

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of February 7, 2013

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room A
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Mort Katz, Russ St. John, Richard Sunderhauf, Yvonne Loteczka, Ed McAnaney, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King, Sherry Osterling, David Elder. **Guests:** Mike Sharff, Kim Dunham (GHTD).

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm.

Fred Riese noted that he had inadvertently omitted Kim Dunham from the list of attendees of the January 3 meeting. With this correction, the January minutes were accepted as written.

Featured Speaker

Mike Sharff, Director of Planning and Development for Peter Pan, began by saying that his company has already cancelled all service north of New York City tomorrow in anticipation of the coming snowstorm.

Sharff's first exposure to Peter Pan was as a student at UMass, whose campus is served by Peter Pan. Later, Sharff got a student job working for the UMass shuttle service. This ultimately led to jobs as a driver, dispatcher, assistant manager and finally manager at UMass Transit. Mike then took a job with MassDOT before beginning his career at Peter Pan. He mentioned that UMass Transit and CT Transit have developed a partnership for training students to go into transit careers.

By way of background, Peter Pan was founded in 1933 in Springfield with two 7-passenger livery vehicles. The initial service route was from Northampton to Springfield to Stafford Springs, Connecticut to Boston. Company folklore has it that the reason for the jog into Connecticut was to place the company under Federal jurisdiction as an interstate carrier rather than being under Massachusetts jurisdiction. Company founder Peter C. Picknelly passed away in 1964, whereupon his son, Peter L. Picknelly took the helm of the company. The founder's grandson, Peter A. Picknelly, took over the operation of the firm upon his father's death in 2004.

Some more recent key dates in company history were the opening of the company's Springfield bus terminal in 1969, the 1985 acquisition of Trailways of New England, and the 2003 acquisition of Coach USA, whose five operating companies included Arrow and Bonanza bus lines. Today Peter Pan operates a fleet of 230 buses (down slightly from its peak a few years ago), employs 700 people and provides 3.5 million passenger trips per year. It operates as far north as Concord, New Hampshire, as far west as Albany and south to Washington, DC.

A review of Peter Pan's revenue mix shows that 50% of it is derived from its regular route service, 16% from its contract service, 18% from charters and tours, 8% from conventions,

5% from garage and repair service, and 3% from other sources. The contract revenue has shrunk since the loss of its contract with Foxwoods.

Peter Pan embraces intermodal connections. Indeed, it runs regular route service connecting to rail access points at the following locations: Boston South Station, Massport in Framingham, Worcester Union Station, Lowell, Springfield, Holyoke, Pittsfield, Greenfield, Hyannis, Woods Hole, Falmouth, Bourne, New Bedford, Fall River, Providence, New Haven, Hartford and New York City.

Peter Pan and Greyhound are partners in two new bus services: Bolt Bus and YO! Bus. Bolt goes through Connecticut but does not currently provide any service here. YO! Bus caters to the Chinese market and provides service between Boston and Philadelphia.

Among the ten states in which Peter Pan operates, by far the greatest number of route miles is in Connecticut. The company also runs commuter express service in Connecticut between Willimantic and Hartford and between New Haven and Hartford. And Peter Pan provides charter service for UConn, especially for its athletic teams. The company provides similar contract service for other colleges including Harvard, Boston College and Boston University.

From Springfield, Peter Pan operates routes to Providence, New Haven/ NYC, and Hartford continuing to Danbury and then to NYC. Peter Pan also runs service from Pittsfield to New York City via Torrington and Waterbury.

The company has a maintenance and operations facility in Rocky Hill, employing 80 people there. Other former Peter Pan operations and maintenance centers in East Hartford, Waterford and Milford have now been consolidated into the Rocky Hill facility.

Future initiatives Peter Pan would like to implement or participate in are more intermodal service, coordinated fare collection systems for intermodal trips, and FTA's National Transit Database.

Peter Pan does have some concerns about having to compete with upcoming or proposed subsidized transit services in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The Springfield Line rail service will compete with Peter Pan's existing bus service in the Springfield to New Haven corridor. In Massachusetts, four new state-supported rail transit routes have been proposed between Boston and the Cape, Boston and New Bedford/ Fall River, Boston and Springfield, and Pittsfield and NYC. All these services would impact Peter Pan's business.

In response to a question about whether Peter Pan's employees are unionized, Sharff said that all drivers and mechanics are union members. There are many different locals as a result of the acquisition of other companies that Peter Pan has made but the company enjoys good labor relations both between the unions and the company as well as between the different unions.

In response to a question about the 5% of the company's revenue derived from garage services, Sharff said that division of Peter Pan does everything from washing vehicles to advertising wraps to repairs and body work.

Sharff answered a question about emerging bus technologies by comparing hybrid, fuel cell and natural gas technologies as they relate to buses. Hybrid buses get better mileage in the cities because of the regenerative braking which recharges the batteries but they have no over-the-road advantage. Fuel cell buses get better mileage on the highways. Natural gas works better for local transit system buses but, for longer routes, there are problems with restrictions on places you are not allowed to bring a natural gas bus. Also, the needs for separate fueling systems and for facility modifications for vehicle maintenance and storage add complexity to the operation. Sharff noted that the emissions from diesel engines are now just a tiny fraction of what they were 20 years ago. The use of ultra low sulfur fuel and of emissions controls has reduced diesel emissions on the order of 97%.

Comments from the Public

None.

Comments from Operating Entities

Fred Riese reported that he had presented the recommendations of the Commission's 2012 Annual Report to the January 23 quarterly meeting of the transit districts. He also mentioned that at that meeting Mike Sanders offered an optimistic projection of how transit funding will fare in the new fiscal year. Mike believed that the transit districts could look for a small increase in transit funding in the new budget.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney sent a copy of the 2012 Annual Report, which contained a dedication to former chairman Tom Cheeseman, to Tom's widow Linda.

Kevin also mentioned a recent Wall Street Journal article which discussed the funding issues that states are experiencing for transportation infrastructure as higher fuel mileage and alternative technologies cut into fuel tax revenues. States are looking toward alternate funding sources including perhaps a tax on total vehicle miles traveled.

Old Business

Fred Riese mentioned that he had sent out a press release concerning the Commission's 2012 Annual Report and had received several press inquires as a result. He also read an article from the Waterbury Republican-American concerning the Commission's recommendation thanking ConnDOT for sponsoring the successful bond request for funds to demolish the old SNET building at the Waterbury train station.

New Business

Chairman Maloney mentioned that Senate President Donald Williams has appointed Captain Mark Denno to the Commission. Mr. Denno was not present for today's meeting.

Fred Riese reported that he had attended the first meeting of the Central Connecticut Rail Study Advisory Committee this morning at the Bristol Chamber of Commerce. The study will look at the feasibility of passenger rail service on the Terryville Secondary line owned by Pan Am Southern connecting Waterbury to the Springfield Line at Berlin.

Regarding the Commission's 2013 public hearings, Fred proposed three spring hearings in Bristol, Putman and Norwalk. Potential fall sites are New Milford, New London, Enfield and Old Saybrook, with Orange as a potential additional site.

Lastly, Fred mentioned the CACT legislative breakfast coming up February 20 at the Old Judiciary Room of the State Capitol. ConnDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker will be the speaker at the breakfast.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm.