

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of January 3, 2013

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Sunderhauf, Mort Katz, Robert Rodman, Bill Kelaher, Chris Adams. **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Anna Barry, Gene Colonese, Dennis King. **Guests:** Randall Collins (CCM).

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm. The minutes of the meeting of December 6 were approved as written.

Featured Speaker

Gene Colonese, ConnDOT's Administrator of the Office of Rail, spoke concerning the preparation for, and impact of, Hurricane Sandy on ConnDOT's rail operations. He said the key to dealing with Sandy was to pre-prepare. By the Friday afternoon preceding Sandy's Monday arrival, there were conference calls between ConnDOT, Metro-North and Amtrak. Bridge and maintenance-of-way crews were prepositioned for repairs and recovery.

On Sunday, October 28 there was an orderly shutdown of service at 7:00 pm. The main concern was for the safety of the new M-8 rail cars because of the low-lying nature of New Haven Yard. Rolling stock was moved on Sunday to Grand Central Terminal and to Bridgeport.

Most of the damage to rail infrastructure in Connecticut from Hurricane Sandy was due to falling trees damaging catenaries and signal systems. Connecticut did not experience any water damage to rail infrastructure. In contrast, the Hudson Line experienced flooding to platform level from storm surges.

On the New Haven Line, service began to get up and running again by Thursday with service between Stamford and NYC. Full mainline service was running by Friday. Track 4 sustained a lot of damage from State Line through Westchester County.

The New Canaan Branch suffered substantial damage from Hurricane Sandy mostly due to trees falling on the catenary. The loss of power also affected the crossing gates. Power necessary to operate the crossing gates was obtained commercially and transmitted to the gates via the signal system cables. A full week was needed to get the New Canaan Branch back into service. There was no significant damage to the Waterbury and Danbury Branches which are not electrified. Similarly, there was little damage to Shore Line East which was up and running by Thursday. Colonese said that one of the lessons learned in Hurricane Sandy was the need for a more vigorous tree removal program especially on the west end of the New Haven Line.

The left hand turn into New Jersey that the track of Hurricane Sandy took could have been a left hand turn into Connecticut. Therefore, ConnDOT is looking at various measures to

prepare for that contingency. These include the availability of easily installed, plug-in emergency generators, vacuum pumping trucks for clogged pipes and basins, the raising of infrastructure and the installation of closed circuit television cameras for more real time information about conditions along the rail right-of-way. Colonese commented that the new constant tension catenary system on the New Haven Line worked very well during the storm. Completion of the new catenary system will cost \$140-150 million. The Department is already looking at more tree removal on private land along its rights-of-way where that can be done with cooperation from the landowners.

Moving on from Hurricane Sandy-related topics, Colonese next outlined the upcoming Springfield Line rail service which will provide service every 45 minutes during peak times and hourly service off peak on the 62-mile corridor between New Haven and Springfield. Sixty-two miles of fiber optic cable are being plowed into the ground along the corridor. The cable system will support signal power, communications and the mandated positive train control system. The Springfield Line track will be designed to support 110 mph service but not on all segments. Colonese noted that passenger rail service can be effective in capturing large shares of the intercity travel market, citing the 70% of the travel market captured on the southern end of the Northeast Corridor (DC to NYC) and a 55-60% market share in the northern half of the Northeast Corridor.

In response to a question about the position of the Department on the location of the Windsor Locks railroad station, Colonese said ConnDOT will work with the Town to find the best site. It may or may not be the historic train station.

The change in concept from a mixed car fleet to an all-M-8 fleet for the New Haven Line has necessitated an update of the plans for the New Haven Yard rail maintenance facility. Currently, the 300,000 square foot component change out shop is under construction with that facility planned to open in the first quarter of 2014. ConnDOT is looking at the impact of climate change on New Haven Yard due to its low elevation.

Colonese closed by discussing the \$2 billion worth of major construction projects planned, underway or completed on the New Haven Line. The completion of the new constant tension catenary system is programmed for 2017. Three railroad bridges in Stamford at Elm Street, Atlantic Street and East Main Street will be replaced and work will be necessary on the moveable bridges on the New Haven Line. ConnDOT is looking at accelerated bridge construction techniques which would shorten the duration of service outages by fabricating new bridge spans off-site and then moving them into place as completed spans.

Moving on to Stamford Station, Colonese noted that the rail station is now the focal point of downtown development in Stamford. ConnDOT Deputy Commissioner Anna Barry said that technical review and evaluation of the three substantial proposals received for development at Stamford Station is now underway with a timeframe of early 2013 contemplated for selection of the preferred proposal. She observed that the evaluation process is taking longer than was originally expected.

At the new West Haven rail station, progress is moving right along with an expected station opening in June of 2013. The split between permit parking and daily parking at the station is yet to be set. Colonese noted that this month marks the 30th anniversary of the creation of Metro-North as an operating entity for the New Haven, Harlem and Hudson Lines.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Bill Kelaher reported that Metro-North workers have now been three years without a contract. Some Amtrak units still have not negotiated a contract in the last 3-4 years.

Kim Dunham mentioned that Hartford was selected for a \$10,000,000 TIGER grant that will facilitate intermodal connections at Union Station. Rich Sunderhauf mentioned that some plans being considered would change the traffic circulation at Union Station and downtown and would also restore the Isle of Safety at the Old State House.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney noted the release of the Commission's 2012 Annual Report and thanked Fred for his work on that document. He also thanked all those members who came to the annual work session on November 15 and contributed to the discussion of the recommendations. Fred mentioned that Jim Stutz of ConnDOT had once again formatted the Annual Report cover as he has done for many years now.

Kevin also followed up on a story he had mentioned last month noting that United Technologies has now sold its fuel cell business to a company from Oregon.

Lastly, Kevin discussed the December 10 *Transportation Funding in Connecticut* Forum held at the State Capitol. In addition to himself, the forum was attended by Commission members Rick Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre and Fred Riese. Kevin noted that to date \$1.2 billion has been diverted from the Special Transportation Fund to the General Fund, compromising the public trust that extra tax revenues implemented with the understanding that they will be devoted to transportation purposes will actually be available for those purposes. This was a topic raised by several speakers at the forum. Chris Adams noted that there have been proposals to formulate some kind of 'lockbox' to safeguard transportation funds but that this is politically very difficult to do. In a fiscal crunch, lawmakers will go after whatever funds are available. Kevin noted that Commissioner Redeker said quite a bit about the need for marketing for transit services and the Department's limited ability to support that role since it has no marketing staff or budget. Kevin noted how Commissioner Redeker's remarks on marketing lined up with the Commission's Annual Report recommendation on that topic.

Old Business

Fred Riese mentioned that he has processed seven sets of reimbursement request forms to date for the second half of 2012. He encouraged members who have not yet submitted their reimbursement requests to get them in shortly.

New Business

Discussion took place concerning a press release covering the Annual Report and concerning the spring public hearing locations. Dennis King requested that the locations of the spring public hearings be nailed down by the February meeting. Kevin and Fred agreed to collaborate on a press release about the Annual Report.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 3:11 pm.