of Google so it cannot be forecast with any degree of certainty just when this will occur.

Due to the volume of data involved in entering and testing all the bus stop locations, routes and schedules, Google has currently closed the door to any new transit partners in order that it can catch up on the backlog of data already submitted. However, the Commission encourages other transit operators to investigate the Google Transit Partners program and, if the program would have utility in their areas, to begin developing the necessary data base so that implementation for their regions can move forward when Google begins to accept new partners.

Connecticut Transit has also begun working on an independent transit planner using Trapeze software. Connecticut Transit's Trapeze trip planner may be more useful in some aspects than the Google trip planner in that it can recognize interlined routes, i.e., different routes served by the same vehicle without the need for a transfer, which Google does not. Such routes are common in many Connecticut bus systems. Connecticut Transit hopes to go live with its Trapeze trip planner by the end of 2009 for its Hartford, New Haven, Stamford and New Britain systems and the commuter express services in the Hartford area. This planner will provide times and routes for point-to-point trips and will ultimately be extended to all eight Connecticut Transit systems. The information developed for this platform will also be useful for eventual submission to the Google Transit Trip Planner. Such an independently-developed transit trip planner, not constrained by Google's workload and schedules or its limitation on accounting for interlined routes, may better serve smaller transit districts in Connecticut in providing useful schedule and routing information to their riders.

The Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority has also been pursuing a two-track approach to provide transit information on the internet. The Authority has been working with Google Transit to make its system information available there and, like Connecticut Transit, is developing an independent trip planner, which is currently undergoing testing. The trip planner is an add-on module to the Authority's scheduling and run-cutting software. GBTA expects to be able to offer this new service in March 2010. GBTA also expects to upload its system information to Google in March 2010. However, the date for full incorporation into Google Transit is unknown. In addition, GBTA is implementing a live bus tracking system called Web Watch which allows users to select a route and view real-time information about the location of all buses on that route. Users can also check the next departures from any bus stop or time point and can register to receive e-mail alerts providing real-time information. The bus tracker module is made possible through the GPS-based Automatic Vehicle Location system implemented at GBTA in partnership with ConnDOT.

4. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS GOVERNOR RELL, THE STIMULUS FUNDING WORK GROUP AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE SELECTION OF THE DANBURY BRANCH CENTRALIZED TRAFFIC CONTROL (CTC) SYSTEM INSTALLATION AS ONE OF THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT STIMULUS PROJECTS. THIS SIGNAL SYSTEM IS INTEGRAL TO THE PURSUIT OF VIRTUALLY ALL OPTIONS TO UPDGRADE SERVICE ON THE DANBURY BRANCH OF METRO-NORTH.

The allocation of \$30,000,000 of ARRA transportation stimulus funding to the Danbury Branch CTC project, when combined with \$24,000,000 in Federal Transit Administration and State funds already allocated to this project, will allow work to get underway in 2010. Already some early materials have been ordered and some vendor contracts have been signed. With design work for the CTC system already completed, installation work can begin in earnest in 2010, with the project expected to require two years to complete. Virtually all potential options for increased frequency of service or reduced travel times between Danbury and Norwalk require the installation of the CTC signalization on the line to accommodate an increased number of trains and provide for two-way service, allowing northbound and southbound trains to pass safely at sidings. The installation of the CTC signal system will also greatly expedite compliance with the Federal Railroad Administration's requirement for installation of positive train control technology by 2015.

The Commission also notes that the provision of \$2.5 million in funding in December 2008 by the Bond Commission for design work on this signal system allowed work to get underway in a timely fashion so that the Stimulus funds could be put toward construction, without losing time waiting for the completion of design work.

5. DUE TO GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTRAINTS, CONNECTICUT IS A FAIRLY DIFFICULT LOCATION FOR LONG DISTANCE RAIL ACCESS FOR FREIGHT. IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, THE PERCENTAGE OF FREIGHT MOVING INTO AND OUT OF THE STATE BY RAIL HAS DECLINED TO JUST A COUPLE PERCENT CURRENTLY. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT INVESTIGATE THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO PROMOTE A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE FOR RAIL FREIGHT BY IMPROVING ACCESS INTO CONNECTICUT.

- Amtrak charges a trackage fee for the use of its tracks, including the Amtrak-owned portion of the Northeast Corridor east of New Haven and the Springfield Line between New Haven and Springfield. By law, Amtrak's fee is set to recover Amtrak's fully allocated costs for maintenance of these lines and is therefore several times higher than the trackage fees customarily charged by other railroads, which are based on incremental costs. Currently, the Amtrak trackage fee rate, which is adjusted periodically for inflation, stands at just about \$1.00 per car mile. This fee is assessed on every car of a freight train, both revenue cars and non-revenue cars, and both inbound and outbound. This fee can add over \$100 per car for freight coming from Springfield to the Cedar Hill Yard in North Haven, for example. As the Springfield Line in particular is the most important rail freight gateway into Connecticut, Amtrak's trackage fee level has the effect of discouraging freight movement into the state by rail.

The Commission recommends that the Department investigate ways to reduce this level of fees. Ten years ago, then ConnDOT Bureau Chief Harry Harris negotiated a draft agreement with Amtrak to provide that freight traffic above a baseline level, representing the then current volume of freight traffic over Amtrak's lines, would be assessed a lower level of trackage fees. This agreement guaranteed Amtrak that the existing level of trackage fee revenue it received would be maintained (assuming traffic volumes did not decline) yet provided an incentive for the growth of freight volumes over the Springfield Line by assessing a lower fee on added traffic.

This previous effort did not yield a final agreement because the legal review by the freight railroad was never completed. Though this was a discouraging result, the same factors which made such an agreement desirable and beneficial ten years ago remain in effect today. With the State of Connecticut planning major infrastructure investments on the Springfield Line which will benefit Amtrak as well as the planned commuter rail service, the Department is in a favorable position to negotiate lower trackage fees on this line. Therefore, the Commission

recommends that this effort be revisited in the quest to shift more freight movement from our overcrowded highways to our underutilized rail lines.

- The State should work with Norfolk Southern and Pan Am railroads to extend the benefits of the new Patriot Corridor operation into Connecticut via the Connecticut River and Springfield Lines. Special emphasis should be given to restoring rail intermodal service to Hartford and New Haven to serve movements from the west, the north, including Canada, the northeast, including Maine and the Atlantic provinces, and from the southeastern US. The entry of Norfolk Southern as a partner with Pan Am through the creation of the jointly-owned Pan Am Southern Railroad represents a promising opportunity to expand the miniscule percentage of freight movements into and out of Connecticut which are made by rail.
- The Department should join and proactively participate in the meetings of the East of Hudson Rail Freight Task Force to represent Connecticut's interests in the developing initiatives in the greater New York metropolitan area such as the proposed cross harbor freight tunnel, the New York Cross Harbor rail car ferry, and locating dedicated rail intermodal terminals in the metro New York area east of the Hudson.

6. THE COMMISSION AGAIN RECOMMENDS THAT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND POLICIES BE DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS THE AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND PHYSICAL CONDITION OF ADEQUATE PARKING FOR USE BY CONNECTICUT COMMUTERS USING ALL FORMS OF TRANSIT. ADEQUATE PARKING IS NECESSARY NOT ONLY FOR TRAIN RIDERS BUT ALSO FOR THOSE WHO RIDE COMMUTER BUSES, OR PARTICPATE IN VANPOOLS AND CARPOOLS. THE GROWTH IN RIDERSHIP IN ALL THESE MODES HAS STRAINED PARKING RESOURCES, OFTEN BEYOND THEIR LIMITS.

The 2007 CPTC annual report made a recommendation for a strategic plan to address commuter parking shortages along the New Haven Line, followed in 2008 by a further recommendation to address commuter parking concerns beyond the New Haven Line.

The Commission recognizes and commends the formation of a rail station parking task force this year by ConnDOT Bureau Chief James Redeker as an important step to tackle this issue. The Task Force has held three meetings to date and has made progress in defining the problem and setting some direction for future steps to address at least some aspects of it.

Overall, the recession has provided some relief to parking shortages, but this is only a temporary respite. Further measures to provide access to transit services must be developed. Remote shuttles were instituted at Union Station in New Haven to help address parking shortages at that very busy station and this concept may have applicability at other locations. The new M-8 rail cars for the New Haven Line are on the horizon, and expansion of service on the Danbury, Waterbury and New Canaan Branches is being evaluated, but the value of these initiatives is constrained if riders cannot access expanded rail service because of insufficient parking. The replacement of the parking structure at Stamford Station could have significant temporary consequences for rail accessibility at Stamford, particularly if the property which has been considered as a temporary parking facility during construction becomes unavailable due to development, as has been rumored.

One facet of any plan to address parking at transit facilities should be a review of current practices for leasing existing lot space from public and private entities. The potential for incorporating the leasing of extremely short term car rental operations, such as *Zip Cars*, at appropriate locations should also be evaluated.

7. THE COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE CONTINUED EXPLORATION OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BICYCLE AND WALKING TRAIL EXTENDING FROM NORWALK TO DANBURY ON THE LAND FORMERLY RESTRICTED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY IN THE ROUTE 7 CORRIDOR.

A group representing the towns of Redding, Ridgefield, Wilton and Norwalk is currently evaluating the concept and feasibility of constructing a multi-purpose non-motorized trail in this corridor. Representatives from Danbury are expected to join the group as well. The proposed trail would be designed for multi-use, including uses beyond recreation. The Commission supports the serious consideration of this project as one which: 1) fits the Department's objective of developing multi-modal transportation solutions, and 2) provides citizens with alternative commuting options beyond automobile reliance. The development of a public multi-use trail and corridor would also promote the planned use of the corridor for transportation purposes.

Officials of all the towns represented on the working group have confirmed their support for the continued exploration of this project. The Commission is aware that any final recommendation on a conceptual plan for this trail would involve the solicitation of public input in each of the towns, as well as from the two regional planning agencies and other entities. In addition, the Commission notes that a multi-use, non-motorized trail within a linear park corridor would promote other public policy goals such as encouraging alternate modes of travel including bicycling and walking, promoting exercise and public health, and protecting open space from potential development.

8. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS THE DEPARTMENT FOR ITS SUPPORT IN ADVANCING THE PLANNING FOR A NEW BUS STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY FOR THE NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT TRANSIT DISTRICT AND ASKS THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUE TO SEEK THE NECESSARY FUNDING TO ADVANCE THIS PROJECT. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE BUS FACILITY AND THIS WORK CAN PROCEED AS SOON AS STATE MATCHING FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE. THE COMMISSION ENCOURAGES THE DEPARTMENT TO CONTINUE TO AGGRESSIVELY SEEK BOND COMMISSION FUNDING TO PROCEED WITH THIS WORK.

The need for a vehicle storage and maintenance facility for the vehicle fleet of the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District was identified as long ago as the *Connecticut Statewide Bus System Study* in 2000. Though there have been several significant changes in the situation at the NWCTD since that time, the key problems remain. The District leases an outdoor lot for storage of its vehicles. It has no fueling facilities, no capacity for vehicle maintenance, and no indoor storage capacity for its 22 vehicles. Five of these vehicles must be operated out of a separate site owned by the Kelley Transportation Company as they cannot be accommodated at the leased facility. The District purchases fuel from the City of Torrington, to whom a surcharge of 25c per gallon is paid, with this surcharge ultimately being reimbursed by the State. All vehicle maintenance must be contracted out, since there is no capacity to perform this work in-house.

Some progress has been achieved toward the development of a new bus facility. A preferred facility location on Lincoln Street has been selected.¹ Almost two million dollars in federal earmarked funds have been secured for this project in the years 2006-2009, which when combined with the required 20% State match provides \$2,456,430 toward this project. However, progress is currently delayed until the State Bond Commission approves \$169,429 for the State's 20% match for an environmental site assessment and preliminary engineering work. The Commission fully recognizes that all State funds, including Bond Commission authorizations, are tight in the current fiscal climate. The support of ConnDOT in repeatedly requesting such funding is appreciated and the Department is encouraged to continue its efforts to secure this funding and move the project forward.

The Commission is aware that the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District is not the only transit system currently operating out of antiquated, leased or non-contiguous facilities. Others including the Windham Regional Transit District, Northeast Transportation (Waterbury) and the Estuary Transit District have similar needs.

¹ 1 An earlier preferred location has been sold and developed for other purposes. The Lincoln Street site represents the second ranked site from a 2004 feasibility study conducted by a consultant for the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials and the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments.

9. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS THE DEPARTMENT FOR ITS QUICK ACTION TAKEN IN FORMULATING A PLAN FOR THE RENOVATION AND REOPENING OF WILTON STATION ON THE DANBURY BRANCH RAIL LINE. THIS STATION HAS BEEN CLOSED SINCE 2005, LEAVING LOCAL COMMUTERS WITH NO OPTION FOR SHELTER IN INCLEMENT WEATHER BUT TO WAIT IN THEIR CARS AND THEN RUSH TO THE PLATFORM TO MEET AN APPROACHING TRAIN. RENOVATION AND REOPENING OF THIS STATION WILL PROVIDE NOT ONLY BASIC SHELTER BUT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A MODEST EATERY AT THE STATION TO PROVIDE FOOD AND OTHER AMENITIES. THE COMMISSION APPRECIATES THE QUICK ACTION TAKEN ON THIS ISSUE, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A PLAN TO RENOVATE THE STATION FOR REOPENING IN OCTOBER 2010.

At the Commission's May 19 public hearing in Norwalk, multiple speakers including the first selectmen of Wilton, Ridgefield and Weston called for action to reopen Wilton Station and cited the relatively modest level of effort and expense that would be required to accomplish this. The Commission wrote to Commissioner Marie on June 16 (see letter on pp. 58-60) expressing the needs cited at the public hearing and the Commission's opinion that this project was an opportunity to acquire some local goodwill and positive public relations at relatively minimal cost. The Department reacted quickly to both local initiative and the Commission's request by conducting two site assessments of Wilton Station on July 10 and August 4 to evaluate the extent of needed repairs. Using this information, and following further discussions with the Town of Wilton, a plan was announced on October 21 to perform approximately \$190,000 in repairs on a schedule which contemplates an October 2010 opening of the station.

The prompt action by ConnDOT to address this important local need will be of great value to commuters in Wilton, Ridgefield and Weston and will demonstrate governmental responsiveness to the needs of rail commuters and, more generally, to all constituents along the southern Danbury Branch.

10. THE COMMISSION RESPECTFULLY REQUESTS THAT THE DEPARTMENT RESUME THE PRACTICE OF PREPARING AND RELEASING ITS RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE COMMISSION'S ANNUAL REPORT. THE DEPARTMENT HAS FORMALLY RESPONDED TO THE COMMISSION'S ANNUAL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FORMATION OF THE COMMISSION IN 1983 THROUGH THE 2007 ANNUAL REPORT. THESE RESPONSES WERE VALUABLE TO THE COMMISSION IN PROVIDING THE DEPARTMENT'S PERSPECTIVE AS WELL AS HIGHLIGHTING ANY FACTORS WHICH THE COMMISSION MAY HAVE OVERLOOKED IN OFFERING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS. EXTERNAL ENTITIES SUCH AS REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES AND TRANSIT DISTRICTS ALSO FOUND THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSES USEFUL. THE COMMISSION HAS ALWAYS APPRECIATED CONNDOT'S EFFORTS TO PREPARE AND PROVIDE ITS RESPONSES.

The Commission requests that ConnDOT resume its traditional practice of providing its analysis of the annual report recommendations. Through the responses typically were only two or three paragraphs in length, they were valuable to the Commission and to readers of our annual report. They also helped the Commission address points raised by the Department when recommendations on a specific topic were offered in a succeeding report.

AMENITIES FOR FIXED ROUTE BUS SYSTEM RIDERS

Though the Commission offers no formal recommendation on the subject of local bus system amenities, various facets of this topic were raised at several of the Commission's hearings during 2009. Many of these comments related to the lack of public awareness concerning the specifics of the operations of the local bus service and the impact of this awareness gap on the development of increased ridership. In comparison to the cost of operating the local bus systems, the enhancement of ridership awareness and amenities involves very modest outlays, but can develop new ridership and increased revenues for the currently existing bus services.

The Commission's public hearings in Torrington and Plainville touched on the first aspect of this issue which is a low public awareness of the existing local bus services. Testimony from the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District cited a need for \$5,000 to \$7,000 in marketing funding to print posters, brochures and schedules to publicize existing services and to update the District's website, which receives 22,000 hits per month but which needs updating. Testimony of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency at the Commission's hearing in Plainville cited a lack of visibility of the fixed route bus system, the services of which seem to be known only to the system's current users. With an eye toward remedying this situation, the City of New Britain successfully applied for a grant of \$200,000 of Transit Enhancement Funds from the Federal Transit Administration for bus shelters, signage, kiosks and bicycle racks. These measures should improve system visibility and thereby draw additional riders onto the system.

The lack of adequate bus shelters for riders was also spoken of by a commuter express bus rider at the Torrington hearing. Such shelters not only afford protection in adverse weather, which was the need cited at this hearing, but also provide an opportunity to enhance bus system visibility and also to provide information on service routes and schedules. The lack of standardized bus stop signage in the New Britain and Bristol areas has been cited as the most critical need to enhance system visibility and better serve existing and prospective bus riders in the region.

An eight-year effort to provide standardized bus stop signage for Waterbury's fixed route bus system finally came to a successful conclusion in the second half of 2009 with the installation of approximately 700 signs in Waterbury and four surrounding towns marking each stop in the system. Efforts such as this increase the public benefit realized from the existing transit operations and from the public dollars which support them.

Recommendation # 3 of this report speaks to another effort to leverage the value realized from existing publically-supported transit services. The use of internet-based transit trip planning services can be an additional vehicle for providing route and schedule information about local bus service to the public, as well as having the broader

value of planning longer trips which may involve multiple transit systems. While still in the early stages of implementation and available only for some transit systems, such internet-based applications have great utility for both those who are dependent on public transportation for their travel needs and those who may be interested in using public transit as an option to private automobile travel.

PARKING AT STAMFORD TRANSPORTATION CENTER

Stamford Station, more formally known as the Stamford Transportation Center, has the highest passenger volume of any railroad station in Connecticut and is, therefore, a key link in our public transportation system. The original portion of the parking structure at the station will need to be replaced within the next few years. Constructed in 1983 by the City of Stamford, this 800-car parking structure, which is now owned by the State, is in deteriorating condition and was recently rehabbed by ConnDOT in a \$700,000 project.

The Commission commends the City of Stamford for undertaking a long-term evaluation of options for Stamford Station through its report *Stamford Transportation Center Master Plan* which will be released in January 2010. The *Master Plan* will address multiple issues in connection with the station and will serve as guidance for the operation and governance of this facility for a planning horizon extending to 2030.

In regard to the critical element of parking, the report looks at multiple options to preserve or expand the existing 2000-space parking capacity at the station, of which 800 spaces are provided by the 1983 vintage garage. The Commission does not have the final copy of the report and is not in a position to recommend a specific option or options. However, the Commission does support the preservation of the existing 2000-space parking capacity, and ideally some enhancement of that capacity, at either the existing location and/or another site or combination of sites which will provide parking within convenient walking distance of the station. Any diminution of parking capacity within the walking distance radius of the station will negatively impact New Haven Line and Amtrak service since the local parking supply is already in a deficit situation relative to demand.

2009 Public Hearings Schedule

In accordance with C.G.S. Section 13b-11a (b), the Commission is directed to hold public hearings in each of the metropolitan areas within the state, as determined by the Commission, for the purpose of determining the adequacy of rail, bus, motor carrier, and other public transportation services and facilities.

The Commission conducted a schedule of seven public hearings, as listed below, during the spring and fall of 2009.

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>MODERATOR</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Norwich	Robert Zarnetske	May 5	Norwich City Hall
Norwalk	Fred Riese	May 19	Norwalk City Hall
West Haven	Fred Riese	June 2	West Haven City Hall
Storrs	Kevin Maloney	September 1	Mansfield Town Hall
Windsor	Morton Katz	September 15	Windsor Town Hall
Torrington	Fred Riese	October 6	Sullivan Senior Center
Plainville	Fred Riese	October 20	Plainville Municipal Center

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Norwich City Hall

Room 335

Norwich, Connecticut

Tuesday, May 5, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Robert Zarnetske
Yvonne Loteczka
Kevin Maloney
Russ St. John
Gail Lavielle

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Peter Richter
Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Robert Zarnetske opened the hearing at 7:35 PM, welcoming the attendees and introducing Commission members and ConnDOT staff. He gave a brief overview of the Commission and of the purpose of this evening's hearing.

STATE RAIL PLAN PRESENTATION:

Zarnetske then turned the floor over to **Peter Richter** of ConnDOT who gave a Power Point briefing on the new State Rail Plan, which is currently under preparation by the Department. Richter pointed out that half of the rail lines shown on a map of Connecticut's rail network in 1900 are no longer in service.

Richter discussed two goals that have been adopted by the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG). These goals are a doubling of passenger rail ridership by 2030 and a 20% increase in rail freight usage by the same year. Achieving the first goal will require an average annual growth rate of 3% in passenger rail ridership, which is double the historic 1.5% average annual rate of increase.

\$1.9 billion in Federal capital improvement grants will be available for fiscal years 2010 through 2013 to implement rail improvements identified in state rail plans, with another \$325 million in congestion mitigation grants also available over the same time frame.

Richter then outlined some of the major initiatives currently underway in Connecticut. ConnDOT is working with Amtrak to increase service on the Springfield Line to 36 trains per day. Also, a \$21,000,000 intermodal transportation center is being developed here in Norwich. The Shore Line East Phase I expansion to provide weekend service has been implemented. Phase II of Shore Line East expansion to provide service to New London is being pursued now.

Richter mentioned that the two rail lines which serve Norwich are no longer connected. Moderator Zarnetske told Richter that the rail line along the west bank of the Thames River is in

bad shape and is subject to a 15 mph operating limit. He cited improved passenger rail service as necessary to address the traffic congestion that threatens southeastern Connecticut and particularly threatens the local casino industry. If I-95 traffic gets too bad, New York City gamblers can just as easily go to the Poconos.

