

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of January 9, 2014

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

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Mort Katz, Richard Sunderhauf, Yvonne Loteczka, Chris Adams, Alan Sylvestre, Ed McAnaney. **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Leslie Simoes, Jamie Lazaroff, Michael Bernier (all of Arc Connecticut).

Chairman Kevin Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:33 pm. The minutes of the meeting of December 5 were accepted as written.

**Featured Speaker**

Leslie Simoes, Executive Director of Arc Connecticut, and Jamie Lazaroff, a Self-Advocate with Arc of the Quinebaug Valley, spoke to the Commission concerning Arc Connecticut's recent transportation planning work. Simoes first explained that Arc, which has over 700 chapters nationally, including 18 in Connecticut, is an advocacy group which promotes and protects the civil rights of persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Historically, Arc has been involved in the areas of health screening, education, employment and housing. Transportation is a new area for Arc.

Jamie Lazaroff provided additional background on Arc's local transportation efforts. An Arc Self-Advocacy Advisory Panel consisting of representatives from Arc chapters around Connecticut was formed and held its first meeting in November 2011. Lazaroff explained that, while it may be possible for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities to get a job without first having reliable and affordable transportation, the keeping of that job does require transportation. To that end, the self-advocates developed a number of transportation recommendations and presented them to, among others, the co-chairmen of the General Assembly's Transportation Committee, ConnDOT Commissioner Redeker and DDS Commissioner Macy.

Lazaroff said the self-advocates discovered there are many gaps in the transportation system. One example he mentioned is that some towns that could benefit from public transportation do not participate in their local transit districts. According to Lazaroff, the Town of Plainfield does not participate in either the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District or the Southeast Connecticut Transit District. As a result, a person wanting to travel from Danielson to Foxwoods would need to take a Windham Region Transit District bus to Willimantic and then travel

from Willimantic to Foxwoods on another Windham Region Transit District bus. [Editors note: Although the Town of Plainfield is not a member of the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District, it does receive transit service from that system.]

Simoes explained that Arc Connecticut applied for a Federal Transit 4 All grant and was awarded a grant in April 2013. In cooperation with the Commission on Aging, the Department of Developmental Services and People First of Connecticut, Arc Connecticut hosted a series of 18 focus groups and community meetings statewide. Two hundred and five participants attended the 18 meetings. Of these, 47% were individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or elders, 12% were family members, and 10% were transit provider representatives or mobility managers.

Simoes said she has been impressed by the complexity of the existing public transportation network. She finds many positive aspects to the existing transportation system, and she noted that transit providers were very willing to try to assist in addressing transportation needs. However, she found that the transportation system as it exists is geared to meeting transportation needs for medical trips and grocery shopping but not for purposes beyond that. Senior citizens are typically unable to arrange transportation to wakes and funerals, libraries, or soup kitchens and are often unable to be picked up after hospital stays. The ability to function as part of the community and to participate in social/cultural activities is very limited.

Dial-a-Ride services are very important to both the intellectually and developmentally disabled and to senior citizens. Many local senior centers offer transportation services using volunteer drivers. Liability issues for the volunteer drivers are a significant concern. In some cases where volunteer drivers and transport vehicles were available, the liability concerns for the drivers prevented the transportation services from being offered. Also expressed at the statewide forum were frustrations about town or state vehicles, which could be used to provide transit services, going unused or being very inefficiently used.

Simoes complimented the value of mobility managers and noted that three mobility managers are available in the state at the Kennedy Center, the Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium and at Way to Go Connecticut in North Central Connecticut. They are a wonderful resource but are not listed on the ConnDOT website and are generally not well publicized. Adding mobility managers to cover other areas of the state would assist in creating a more accessible transportation system.

In the short-term, Simoes recommended a number of small pilot projects in towns that don't have any public transportation. She also noted the fragmented

nature of the current delivery of public transportation services by many different providers. Fred Riese mentioned to her that this has been a longstanding problem in Connecticut. One possible solution mentioned at several Commission public hearings is for various organizations who are currently transit providers to contract with the local transit districts to operate the service they need. The transit districts would use the funding from the various organizations to purchase and operate additional vehicles which could be used much more efficiently than the vehicles each separate agency owns, which are only used intermittently and for very specific purposes.

Kevin Maloney mentioned the model of the Independent Transportation Network (ITN) which operates locally in north central Connecticut and the Middletown area. This model employs volunteer drivers and transportation provided by subscription.

### **Comments from the public**

None.

### **Comments from Operating Entities**

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned that the bus fare increases across the state go into effect on January 19.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney referred to a Journal Inquirer article about the soon-to-open Storrs intermodal center that the Commission heard testimony on at its September 2012 Storrs public hearing. The intermodal facility, which is attached to a new parking garage, will include a bike sharing facility, four charging stations for electric cars, and a Hertz short-term car rental operation. Bus service, including the UConn campus bus service, Windham Region Transit buses and intercity bus companies will all use the intermodal center. The center will also incorporate information kiosks.

Kevin attended the Stamford Transportation Summit on December 12, hosted by CBIA and the Stamford Chamber of Commerce. He noted that the transportation priorities laid out at the summit were more highway-focused than most of the major transportation projects we hear of. Respondents at the summit generally felt that expanding the highway capacity was the state's #1 need. The continued dominant role of the single occupant vehicle was also noted. The value of highway infrastructure in moving people and goods was the central theme of the summit.

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese noted that all the reimbursement request forms for members for the second half of 2013 have now been reviewed and forwarded to the department.

## **New Business**

Fred Riese mentioned several items under New Business. First, the three years of Federal funding support for the evening bus service in Waterbury is coming to an end. If the evening bus service is to continue, increased state and local support will be needed.

Fred then mentioned two upcoming meetings dealing with passenger rail service. On January 23, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will host a 7:00 pm meeting on enhancing rail service from Springfield north to Vermont and Montreal and from Springfield east to Boston. MassDOT and the Vermont Agency of Transportation will be leading this study effort.

On January 28 at 3:00 pm, a meeting to discuss funding support for future phases of the Springfield Line rail service will be held in Room 2E of the Legislative Office Building. Senator John Kissel is coordinating the meeting, which will also involve representatives from the Corridor Advisory Committee and the affected regional planning agencies.

A short discussion concerning putting out a press release on the recommendations of the 2013 Annual Report then took place. It was agreed that this would be worthwhile. Fred will draft that press release for the chairman's review.

Fred also reported there has been substantial progress on the revision and renewal of the Valley Railroad's lease to operate on the DEEP-owned corridor on from Old Saybrook to Middletown, the southern half of which supports Valley's current operations. A draft of the revised lease has been tentatively approved by Valley. In connection with the revised lease, a license to allow the Providence and Worcester Railroad to have access to the southernmost portion of the Valley Railroad lease area for the purpose of getting trains off the Northeast Corridor main line when necessary has also been drafted and has just gone out to P&W for review.

Lastly, Fred mentioned that Jon Foster of the ConnDOT Office of Rail will be the speaker at the Commission's February 6 meeting at Union Station in New Haven. Jon Foster's presentation will cover a wide range of Shore Line East issues.

Potential speakers for other upcoming meetings were discussed. Chris Adams will contact Joe Comerford of Nine Town Transit concerning speaking at the March 6 meeting. Kevin Maloney mentioned Mike Riley of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association as a potential speaker this spring, probably in April or May. The possibility of a tour of the expanded rail maintenance facilities at New Haven Yard was discussed, perhaps for the May meeting. In connection with rail issues,

Dennis King informed the Commission that ConnDOT's Administrator of the Office of Rail, Gene Colonese, will be retiring soon.

Two final discussions concerned potential roles for the Commission in the Federal inquiry into the operational practices and competency of Metro-North in the wake of the Bronx train derailment and also in ConnDOT's solicitation of public input about improvements to Connecticut's transportation system via its Transform Connecticut initiative. Chairman Maloney asked Chris Adams and Alan Sylvestre to draft a statement regarding the Commission's interest and potential role in the Federal review of the Bronx derailment and of Metro-North's safety practices for consideration at the February meeting.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 2:52 PM.