The schedule for the State Rail Plan is to have an interim draft by June, have this draft reviewed by a stakeholders group, and have a final draft for public review by late summer.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Moderator Zarnetske then read into the record a letter received from **Kay Molochko** who was unable to attend tonight's hearing. Ms. Molochko sees an urgent need for rail and bus service in Norwich, including for trips to church and child care and for recreational purposes. Improved taxi service is also needed, as are wheelchair tie-downs on trains.

Terry Hall discussed the problems facing the development of good rail service in Connecticut. The state has three good north-south corridors (the Housatonic Railroad, the Springfield Line, and the New London to Worcester line) but poor options for east-west rail travel. The Northeast Corridor is too curvy to accommodate true high speed service, i.e., 110 mph or greater. South of New York, you have high speed service on the Northeast Corridor, but not north of the city. The use of ACELA Express for business trips was increasing until the recession but is now stagnant.

Rail ridership has now pulled even with air travel in serving the New York-to-Boston market. South of New York City, rail is quicker than air and has a bigger market share than commuter air does in the southern half of the Northeast Corridor.

Hall recommended that the Northeast Corridor along Connecticut's shoreline should be straightened out, perhaps using tunnels. He noted that Amtrak is under a federal mandate to prepare a plan to get travel times between New York and Boston under 2 ½ hours. However, there is the separate problem of the east-west movement of freight in Connecticut. It is not feasible to load the shoreline corridor down with freight because of the level of passenger service on the line. Hall sees the best solution as a more northerly east-west route employing tunnels to make it straight.

Hall wrapped up by noting some positive developments for rail. The State of Massachusetts is actively working to extend the proposed Springfield Line service further north, while the Northern New England Rail Passenger Association is extending the Downeaster rail service further north into Maine. The Federal government is evaluating 10 or 11 corridors for high speed rail service and will select three of them for funding by the end of the summer. Hall sees the likely selections as including one eastern corridor, one western corridor and one corridor in the central US. Finally, Hall said he supports the extension of Danbury Branch rail service to New Milford.

Jan Lindberg, a Council Representative for the National Association of Railroad Passengers, suggested that the State Rail Plan show all state-owned rights-of-way whether they are currently operated or not. He also advocated that eastern Connecticut receive its fair share of any rail

investment funds. He faulted the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments for being more concerned with bus service but not paying much attention at all to rail service.

Peter Richter responded to Mr. Lindberg's comments by noting that many rail corridors were land banked by the State in the 70s and 80s to protect them for future use. These corridors could be used again for rail if the need arises. Fred Riese noted that even when the former rail corridors have been leased by DEP for recreational uses, it is recognized that rail reuse of the rights-of-way takes priority over recreational uses. Kevin Maloney mentioned the general rule of thumb that freight movements of less than 700 miles are generally not economic by rail.

Mike Gilluly of Norwich wondered what a 20% increase in train ridership would mean in terms of NOx and carbon dioxide emissions. Of the 280 trains per day using the New Haven Line, Gilluly said 255 of them rely on electricity generated by power plants. In response, Peter Richter noted that Connecticut will be addressing transportation-related emissions in part by using some of its federal stimulus money to purchase 75 more hybrid buses and that SEAT is operating an experimental alternate fueled vehicle.

Kathleen Murphy expressed the opinion that tolls on our highways would cause more congestion. She also felt that we could talk about rail all night long but, in the final analysis, rail does not benefit southeastern Connecticut because the area does not have sufficient population density for rail. Murphy travels on Interstate 395 to New London every day. From an environmental standpoint, she would love to ride a bus to New London every day but it is not economical to run such a service. But she believes that bus service in southeastern Connecticut needs to be improved.

She noted that the new transportation center in Norwich will break ground this summer. But we need more. The times, routes and prices of the SEAT bus service are wrong for her to use the bus. Lastly, Murphy said the government should help the public to buy efficient, reasonably priced, environmentally-friendly vehicles.

Moderator Zarnetske closed the public hearing at 9:24 pm.

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing
Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, Connecticut
Tuesday, May 19, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Thomas Cheeseman
William C. Kelaher
Gail Lavielle
Yvonne Loteczka
Richard Schreiner

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Dennis King
Peter Richter

INTRODUCTION:

Fred Riese opened the hearing at 7:50 PM and informed those in attendance of the dual purposes of tonight's hearing to present the draft State Rail Plan for public comment and to receive comment on all aspects of public transportation for use by the Commission for its Annual Report and other duties. Gail Lavielle introduced the elected officials present.

STATE RAIL PLAN:

Peter Richter of ConnDOT gave a brief PowerPoint presentation regarding the State Rail Plan, which is currently under preparation by the Department. Richter noted that during his 30 year career at ConnDOT, passenger rail ridership in the state has increased from 17,000,000 per year to 36,000,000 annually. The Coalition of Northeastern Governors has adopted a goal to double rail ridership within the next 20 years. Attainment of this goal will require doubling the historic 1.5% per year long-term growth rate in rail ridership.

Richter then opened the floor for questions and comments relative to the State Rail Plan. Points rose concerning the State Rail Plan included:

Comment 1: Will the Plan include any provision for shuttle services to rail stations as a strategy to alleviate parking capacity problems at the stations? Richter confirmed that the Plan will contain a discussion of intermodal options including shuttles serving selected rail stations.

Comment 2: Is there any timetable for the identified projects to come to fruition? The commenter acknowledged that some incremental improvements have been made, but in real terms he felt that little has been done. Richter noted that individual projects listed in the state plan include timetables. However, environmental requirements can be time consuming and delay projects. But Richter observed that major improvements are already underway. New rail cars have been ordered. Another significant improvement has occurred on the Danbury Branch where service has been increased from 14 to 22 trips per day.

Comment 3: Hal Clark, a Selectman from Wilton, said Connecticut needs to have some sense of urgency regarding transportation needs. We need to have non-highway transportation options to make sure this state remains viable. Cars aren't the only solution.

Richter noted that ConnDOT and state legislators are working hard on improvements to mass transit, such as catenary replacement on the mainline, the Danbury Branch signal system being designed using stimulus program funding, and the new M-8 rail cars being delivered this year.

Comment 4: Molly McKay of the Sierra Club said her organization is holding roundtable meetings on transportation issues to get more pressure on Governor to move these projects along.

Fred Riese then closed the question and comment session on the State Rail Plan and opened up the general CPTC hearing.

CPTC HEARING PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Sen. Toni Boucher of the 26th District thanked the Commission for its work in advocating for public transit. She singled out Fairfield County as the area of Connecticut with the greatest transportation needs, the greatest transit use, and the greatest population density. So, while geographic balance in transportation spending is desirable, it should be recognized that Fairfield County has greater needs than other areas of the state. Senator Boucher is a long-term advocate of upgrading train service and rail stations, especially on the Danbury Branch. Ignoring the needs of the Danbury Branch has clogged up the stations of the New Haven main line and the Harlem Line. She hears from her constituents all the time that they need and desire upgraded rail service as well as better bus service.

Boucher also advocates a cautious approach to tolling. Connecticut needs funding for transportation services but she is concerned about potential diversion of traffic around tolling sites and the outlook for horrendous traffic on Route 1. There is also the issue of the potential loss of federal highway funds if tolls are reinstated. She is requesting a study to examine the legal and financial impacts of toll implementation.

Bill Brennan, First Selectman of Wilton, said he would start off his remarks with a compliment; he noted that the Town of Wilton had a good experience with ConnDOT during the project to widen Route 7. There was good communication on the project and it was completed on time.

Rail stations and amenities are a problem in Wilton. Wilton Station has been locked for several years. No interior or exterior maintenance is being done. Brennan has written Deputy Commissioner Albert Martin and Commissioner Joseph Marie concerning Wilton Station and the need to reopen it. Wilton commuters sit in their cars in winter to keep warm, then need to dash to their trains. The situation is unacceptable and unfair. \$76,000 of stimulus money has been programmed to go to Wilton Station improvements but now ConnDOT has reprogrammed this money toward platform, canopy and stairway repairs.

Cannondale Station is open, with the renovations completed, in large part due to assistance from Senator Boucher. Cannondale Station is well maintained, with good facilities. After ConnDOT rejected a Town plan to renovate this station for \$200,000, it spent \$600,000 and over one year, a very costly and slow process. There has got to be a better way to do facility repairs and upgrades. Regarding Wilton Station, Brennan says ConnDOT insists on going through the lengthy RFP process there also, even though a local proposal has been made to renovate the station.

Woody Bliss, First Selectman of Weston, endorsed the comments of Senator Boucher and Wilton First Selectman Brennan. He hopes that the State Rail Plan does not get people thinking in silos but rather to approach transportation as an integrated system with all modes working together. The Plan should consider how bus transit and pedestrian trips fit into the rail network.

Traffic congestion is a problem on Interstates 95, 91 and 84 and Route 15. Congestion pricing could be a useful tool to get people onto transit and to provide capacity on roadways. If 5-15% of the travel could be shifted, it would get the flow on the roads going again.

Railroad station parking capacity is also a problem, with waiting lists as long as 4-6 years for station parking spots. Station conditions also need improvement. Transit-oriented development and its potential economic benefits should be considered for bus rapid transit and light rail systems.

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman of Ridgefield, concurred with his three predecessor speakers. Marconi sees much frustration in the area over the pace of transportation projects. In 1999, Representative Jim Maloney got \$2,000,000 to study electrification and other improvements for the Danbury Branch. The study began in 2000. It's now 2009 and the study still is not done. In that time period, a whole rail system was initiated between Quincy and Scituate, Mass. In fact, that project was completed in two years, despite much public opposition. But in Connecticut, the process is mired in political rhetoric, and ConnDOT does not get adequate funds to see projects to fruition, Marconi stated.

Marconi sees too much focus on planning studies. He would like to see some short-term projects so that area residents can see some progress being made. The addition of the two new Danbury Branch trains is a good example of such projects, although he would like to see more Danbury Branch service, including the extension of service to New Milford.

The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) has advocated for years to push transportation projects forward. The Harlem Line shuttles got done very quickly after New York State identified a need for them because Connecticut cars were taking up all the parking on the Harlem Line. If not for New York's involvement, the shuttles would not have happened.

Marconi cited Route 7 expansion as having taken 10 years and now it has run into a problem with unpermitted filling of wetlands. He feels ConnDOT has lost its credibility with taxpayers. Fairfield County produces 70% of the state income tax revenues, Marconi said, but isn't getting much in return. The State needs to set more attainable short-term goals. He closed by asking that Wilton Station be reopened soon, for the sake of Wilton First Selectman Bill Brennan.

Tony Carlo of Norwalk expressed his concerns about the Norwalk Transit District's Route 12 bus which added Flax Hill Road to its route beginning December 10, 2008. He has not seen any riders on this bus, which passes in front of his house ten times per day. Carlo complained that he received a very rude response when he called the Norwalk Transit District with questions about the route. Flax Hill Road is hilly and narrow and not appropriate for buses. The buses add to the problems encountered on that road since Route 136 was closed to truck traffic. Flax Hill Road is

now overloaded with truck traffic including trucks at 2 AM and 4 AM and twenty UPS trucks per day.

Jim Cameron, Chairman of the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council, said that he used to be an optimist on transit matters but that is no longer the case. Regarding the State Rail Plan, Cameron feels that, in order for it to be successful, the Transportation Strategy Board will have to endorse and embrace it. Unless the TSB backs the Plan, the Plan means nothing.

However, Cameron feels that the TSB has lost its focus and turned into a debating society. He cited the TSB's electronic tolling study as an example. There is no public support for tolls. The Governor is against them. It's a dead issue. So why are we wasting any more money on this? The TSB provided no presentation or explanation of the tolling plans at its public hearings. He asked how you can hold a public hearing soliciting public input without briefing the public on the topic you are seeking its input on.

Cameron is pleased to see the new M-8 passenger rail cars on the horizon. But overall, he has become cynical about the whole transportation planning process. He is concerned that when Stamford Station parking garage is demolished, it may be replaced by retail use rather than transit use. He also feels ConnDOT deliberately neglected the Danbury Branch for many years because they had very limited funding and wanted to use these funds for the main line. Finally, he expressed that Connecticut should be ashamed that NYDOT pays for our shuttles to the Harlem Line. Our people are voting with their feet by using this service.

Jo-Anne Horvath attended the TSB's public hearing in Norwalk on electronic tolling and found it not very helpful. There was no presentation of the study's findings. She cited Connecticut and Vermont as the only northeastern states without tolls. This has to change. We need a continuous revenue stream to fund highway improvements. She supports the extension of Super 7 from Norwalk to Route 33 on the Wilton Line. She opposes congestion pricing because it is unfair to daily commuters on Interstate 95 and the Merritt Parkway but she does support putting tolls on all limited access highways or tolling the limited access highways at the state's borders. All weigh stations should be kept open to maintain safety. She would not support an increase in the gas tax. The gas tax is not working as a revenue generator because we have more efficient cars.

Craig Lader, a Senior Transportation Planner at the South Western Regional Planning Agency, advocated a balanced, well maintained, multi-modal transportation system. He believes that strategic plans should be developed not only for the rail system, but for the bus network as well. Among projects endorsed by SWRPA are improvements to the infrastructure and service on the Danbury Branch and enhanced bus service on Route 1 between Stamford and Norwalk. SWRPA also anticipates beginning a study of bus rapid transit options between Greenwich and Norwalk.

Lader cited addressing the shortage of rail station parking as a critical need. Waiting times for parking permits can exceed three years. Development of parking information technology systems, demand management, and improved wayfinding and signage should compliment approaches to increasing parking capacity. Secure and safe bicycle storage is also needed at stations. Intelligent Transportation Services (ITS) could be used to provide real time information as to which rail stations have parking available. Off-site auxiliary parking for rail stations with

parking deficits, utilizing commuter connection shuttles, should also be explored. More parking capacity is needed, not only within the South Western Region but to the east as well.

ITS could also improve the efficiency of bus systems and provide additional user information by giving information on vehicle locations and delays and by giving buses priority at traffic signals.

SWRPA also just completed an update of the Bridgeport/Stamford Urbanized Area Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP) which identified needs and gaps in the local transportation system including extension of service hours, improved service in less populated communities, improved inter-regional services, improved amenities to enhance safety and security, improved dissemination of information and marketing, improved coordination between service providers and human service organizations, door-to-door services and additional volunteers. A proposal to create a mobility ombudsman to focus on all aspects of improving transportation services for persons with disabilities has been forwarded to the State.

SWRPA stresses the link between land use and transportation and believes that transit-oriented development should be encouraged to maximize the utility of our transportation investments.

Regarding the TSB's toll study, SWRPA feels that congestion pricing should be pursued on crowded, limited access routes such as Interstates 95, 84 and 91 and the Merritt Parkway, utilizing booth-less electronic tolls. Congestion pricing is preferred over tolls at the state's borders. Congestion pricing could be an efficient way to improve roadway efficiency and reduce environmental pollution.

Lastly, more and better real-time information for Metro-North passengers is needed. Displays containing this information are currently scarce, being available only in a couple locations at the Stamford Transportation Center, forcing most passengers to rely on audio announcements. Over the long-term, development of enhanced real-time information, including estimated delays and listings of all stations that a departing train will serve, are goals that should be pursued. Metro-North should also continue efforts to improve on-board notification, especially when delays or track changes occur.

Michael Lindberg, Chairman of the Wilton Energy Commission, sees mass transit as critical to the community. He served on the Fairfield 2000 Task Force which developed twenty-four top recommendations some ten years ago. Most of these focused on mass transit. Lindberg notes that progress has taken place on some of these recommendations but most of the needs are still not addressed. He sees the same issues being discussed today as were being discussed ten years ago; let's hope we are not discussing these same issues ten years from now.

As a state, we need to identify clear plans for transportation improvements and develop accountability. The Federal government is pressing new initiatives for carbon reduction. To accomplish meaningful results, we need to double mass transit ridership over the next twenty years. It appears we will fall woefully short of that goal. The new rail cars for the New Haven Line are a start, but further capacity will be needed beyond that. Also, buses or other means of transportation will be needed to make connections to train stations. Lindberg cited a figure of

25,000 vehicle trips per day through Wilton on Route 7. We need to move a substantial number of these riders to trains.

Georgiana Hanrahan is a Norwalk resident and a member of the Flax Hill Neighborhood Association. She mentioned that a recent article she had seen spoke of declining traffic levels on Interstate 95 in Fairfield County. She feels this is due to more diversions of traffic onto local roads such as Flax Hill Road. This traffic is having a negative impact on an old, historic neighborhood. Large construction trucks, UPS trucks and other trucks use Flax Hill Road. Every night the news speaks of accidents on Interstate 95.

Truck traffic through Rowayton was re-routed to Flax Hill Road when Route 136 was closed to truck traffic. No proper public notice of this change occurred to inform citizens about what was going on.

Andrew Todd is a member of the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council who commutes to and from New York City every day on the railroad. He reiterated the point that the parking situation is terrible. If we are to double rail ridership, where will these people park? There are no more parking spots left.

Todd urged the Commission to be more active in advocating for transit needs and to be more visible to the Governor. He said that the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council is favorable toward accommodating bicycles on trains but only if other passengers are not impacted. He also noted that the bar cars generate substantial income for the railroad.

Diane Lauricella of Norwalk is a member of the Sierra Club and the League of Women Voters and a founding member of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. She echoed the three first selectmen about the need for action. The time for more studies has passed. She feels that the Danbury Branch has always been a stepchild in Connecticut's passenger rail system but she sees hopeful signs that this is changing with Commissioner Marie.

Lauricella sees the Danbury Branch as an integral part of the life and economic development of Fairfield County. She pointed out that at one time the Branch was double-tracked and electrified. It was a big mistake to have removed the catenary and second track.

She is pleased to see more accommodation for bicycles as a connecting mode to trains. Bicycle use can also reduce the need for parking. Bicycle permits are not available via Metro-North vending machines.

Lauricella was disappointed to hear about the filling of wetlands on the Route 7 project in Danbury. She was one of three women that had brought the previous filling of wetlands on the Super 7 project to the attention of ConnDOT and she had worked to improve wetlands compliance for the project. Now we will need to waste precious state dollars to correct these new violations.

Richard Creeth is a member of the Wilton Board of Selectmen and the Wilton Energy Commission. He advocates a balanced transportation strategy. Every gallon of gas consumed

equals ten pounds of CO2 when burned. But a switch to mass transit won't happen just by making transit available. Congestion pricing, higher gas taxes and other measures will be needed to push people to transit.

Dave Roberson is a member of the Greenwich RTM and of the RTM's Transportation Committee. He sees freight rail as an important part of the transportation equation. We need to make more progress in moving freight to the railroads. Trucks create traffic problems on Interstate 95, add to wear and tear on the highways, and cause dangerous accidents.

Bill Galasso of Norwalk lamented the long and costly process of trying to expand taxi fleets. Taxis need to be integrated into the mix with rail and bus to provide a complete transportation system. Galasso pointed out that taxis require no subsidies to operate and they provide jobs.

Jackie Liljegien presented CPTC Chairman Tom Cheeseman a petition from the Flax Hill Neighborhood Association. She said the Norwalk Transit District Route 12 extension over Flax Hill Road carries no riders. She asked why this route is run. She received rude treatment when she called the Norwalk Transit District with her questions.

Fred Riese closed the hearing at 10:27 PM.

Ten letters and e-mails were submitted by parties who were unable to attend the public hearing. A summary of these submissions follows.

Pat O'Neil, House Republican Communications Director, submitted a statement of behalf of **Rep. Larry Cafero**, 142nd District. Rep. Cafero noted significant recent progress in bringing our transportation system into the 21st century. While Fairfield County has historically not benefitted proportionally from these improvements, recent steps have been taken toward solving the county's transportation dilemmas. However, much more remains to be accomplished when it comes to improving our rail system, highways, parking, and congestion in general. These represent more than just quality of life issues; if we cannot move freight and products into and through our borders quickly and if commuters cannot get to and from work reliably, our state's economy cannot function and businesses will seek other places to grow.

Jonathan Chew, Executive Director of the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials, expressed that from the perspective of the nearby Greater Danbury area, north-south commuter transportation links in Fairfield County are of great importance. A great many persons live to the north of the Norwalk-Stamford area and commute south daily. To facilitate these trips by public transit, cooperatively-administered public bus service is in operation along the Route 7 corridor. The Norwalk Transit District's WHEELS service and Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART) do a good job with this service and it is vital it be continued. Greater Danbury is also in full accord with coastal communities in advocating for enhanced public transit service via the Danbury Branch rail line.

Jara Burnett, transportation specialist for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, wrote that the statewide LWV has a strong position in support of transportation policy and program alternatives that keep our economy viable and our workers working. The League further

believes that the reduction in road congestion, the decrease in pollution, and the improved availability for moving passengers and freight through the state all have broad implications for keeping Connecticut competitive and modern. A reduction in vehicular traffic will have an additional benefit of reducing wear and tear on our roads and bridges.

The State's fiscal situation is creating a serious scarcity of resources that necessitates careful priority setting among programs. Thus, the need for increased dedicated funding sources for mass transit, highway congestion relief, and highway maintenance must become a critical component of a transportation plan. The State must explore new funding options and explore public/private partnerships to implement various projects.

In particular, the League of Women Voters expressed its belief that congestion pricing offers a fair way to improve the flow of traffic on our highways and to provide much-needed revenues for transit projects and vital maintenance and repair of existing roads and bridges.

Jerry Doyle, a resident of Westport, formerly lived in Manhattan and Norwalk. He feels we need smart and immediate solutions to the traffic and commuting problems we face, particularly here in lower Fairfield County. On Metro-North, we need more trains that originate in Westport during rush hour; too many trains arrive already packed, and weary commuters have to stand for the whole trip. Our friends in Wilton and those on the Danbury Branch should be able to use their stations and not have to bypass them to come down to Westport or South Norwalk, causing more parking and traffic woes. Doyle also hopes that the stimulus money is spent to find smarter parking solutions, do lot repair, improve traffic patterns, and repair deteriorating steps and benches.

Bruce Likly of Wilton is a 10-year resident of Fairfield County who commutes to New York City and makes frequent trips to Washington, DC and Boston. He is in favor of a more efficient and effective rail system, including electrifying and improving the Danbury Branch. He also favors improving the access to, and visibility of, local rail stations in lower Fairfield County, most of which seem to be "tucked away" making them hard to reach.

Jason Weisman commutes daily from Wilton to New York City on Metro-North. He expressed his strong support for initiatives to upgrade the quality of transportation systems and facilities.

John Busby works in Wilton on Route 7, commuting daily to his job site. He favors an increase in the number and frequency of commuter buses to the office parks on Route 7 in Wilton and Norwalk from the South Norwalk and Danbury train stations. This increase in service is most needed during the morning and evening commuter hours. Improved commuter bus service would do the following:

- Encourage commuters to use the train lines because they would be able to get to work quickly with more bus runs from the train stations
- Reduce congestion and pollution on Interstate 95, the Merritt Parkway, and Route 7, and
- Give employees commuting options, especially during periods of bad weather or highway construction.

Don Rosomer of Ridgefield wrote to express his opposition to tolls, particularly at the gateways into Connecticut. He believes such a system would unfairly tax the residents of Fairfield County, who already contribute over 46% of the income tax revenue to the State, despite representing only 26% of the state's population. Combined with the sales and use taxes its residents pay, Fairfield County is already the economic engine that drives Connecticut State government.

Tolls at the gateways will tax commuters out of and into Connecticut. This would significantly increase passenger and commercial vehicle traffic onto the already stressed roads of rural Fairfield County. The increase in commercial truck traffic on State and local roads would increase the maintenance needed to those routes.

John Sohikian of Wilton expressed his views on the Danbury Branch, bicycle commuting, and the effect of gas taxes on commuting habits. First, Connecticut needs to "think green" and invest in our rail systems and also become much more bike friendly. He suggests that:

- For Danbury Branch trains, remove all main line stops except Stamford, South Norwalk and Greenwich, making no other stops except for those on the Branch. More express service would reduce travel times and the need for residents along the Branch to travel to Brewster, NY, New Canaan or South Norwalk to avoid slow, sporadic service.
- Invest in light rail to move people north and south off the main lines.
- Have corporations subsidize bus service to their offices from main line train stations. Currently, many employees do not use the train because they can't get from the stations to their offices.
- New road construction should include bike lanes.
- Place bike racks at all rail stations and in commuter lots.
- Allow bicycles on rush hour trains.
- Widen main roads to add bicycle lanes.
- Re-educate drivers and police that bikes have as much right to the roads as cars.
- Put up "share the road" signs to educate motorists about cyclists on the roads.

Connecticut needs to change from being a laggard on public transportation and green commuting to leading the way, like other states including California, Vermont and Oregon. Sohikian also suggests raising the gas tax to generate funds for these efforts. The use of tolls would cause local drivers to choke the secondary roads which are already clogged with people traveling 10-15 miles per hour over the speed limits. When gas hits \$4.00 per gallon, people begin to switch their habits. Businesses and people need to have steady gasoline prices in order to make longer term investments. If gas taxes were to fluctuate to keep the retail gas price at \$3.00-4.00 per gallon, behavior will change and people will make the necessary green investments.

Al Alper sees value pricing and congestion mitigation toll options as just tolls and hence as taxes that will fall principally on the middle class who have no real options to driving. He also sees impacts to secondary and tertiary roads as drivers look to avoid the tolls. Until such time as there are significant and substantive improvements to other forms of transportation, these toll concepts simply amount to an additional tax.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

West Haven City Hall
355 Main Street
West Haven, Connecticut
Tuesday, June 2, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Dick Carpenter
Yvonne Loteczka
Kevin Maloney
Russ St. John
Gail Lavielle

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS **CDOT STAFF**

Fred Riese

James Redeker
Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Frederick Riese opened the hearing at 7:33 pm and welcomed the public attendees. He then gave a brief description of the organization and function of the Commission and the purpose of the public hearings. Tonight’s hearing, Riese explained, would serve the dual purposes of gathering public testimony for the Commission and of providing ConnDOT with an opportunity to present the draft State Rail Plan to the public and solicit comments. Riese then introduced James Redeker, Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Public Transportation of ConnDOT.

STATE RAIL PLAN PRESENTATION:

Bureau Chief James Redeker provided an outline of the purpose and content of the State Rail Plan, which will cover a planning horizon through 2030. The Plan will provide guidance for state investments in Connecticut’s passenger and freight rail infrastructure and services by setting forth the goals for rail service in the state and by identifying and prioritizing the needs to meet those goals. Though the State Rail Plan will take a long-term perspective of rail needs, it will be revised and updated every five years.

Following Mr. Redeker’s presentation, **Paul Looney** asked whether the proposed commuter rail service on the Springfield Line will incorporate a rail connection to Bradley Field. He also enquired whether there have been changes to the scope and mission of the proposed maintenance facilities at New Haven Yard in light of the cost overruns which received substantial publicity last year. Redeker said that the specifics of the service plans for the Springfield Line commuter rail service are still being determined. Regarding the proposed maintenance facilities at New Haven Yard, some components have been scaled back slightly while others have been moved to later phases of development to accommodate available funding, but the basic functions proposed at the yard have not been compromised because the size and needs of the new fleet of M-8 rail cars dictate that the capabilities to service and maintain these cars be available at this facility.

There was no additional public comment specific to the draft State Rail Plan.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Terry Hall of Mystic, a representative on the National Association of Railroad Passengers, sees a need to improve the speed and performance of Connecticut's rail network. He noted that Amtrak is required to develop plans to improve travel times on both the northern and southern halves of the Northeast Corridor. This planning is already underway. The Federal government recognizes that rail service needs to be improved. Some states are not yet working to meet the new requirements for development of state rail plans.

The long-term growth of population and the price of gasoline will affect rail planning efforts. Hopefully we can grow the system and re-establish service on some inactive lines. Hall also noted the importance of intermodal connections. Without intermodal connections, we become entirely dependent on parking for rail access. California and the MARTA system of Atlanta have been leaders in developing intermodal connections. The air/rail intermodal connection can also be very important. At Newark Airport, Continental Airlines and Amtrak have developed a partnership whereby the airline feeds passengers to Amtrak, eliminating the need for many short connecting flights which consume as much airport capacity as longer flights.

Hall also advocated a long-term vision for freight-dedicated rail lines which would not be shared with passenger service. He feels that capacity needs require this. Ideally he would like to see a new east-west freight corridor across the middle of the state, perhaps employing tunnels to overcome topographic constraints. He also observed that the national rail freight network does not connect well into New York City and Connecticut.

David French expressed 100% agreement with the comments of Terry Hall. Mr. French lives on Derby Avenue in West Haven just up the street from the Yale Bowl. The heavy traffic and the lack of sidewalks in the area of Routes 34 and 122 preclude him from walking to several nearby locations such as his favorite Chinese restaurant and his barbershop. He makes these short trips by car because they are unsafe to attempt as a pedestrian. He advocated more sidewalks, not just in his neighborhood, but as a general policy in all appropriate locations so as to encourage more pedestrian trips which would also improve public health and well-being and reduce air pollution.

Mr. French also noted that there is no bus service linking the Allingtown area of West Haven and the Westville section of New Haven which are connected by Route 122. The bus system would benefit by such a route so that bus riders would not have to make this short trip by going into downtown New Haven to transfer buses.

Commission member Gail Lavielle noted that the General Assembly had just passed Senate Bill 735, a bill to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access, by wide margins in both houses, and that this legislation provided funding to support such infrastructure.

Patricia Whelan of West Haven spoke about problems that her son and other riders have encountered in using the My Ride program operated by the Greater New Haven Transit District to provide ADA transportation in the New Haven area. Her 26-year old son has cerebral palsy. He is a graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University and holds a job at Wal-Mart. On a

recent Saturday, the van arrived to pick up her son for work. She went out to clear the sidewalk for his wheelchair and then he came out, but the van was already pulling away. Five minutes are allotted for each pick-up by ADA rules but this van did not wait more than a couple minutes and never deployed its lift. She called the My Ride office immediately but was told that her son missed his ride and nothing could be done about it. She later found out that another My Ride driver had overheard that call and had offered to make the pick-up since that driver's van was just lying over at that time, but that driver was told not to make the pick-up. On another occasion, she called the office when her son's 6:00 pm ride did not show up and was told that the van had been there at 6:00 am and her son had missed his ride. She related a third story of a blind friend of her son's who was using My Ride to reach his dialysis treatment in Milford. This rider enquired several times during the trip as to whether they were on the road to Milford. When the van eventually stopped, it had taken the rider to Branford. He was told that he could not be taken to Milford and was blamed for the error. A call from the driver to the office produced the options that the rider could either stay in Branford or be driven home, but could not be taken to Milford.

Whelan noted that most of the problems occur on the weekends and that the office staff on the weekends is not as helpful as the weekday staff. She finds the attitude that "we are right, you are wrong" to be very frustrating. From the examples she has seen, the driver was not right and her son missed his shifts at work.

Paul Looney thanked the Commission for coming to West Haven. He spoke about problems at the rest areas along I-95, mostly concerning the Darien rest area. On a recent stop there, he could find no place to park because trucks were blocking the entrances. He understands their situation as there is an acute shortage of truck parking capacity at the rest areas and they have no place to go. In a recent conversation with Steve Delpapa of ConnDOT, Looney was told that the current shortage in truck parking capacity is 2,000 spaces every night, as he recalls. The rest areas along I-95 are also pretty worn out and dated and could use some updating. The rest area and the welcome center at Darien are not good advertisements for our state. He spoke favorably of the concept of rest area services being constructed over the highway and shared between the eastbound and westbound sides as he saw in a rendition from the Service Plaza and Rest Area Study of a couple years ago. He also noted there is a large empty lot in Bridgeport adjacent to the highway that could serve to provide rest area parking capacity.

Looney also expressed his disappointment with the quality of the air service in southern Connecticut. He characterizes the three airports in southern Connecticut as third world class. Southern Connecticut exports airline passengers to New York City, Bradley and Providence since there is not good airline service offered there, so people have to drive elsewhere.

Mr. David French spoke again, mentioning that he moved from Enfield in 1965 and is familiar with the Windsor Locks area. Transportation is the reason that Windsor Locks developed, going back to the construction of the canal there. He advocated that the Springfield Line alignment loop into Bradley Field to make a direct connection there.

Brooke Hoberman of Rideworks asked Jim Redeker whether Shore Line East service could be extended to serve the new West Haven railroad station. Redeker said that is a great concept but there is operational and labor issues connected to implementing that.

The hearing was adjourned at 8:53 PM.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Mansfield Town Hall
Storrs, Connecticut

Tuesday, September 1, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Kevin Maloney
Russ St. John
Gail Lavielle

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS **CDOT STAFF**

Fred Riese
Susan Simmat

Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Kevin Maloney opened the hearing at 7:30 pm. He gave a brief description of the organization and function of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Lon Hultgren, Public Works Director for the Town of Mansfield, thanked the Commission for coming to Mansfield for this hearing. He noted that public notice for this hearing was not widespread and that he knows of parties who would have liked to attend but who found out about the hearing too late to allow for their participation.

Hultgren reported that the Windham Regional Transit District (WRTD) pre-paid bus fare program for UConn students and Mansfield residents is alive and well, having survived the Town's and the University's budget cuts. Mansfield and UConn contribute \$15,000 each to the pre-paid fare program, which then allows students and town residents to ride WRTD buses free of charge. Ridership under this program was up 20% last year and is up an additional 20% on top of that this year.

Mansfield is working on a project for the redevelopment of downtown Storrs, which is estimated to cost \$220,000,000 in total. One element of the proposal is an intermodal parking structure capable of handling UConn buses, WRTD buses, and bicycles, in addition to cars.

The Town is also working with the New England Central Railroad and other entities in the early stages of exploring a proposal for passenger rail service from Amherst, Massachusetts to New London over New England Central's line. Service along this corridor would serve a number of colleges and universities including UMass, UConn, Eastern Connecticut, Connecticut College and the US Coast Guard Academy. A presentation on this proposal will occur at 9:00 am, October 1 at Mansfield Town Hall.

In the nearer term, Mansfield is still pursuing commuter bus services from Storrs to Hartford. Currently, the Coventry commuter express bus is the nearest bus link to Hartford. There is a large unserved market for a Storrs to Hartford bus service.

Hultgren also mentioned that he and the University have started to look into the feasibility of having short-term (hourly) car rental services such as *Zip Car* being employed to meet some of the campus transportation needs. Such a service can also reduce the amount of parking capacity that must be provided in a parking structure, thus offering an additional incentive to investigate such an arrangement.

Gordon Mochel cited the limitations of passenger rail services in meeting travel needs, mainly due to the location constraints of the underlying railroad infrastructure. He cited the local urban trolley systems of a century ago as having been very efficient in meeting the transportation needs of our cities and of much of the surrounding areas. In this state, the Connecticut Company ran several of the urban trolley systems and is an excellent example of the type of transportation he thinks could once again effectively serve travel needs. Mochel envisions an updated 21st century version of the urban railways with automated, compact trolley cars which are computer controlled from a central operations center rather than manned by an operator.

David Freudmann of Storrs provided extensive testimony on his experience as an occasional rider of the Windham Regional Transit District, particularly concerning the bus schedules. He believes that the public is being poorly served by the District's schedules in several respects. First he cited the removal of the pole and posted bus schedule that formerly marked the bus stop at his Knollwood Apartments. The bus still stops there but there is no longer any visual cue that this is a bus stop.

The physical presentation and clarity of the system schedule has also deteriorated over the last four or five years. In 2005, WRTD published two schedules, which covered the Storrs-Willimantic bus and the Willimantic city bus. Now a third schedule for the Storrs-North Windham bus service has been added, which has made the system harder to understand. As to the times of the bus runs, in 2005, all southbound buses left the Knollwood Apartments stop at 34 minutes after the hour. Now the schedule is much more erratic, with the first two southbound buses leaving 15 minutes apart, while other buses through the day leave at erratic times, yielding a less useful schedule. The last southbound bus of the day now comes two hours earlier than it did in 2005. Freudmann said the old system had better coordination between the two routes than occurs now.

Freudmann also mentioned seeing what he called 'phantom buses' coming from UConn at 7:00 or 8:00 pm. These buses are not on any published schedule. He also spoke of problems with the premature departure of some buses. He was at the Mansfield Center bus shelter and saw his WRTD bus whiz by four minutes ahead of schedule. He hadn't gotten up from the shelter to meet the bus because he wasn't expecting it to arrive early. He later learned that WRTD policy allows for buses to be up to five minutes ahead of schedule and still be considered on schedule. Freudmann believes this is a poor operating policy.

Lastly, Freudmann discussed the lack of coordination between WRTD, Peter Pan and UConn buses. The WRTD buses arrive in Willimantic too late to catch the Peter Pan bus to Hartford. At Storrs, Peter Pan buses stop at the Co-op on Hillside Row, while WRTD stops at Whitney Hall on Route 195. There is also little coordination between these buses and the UConn shuttle buses.

Jane Blanchard lives in the Glen Ridge Senior Housing development, which consists of 51 units. Most of the residents there shouldn't be driving anymore, a group in which she included herself, but they all do because they have no satisfactory alternatives. This is a town-wide problem that occurs at other senior housing complexes as well. The Town of Mansfield does not see transportation for seniors as a priority. But it really is a public safety issue as much as it is a transportation issue. Dial-a-Ride service is available but that is not the same as having a bus. "Some of us are too old to plan for Dial-a-Ride", Blanchard said.

Current bus connections allow her to get to the Big Y grocery store but nowhere else. In order to give up her driving, she would need access to the community center, the library, and to Willimantic, which is where her doctors are. Blanchard mentioned that her daughter, who is the manager of the school buses in Mansfield and Eastford, feels those buses could be used for public transportation during the day when they are otherwise idle.

Gene Nesbitt is a member of the Mansfield Town Council. He mentioned that the extension of North Hillside Road to Route 44 will become the main entrance to the UConn campus. This will change the nature of the Four Corners area at Routes 195 and 44, allowing for potential new mixed use development there. This new development will have traffic implications. The new campus entrance at North Hillside Road will happen in one to two years, with new development following a couple years after that.

Moderator Maloney closed the hearing at 8:15 PM.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Windsor Town Hall
275 Broad Street
Windsor, Connecticut

Tuesday, September 15, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Dick Carpenter
Yvonne Loteczka
Kevin Maloney
Russ St. John
Morton Katz

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS **CDOT STAFF**

Fred Riese
John Boren (for Susan Simmat)

Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Morton Katz opened the hearing at 7:30 pm and welcomed the public attendees. He then gave a brief description of the organization and function of the Commission and the purpose of this public hearing.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Jim Burke, Economic Development Director of Windsor, said that Windsor has become a key employment center for Greater Hartford with such industries as business and finance, data management, precision manufacturing, and hospitality. Among key companies with a significant presence in Windsor are ING, Alstrom, Hartford Life, Northeast Utilities, Konica/Minolta, and Sun Life. Sixteen foreign companies with facilities in Windsor employ over 3,000 people and have four million square feet of space, including 2.5 million square feet of industrial and distribution space, 1.2 million square feet of office space, and 300,000 square feet of retail space.

Among new facilities recently opened in Windsor are a 580 room hotel and conference center, a new Northeast Utilities service center for CL&P, Western Massachusetts Electric Company and Yankee Gas, Walgreen's 900,000 square foot northeast distribution center with over 500 employees, ING offices relocated from Hartford and employing 2,000 people, Emhart's Glass Division research and development center, Hartford Life's 450,000 square foot office center with 1,500 employees, Travelers Insurance national insurance claims center, and the Hyatt Summerfield Suites on Day Hill Road. In part because of these and other new facilities, Windsor experienced 7.9% job growth between 2000 and 2007. Manufacturing remains an important component of Windsor's employment picture, representing 25% of its employment. Finance, insurance and real estate have been key centers of job growth, increasing from 1,600 to 3,800 jobs between 2000 and 2007, which is before ING and Hartford Life moved to Windsor.

Burke cited the presence of 8.5 square miles of developable land in central Windsor, primarily in a block bounded by Interstate 91, Day Hill Road, Route 305 and Route 189. Only 50% of this land has been developed to date. This land is only ten miles from downtown Hartford.

Burke sees the trend in new industry as moving from heavy manufacturing to more service industries. This change carries with it a shift in the worker base toward those with greater transit dependence. Therefore, Windsor is actively promoting alternative modes of transportation including bicycling, carpooling and transit. Burke also mentioned that there is some use of the existing Amtrak service by employees to get to jobs in Windsor.

In response to a question as to why Windsor in particular was experiencing such dramatic economic development, Burke cited the factors of proximity to Interstate 91, Bradley Field and Amtrak, the presence of Connecticut Transit bus service, an ample supply of easily developable dry land, a good location, and a very certain development review process.

Peter Souza, Windsor Town Manager, said there are 25,000 people employed in Windsor, Windsor Locks and northern Bloomfield. The region has transportation assets that can be built upon to create a robust, multi-modal transportation system. Among these assets are Interstate 91, Bradley Field, Amtrak's Springfield Line, and the Griffin Corridor. A dynamic, regional transportation system will facilitate job growth, promote overall development as well as Smart Growth, and conserve resources. Souza thinks there is an opportunity to link the Amtrak service to employment centers in the three towns and to the airport. He also sees an opportunity to develop the Griffin Line for bus rapid transit, which has the flexibility to access North Bloomfield, the Day Hill Road area, and the airport.

Improvements to pedestrian and bus amenities are needed in the NW Windsor Industrial Area. However, the large setbacks at which many of the businesses and warehouses have been constructed from the road are a significant hurdle for transit service. The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) has recently completed its Northwest Corridor Study which analyzed options for improving transit service to the Windsor area, identified many of these issues, and offered some solutions. The study sees a need for local transit hubs to facilitate better connections, including for suburb-to-suburb trips, which do not lend themselves to routing via downtown Hartford. At the hubs, perhaps located at Exits 38 and 36 of Interstate 91, commuters could exit Connecticut Transit or other large buses to board local shuttles. CRCOG's Northwest Corridor Study recommendations included shuttle systems running a continuous loop, and park-and-ride lots on Routes 305, 20 and 159. Souza also mentioned the Rideshare Company as an important asset to facilitate carpools and vanpools.

Souza also sees bus rapid transit service on the Griffin Line and then extending via Route 189 to serve the International Trade port at Bradley Field.

Jim Burke had mentioned the desirability of having more compact housing close to employment sites. When asked if Windsor might rezone some of its eight square miles of developable land to meet this need, Souza identified an area at the west end of Day Hill Road which may be rezoned to allow the construction of a whole new village including housing, retail and service land uses. Cheaper land in Windsor makes development, including residential development, more attractive.

In response to a question about the local availability of Dial-a-Ride service, Souza said the Town of Windsor provides Monday through Friday Dial-a-Ride service plus limited weekend and

evening service. The Town also uses volunteers to provide limited trips to destinations outside of Windsor for medical purposes.

Mary-Ann Langton is a Disability Policy Specialist at the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council recommends that the Department of Transportation should not distinguish between providing ‘human services transportation’ for people with disabilities and ‘public transportation’ for people without disabilities. In doing this, ConnDOT is segregating people with disabilities from their peers who are not disabled. Rather than having two categories of transportation, people with disabilities want to ride on general public transportation, not on human services vans.

In line with this philosophy, the Council proposes a reconfiguration of the 5310C van program to have it become an inclusive transportation system. The Council proposes that 5310C vans be used to operate a feeder system to transport people with disabilities to and from public transportation lines. Vans would then need to be on the receiving ends of the trip to take riders with disabilities to their locations. This would create a truly inclusive public transportation model.

Ms. Langton is also a frequent train rider to New York City from New Haven. In the past, the train personnel have forgotten to assist Ms. Langton with getting on and off the train by not placing the portable bridge plate from the train to the platform. A few times, the train crews have left Ms. Langton and her friends on the train after the end of the trip. Therefore, she suggests that train personnel periodically undergo disability training so they will be better ready to assist passengers with disabilities.

Ms. Langton concluded by putting her comments in perspective, saying that transportation plays a vital role in everyone’s lives so they can be productive citizens.

Ronald Eddy of the Griffin Land Development Corporation also serves on the Transportation Committee of the Windsor Chamber of Commerce. He is actively involved in planning for future transportation to accommodate growth and to get vehicles off the road.

The Griffin Land Development Corporation owns 240-260 acres including the land at the terminus of the Griffin Line corridor. The corporation wants to promote more transportation-friendly development at the sites along Day Hill Road.

Eddy has led planning seminars evaluating ways to connect Amtrak’s Springfield Line service to downtown Windsor. Regarding bus service, he sees the traditional hub and spoke service configuration not servicing areas like Windsor very well. This has given rise to an interest in cross-town shuttles to provide trips to meet this need. Windsor and Bloomfield have been working together to address transportation needs but there has been little outreach to East Granby thus far.

Lorna Hamilton described herself as a prospective commuter to Windsor. She is an enthusiastic advocate for commuting via public transportation. This wasn’t always the case. She formerly had responsibility for distributing her employer’s \$35 monthly transit support payments

to transit users who commuted to work, but she herself was a skeptic when it came to public transportation. The availability of the Guaranteed Ride Home program and the offer by Connecticut Transit of a free 10-day trial bus pass convinced her to give transit a try. She found less stress, nice drivers, and friendly passengers on the bus. But eventually, her job moved from Hartford to Windsor and she could no longer make her trip via the bus, though she wishes she still could.

Moderator Katz closed the hearing a 8:55 pm.

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing
Sullivan Senior Center
Torrington, Connecticut
Tuesday, October 6, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Kevin Maloney
Russ St. John
Yvonne Loteczka
Morton Katz

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS **CDOT STAFF**

Fred Riese

Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Frederick Riese opened the hearing at 7:34 pm. He gave a brief description of the organization and function of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Rick Lynn, Planning Director for the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials, stated that the top transit priority in the Litchfield Hills Planning Region is the construction of a centralized vehicle storage and maintenance facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District. This was initially identified as the top need in the region in the *Connecticut Statewide Bus System Study* done in 2000. This need was further confirmed by a 2004 report prepared by the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials. ConnDOT has taken over the management of this project and has included \$1,107,000 in its draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program toward the 20% state share of this project. A preferred location in downtown Torrington has been agreed to. However, progress has been delayed until the State Bond Commission approves \$169,429 for the state's 20% match for an environmental site assessment and preliminary engineering. This request was first submitted in February 2009 and has been made several times since, but has not been approved thus far. The originally-selected prime site for this bus facility has been sold and developed for other purposes, so the Transit District and ConnDOT will work with the second choice site from the feasibility study. ConnDOT's current estimate for the total project cost is \$15.8 million, including site acquisition. Lynn said \$1,000,000 in earmarked federal funding from 2008 and 2009 is available for the bus facility project, but the status of federal funding from 2005, 2006 and 2007 is uncertain.

Lynn next discussed the findings of the Locally-coordinated Human Services Transportation Planning process for LOCHSTP, which is designed to identify service gaps, resource gaps, potential strategies to address these gaps, and recommended projects. The top priority projects identified for the Litchfield Hills Region are: (1) hiring a regional transit coordinator to enhance service delivery and develop and implement a public awareness campaign of available transit services, and (2) purchasing a wheelchair-accessible van for the evolving Rural Independent Transportation System (RITS) in the region. The provision of operating funds for the RITS is also being requested through LOCHSTP.

The Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials strongly supports expanded bus service in the region, and would like to see a strong, equitable and stable funding source for bus systems. As the Litchfield Hills Region's population ages, the demand for transit services will increase. According to a recent report by the CT Office of Rural Health, by 2030, 40% of the Litchfield Hills Region's population will be 65 or over.

In response to a question about the purpose and mission of the RITS and how it differs from service provided by the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District, Lynn said the RITS would provide 'gap' transportation, which means it would offer services which are not currently provided. This would principally be evening and weekend service and medical trips such as for dialysis. RITS would operate mostly with volunteer drivers.

Noreen Needham commented on the safety, efficiency and cost of the commuter bus service to Hartford. She has used the commuter bus service to Hartford for two years now. She feels that some of the locations used for pick-ups and drop-offs are not the safest. Some have poor lighting, which not only affects bus riders but can make it difficult for drivers to see the riders. Many locations lack shelters for protection in poor weather. She mentioned that recent improvements to the Avon commuter lot, which included constructing a larger island in the front of that lot, have reduced the available turning radius for buses to the point where turning a bus around in the lot is very difficult and, in some cases, the buses have to go into reverse to exit the lot.

At Central Row in Hartford, there are not enough shelters for passengers. More critically, the Old State House museum sometimes blocks off the shoulders with plastic cones, forcing the buses to stop in the street.

Regarding efficiency, she mentioned that the Canton Express makes one extra swing in its route, which serves to pick up only one or two people.

Needham cited the Connecticut Transit-operated commuter buses as being very reliable, saying you can set your watch by them. This is not always the case for the private buses, like Kelley Transportation. The performance of the private contractors should be monitored to make sure that are performing as they should be.

Other observations and opinions by Needham are that bus transit needs to be more deeply subsidized to keep the buses full rather than half full, more bicycle racks are needed at commuter parking lots, the bus shelter in Winsted was removed which is a setback to riders there, and there is no parking at the New Hartford commuter bus stop on the Winsted route.

Tammy Ostroski of the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District began her remarks with the positive news that the reimbursement payments from ConnDOT to the transit district were on time this year, for the first time in nine years. She also noted that Dial-a-Ride ridership is up in all sixteen towns in the District, and Job Links ridership is also up, with the exception of one route which was eliminated on July 1 due to low ridership.

On January 2, 2009, the Transit District implemented its first fare increase since 1983, when the system began operations. Job Links and Dial-a-Ride service fares went to \$2.00, while the Candy striper deviated fixed route service fares went to \$1.25.

On July 1, the NWCTD took over operation of the Winsted Dial-a-Ride service which had become very unreliable. Since that time, ridership in Winsted has doubled. Many students from Torrington who attend Northwestern Connecticut Community College use the Dial-a-Ride service.

Ostroski sees a need for marketing funds to print posters, brochures and schedules. She noted that the Transit District's website receives 22,000 hits per month. But the site needs updating. She estimates \$5,000 to \$7,000 in funding is needed to marketing efforts.

She also noted the difficulties caused by the starting and stopping of funding sources. In particular, this was the case for the Section 13b-38bb matching grant Dial-a-Ride services, which were operating in 15 of the 16 towns in the District to provide weekend and evening services and special trips. These very successful services had to be terminated on June 30 at the end of the fiscal year due to the lack of a new State budget. These services were reinstated on October 3 but the lack of service for three months caused a hardship to many riders.

Moderator Riese closed the hearing at 8:27 pm.

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Public Hearing**

Plainville Municipal Center

Plainville, Connecticut

Tuesday, October 20, 2009 – 7:30 PM

CPTC VOTING MEMBERS

Tom Cheeseman
Russ St. John
Yvonne Loteczka
Richard Sunderhauf
Richard Carpenter

CPTC EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS **CDOT STAFF**

Fred Riese
John Boren (for Susan Simmat)

Dennis King

INTRODUCTION:

Hearing moderator Frederick Riese opened the hearing at 7:37 pm. He gave a brief description of the organization and function of the Commission and the purpose of tonight's public hearing.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Ken Shooshan-Stoller of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency said that the agency is embarking on its new Long Range Transportation Plan. The Plan will attempt to better balance modal choices in the region and give citizens in the region more of a choice beyond reliance on automobiles. Shooshan-Stoller said currently there are no bus routes servicing Plainville (although some buses do pass through Plainville) and there is no bus service in Plymouth. The Regional Planning Agency has a proposal for bus service in Southington along Route 10, with Stop and Shop as its southern terminus. The disabled community in Southington wants to see this service too, as it would allow for transfers to other routes and regions.

Residents of Terryville, especially non-auto owners, need transportation to job sites in Bristol. The disabled community of Plymouth/Terryville has also expressed its desire to access Bristol and the region.

In response to a question about the preference for the busway vs. the light rail option in the New Britain Busway corridor, Shooshan-Stoller said that the RPA supports the busway. However, it is also supportive of making better use of the under-utilized rail line between Waterbury and Berlin and would support passenger service over that segment to meet up with the Springfield Line service.

Shooshan-Stoller also mentioned that all towns in the Central Connecticut Planning Region have Dial-a-Ride service. Most of the towns were able to continue their paratransit services funded under the Section 13b-38bb State Matching Grant program, even after the previous state budget expired. In the Central Connecticut Planning Region, most of the towns used the State Matching Grant money for geographic expansions of the paratransit routes to connect to other towns and regions, rather than to expand hours of operation in the evenings and on weekends.

Dialysis trips are one of the major trip generators for paratransit services in the Central Connecticut Planning Region. Formerly, the only nearby dialysis center was in Newington, which put a major strain on the system to transport all dialysis patients out-of-region to Newington. Dialysis centers have now opened up in Bristol, New Britain and at Farmington UConn. However, dialysis trips are still a major trip generator in the region. DATTCO has a new contract to run the paratransit services in the region. A new computer system will help schedule such trips more efficiently.

In response to a question about the ability of the paratransit system to handle the volume of trips which are demanded and whether some trip requests must be denied, Shooshan-Stoller said that trip denials are few and are within the allowable limits in the guidelines, but the bigger issue is that there are peak times for travel demand at which not all requests can be accommodated. At these times, some trips may have to be scheduled at less than ideal times so that riders must arrive earlier than desired for appointments or must wait longer for a return ride after an appointment.

Another issue highlighted by Shooshan-Stoller is the lack of visibility of the fixed route bus system. Only current system users seem to know about the bus system. It is largely invisible to everyone else. The City of New Britain applied for and was approved for a grant of \$200,000 for bus shelters, signage, kiosks and bicycle racks. These measures should improve system visibility. Standardized bus signage is seen as an especially significant step.

Francis Pickering, who is Ken Shooshan-Stoller's assistant at the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, elaborated on paratransit and bus issues. Many Dial-a-Ride timeslots are overbooked due to the number of trips that have consistent fixed times every day or on multiple days per week. So there has been an effort to shift leisure trips to mid-day timeslots when demand is at lower levels than at the morning and afternoon peaks.

Regarding the community visibility of the bus system, Pickering said most residents do not know that the bus system exists. There are no official bus stops, only time points at which the bus will pass certain locations. Some people see this as a more efficient way to operate lightly used routes. Many of the posted time points are located at shopping centers or medical complexes. The problem at these facilities is that a potential rider has no guidance as to where the bus might actually stop within a large plaza or complex. Designating specific bus stop locations would provide the opportunity to pick the safest locations within a shopping area or at an intersection.

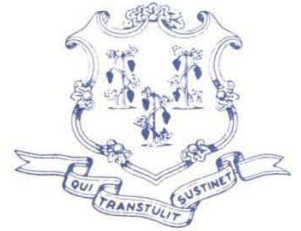
Pickering mentioned that in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, among other locations, a transit rider can now use Google to get door-to-door directions for a specific trip. This cannot yet be done in Connecticut but Connecticut Transit is leading a statewide effort to provide this information. Google has a backlog of such information to post on its system and preference is being given to getting the data of larger systems posted first. That is why CCRPA and other smaller entities are working under the lead of Connecticut Transit to submit statewide transit data and get a higher priority on having this entered into the Google transit database.

Pickering said a new bus service plan is being developed for the region. Many bus routes currently contain one-way loops but it is not always clear in which direction the bus will travel in these loops. When bus routes are reconfigured in connection with the development of the service plan for the New Britain Busway, these one-way loops may be eliminated.

Inter-regional connections are also an important issue. Transfers between the routes of the fifteen different transit districts and operators are provided but are often not coordinated as to schedules. If riders have to wait a half hour between being dropped off by one system and catching a ride on the next system, they won't use the bus system to make their trips. An improved connection at Westfield Shopping Center in Meriden has been instituted between DATTCO and the Meriden-Wallingford Division of Connecticut Transit. Two examples of inter-regional trips still needing improvement are the four hour trip to go from New Haven to Hartford, which involves three transfers between systems, and the connection between New Britain and Middletown, which currently requires two transfers and takes 45 minutes longer in one direction than the other. Lastly, Pickering noted that the lack of posted bus stops makes transfers between systems more difficult.

Moderator Riese closed the hearing at 8:28 pm.

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission



2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546 • NEWINGTON, CT 06131-7546

June 16, 2009

Commissioner Joseph F. Marie
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Post Office Box 317546
Newington, Connecticut 06131-7546

Dear Commissioner Marie:

As you are aware, the Wilton railroad station on the Danbury Branch of Metro-North has been closed since 2005. This station serves the needs of commuters in several towns, most notably Wilton, Weston and Ridgefield. At present, with the station locked, commuters typically wait for the train in their cars in inclement weather. Though the station does have restrooms, they are inaccessible in its current locked state.

Although the past year has seen many new developments on the New Haven Line and its Danbury Branch, the many comments made at the CPTC's May 19 public hearing in Norwalk showed that area residents are highly frustrated because, to date, they can see little concrete evidence of progress occurring on the larger projects (new rail cars, new signalization system, etc.). Because opening the Wilton Station appears to them to be a simple project, it has become a focal point for their frustration, which has reached a particularly high level, among both residents and officials of Wilton and neighboring towns.

The Town of Wilton and other local interests have made repeated and concerted efforts to have the station reopened. (See attached chronology of these efforts) As the necessary repairs and renovations are not structural, they should be neither time-consuming nor particularly costly: they comprise mostly painting and minor repairs. First Selectman William F. Brennan estimates that the total cost of the work should be between \$25,000 and \$30,000, and should take no more than two months to complete. A site inspection of the station by ConnDOT and local officials scheduled for June 22 should verify this point.

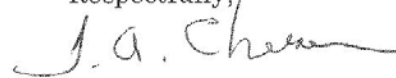
In late March of this year, Governor Rell's Recovery Working Group allocated \$56,820 in ARRA stimulus funds to Wilton Station under a project entitled "Rail Station Maintenance, Repair and Improvement Program". It has been indicated to First Selectman Brennan that these funds will not be used for the renovations necessary to open the station, but rather for canopies, ramps and other exterior amenities.

The Commission strongly believes that Wilton Station should be reopened quickly, whether this is done with ARRA stimulus funding, through a local offer of assistance by the Town to renovate the station, or through other means available to ConnDOT. Completing this relatively minor project could be a major gesture which would buy substantial goodwill for the Department. As a major station on the Danbury Branch used by residents of several towns, Wilton Station has come to symbolize perceived ConnDOT inaction among area residents. Skillful positioning of an opening event could provide clear evidence of efficiency, good faith, and a focus on mass transit, producing a very substantial shot in the arm for the Department's public image in densely populated lower Fairfield County.

At least one local vendor has expressed serious interest in leasing space and establishing a food service business at the station. This Wilton resident, with extensive experience in owning and operating small restaurants, has proposed selling coffee, baked goods, and newspapers in the morning, and southwestern-style food in the afternoons and evenings on both a dine-in and take-out basis. This proposal demonstrates the commercial value of the station and the opportunity for a small scale transit-oriented business.

In view of the public desire for the reopening of this station and the extremely modest financial and time requirements necessary to do so, the Commission strongly recommends that Wilton Station be reopened in a timely fashion using either the stimulus funds designated for the station or taking advantage of a town-offered proposal to renovate it. Reopening the station would provide a valuable benefit to the residents of several area towns and would unquestionably buy much goodwill for the Department at minimal cost.

Respectfully,



Tom A. Cheeseman
Chairman

Attachment: (1)

CC: Governor M. Jodi Rell

Transportation Committee Co-chairs and Ranking Members:

Senator Donald J. DeFronzo and Rep. Tony Guerrera

Senator Toni Boucher and Rep. David A. Scribner

Brief Chronology of Efforts to Reopen Wilton Station

Wilton's current First Selectman, William F. Brennan, has been active in trying to get the station opened. Here is a brief history of his experiences:

- 2005 - Wilton Station is locked up.
- 2006-2007: repeated inquiries to the DOT concerning the station with no response.
- Late 2007: meeting in Newington with DOT management and SWRPA to discuss service improvements.
- March 2008: receipt of a business plan from a Wilton vendor, Tony Tecce, expressing interest in leasing space in the station. The Town put Mr. Tecce in touch with the DOT, which indicated that an RFP would be necessary.
- June 2008: visit to the station by DOT Deputy Commissioner Albert Martin, leading to general agreement that renovation and maintenance work were necessary.
- Throughout 2008: Discussion of the Wilton Station at several meetings with DOT management, SWRPA, HVCEO, and the First Selectmen of Ridgefield and Weston, two other towns whose residents use the Danbury Branch.
- Late 2008: local DEP maintenance crews sent by the DOT cleared litter, debris, weeds, and invasive shrubs from the station.
- Early 2009: meeting with Commissioner Marie at SWRPA, where Wilton Station was discussed.
- May 2009: further discussions with DOT engineer John Bernick, who indicated that the project, if undertaken, could not be completed before the end of 2009, due to the time needed for a sequence of administrative procedures.

SEC. 13b-11a. Connecticut Public Transportation Commission

Sec. 13b-11a. Connecticut Public Transportation Commission (a) there shall be in the Department of Transportation a Connecticut Public Transportation Commission which shall be a successor to the Connecticut Public Transportation Authority and which shall consist of nineteen members, who are electors of the state. Eleven of such members shall be appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a representative of business and industry and a regular user of railroad or truck freight service; one a regular commuter using railroad passenger service; one a regular bus user; one who is permanently mobility impaired and a frequent bus user; one a working member of a railroad labor union; one a working member of a bus labor union; one a representative of railroad company management; one a representative of trucking company management; two representatives from separate local transit districts and one a person sixty years of age or older. The remaining eight members shall have a background or interest in public transportation and be appointed as follows: Two by the president pro tempore of the Senate; two by the minority leader of the Senate; two by the speaker of the House of Representatives; and two by the minority leader of the House of Representatives. The Commissioner of Transportation, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the cochairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, or their respective designees, shall serve as nonvoting, ex-officio members of the commission. The term of each member of the commission shall be four years. The term of any member who was appointed by the Governor and who is serving on the commission on October 1, 1985, shall expire December 31, 1985. The term of any member who was appointed by any legislator and who is serving on the board on October 1, 1985, shall expire December 31, 1987. Vacancies on said commission shall be filled for the remainder of the term in the same manner as original appointments.

(b) The commission shall advise and assist the commissioner, the Governor and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation in the performance of their functions and duties relating to the planning, development and maintenance of adequate rail, bus and motor carrier facilities and rail, bus and other public transportation services including the adequacy of such services for elderly and disabled users in the state and any other matters affecting the quality of public transportation facilities and services in the state. At least once each year, the commission shall hold public hearings in each of the metropolitan areas, as determined by the commission, within the state for the purpose of evaluating the adequacy of such rail, bus, motor carrier and other public transportation facilities.

(c) The commission shall assist the commissioner in developing regulations to formalize arrangements between the department and local transit districts, between local transit districts and transit system operators and between local transit districts.

(d) Repealed by P.A. 77-33, S. 1.

(e) On or before January first, annually, the commission shall submit in writing to the commissioner, the Governor and the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board, established pursuant to section 13b-57e, (1) a list of public transportation projects, which, if undertaken by the state, would further the policy set forth in section 13b-32, including projects specifically for elderly and disabled users; (2) recommendations for improvements to existing public

transportation service and projects, incorporating transportation service and projects relative to the needs of elderly and disabled persons and including proposals for legislation and regulations; (3) recommendations for disincentives to free parking, including urban and suburban employment centers; (4) off-peak transit services; and (5) the establishment of urban center loop shuttles. The commissioner shall notify members of the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation and finance, revenue and bonding, on or before January first, annually, of the availability of the commissioner's comments and analysis of priorities. A written copy or electronic storage media of such comments and analysis shall be distributed to members of such committee who request them. The commissioner shall meet with the commission at least once during each calendar quarter.

(f) The commission may, upon its own motion, undertake any studies it deems necessary for the improvement of a balanced public transportation system within the state, including the improvement of such system for elderly and disabled users. The commission shall have other powers and shall perform such other duties as the commissioner, the Governor and the General Assembly may delegate to it.

(g) Subject to the provisions of chapter 67, and when authorized to do so by the commissioner, the Governor or the General Assembly, the commission may appoint such officers, agents and employees and may retain and employ other consultants or assistants on a contract or other basis for rendering legal, financial, technical or other assistance or advice as may be required to carry out duties or responsibilities. The staff of the department shall be available to assist the commission.

(h) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services as members but shall be reimbursed for the expenses actually and necessarily incurred by them in the performance of their duties. No member of the commission who is otherwise a public officer or employee shall suffer a forfeiture of his office or employment, or any loss or diminution in the rights and privileges pertaining thereto, by reason of such membership.

(i) A quorum of the commission for the purpose of transacting business shall exist only when there is present, in person, a majority of its voting membership. The affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum shall be required for the adoption of a resolution or vote of the commission.

(j) The members of the commission shall elect one of the members as chairperson with the responsibility to act as presiding officer at meetings of the commission. Regular meetings shall be held at least once in each calendar month and as often as deemed necessary by a majority of members. Any member absent from (1) three consecutive meetings of the commission, or (2) fifty per cent of such meetings during any calendar year shall be deemed to have resigned from the commission, effective on the date that the chairperson notifies the official who appointed such member.

(k) The commission shall have access through the Department of Transportation to all records, reports, plans, schedules, operating rules and other documents prepared by rail and bus companies operating under contract with the state of Connecticut which pertain to the operations of such companies and to any documents that the commission may require from the department to carry out its responsibilities under this section and sections 13b-16, 13b-17 and 16-343,

provided this subsection shall not apply to any plans, proposals, reports and other documents pertaining to current or pending negotiations with employee bargaining units.

The Connecticut Public Transportation Commission is charged with the annual task of presenting a list of recommendations which, if undertaken by the State, would further the policy set forth in Section 13b-32 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

SECTION 13b-32

“IMPROVEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF PEOPLE AND GOODS WITHIN, TO AND FROM THE STATE BY RAIL, MOTOR CARRIER OR OTHER MODE OF MASS TRANSPORTATION ON LAND IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE WELFARE OF THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE AND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS RESOURCES, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A MODERN, EFFICIENT AND ADEQUATE SYSTEM OF MOTOR AND RAIL FACILITIES AND SERVICES IS REQUIRED. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF SUCH FACILITIES AND SERVICES AND SHALL PROMOTE NEW AND BETTER MEANS OF MASS TRANSPORTATION BY LAND.”