

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of January 7, 2016

Fourth Floor Conference Room and Conference Room A
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, Robert Rodman, Chris Adams, Francis Pickering **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Carl Jackson. **Guests:** Rodney Chabot, Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg, Don Stacom.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm. Featured speaker Carl Jackson had set up his presentation in Conference Room A so the Featured Speaker portion of the meeting was relocated to that room at 1:40 pm, after approval of the December 3 minutes.

Featured Speaker

Carl Jackson, the Administrator of ConnDOT's Office of Rail, has now been in that position for approximately a year and a half. He began his career with the Long Island Railroad where he spent 27 years. He then worked for the Chicago Transit Authority and then on a bus rapid transit (BRT) project. He also managed two transit agencies in Georgia and South Carolina, then became the Transit Administrator for the District of Columbia, before assuming his current position at ConnDOT. Mr. Jackson asked the members of the Commission to introduce themselves and give their backgrounds with railroads or transit in general.

Mr. Jackson said he feels very fortunate to be in his current position because Commission Redeker and Governor Malloy "get public transportation" more than leaders in other places he has worked. Jackson also noted that the Office of Rail does not directly manage the design and construction of its projects, though some of its projects are managed by other offices within ConnDOT.

As required by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), ConnDOT prepared a State Rail Plan in 2012. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) just approved the plan in mid-2015.

The rail capital funding program for FY 2016 is almost \$870 million. This total consists of \$190 million in Let's Go CT ramp-up funding, \$404 million in State bonding for rail projects, \$139 million in Federal funds under emergency relief, TIGER grants or special transit funding, and \$136 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding for rail projects. On the operating side, revenue consists of \$301 million from Metro-North fares, \$2.5 million from Shore Line East fares and \$185 million of State operating support, for a total of \$489 million. Farebox recovery for FY 2013 was 72.0% on the New Haven Line and 7% on Shore Line East.

For the New Haven Line, 304 daily trains carry 39.6 million passengers annually. On-time performance for 2015 was 92.3%. Last winter's harsh weather impacted on-time performance and prevented attainment of the goal of 95%. ConnDOT has now received all 405 of its new M-8 cars. (Carl mentioned that when he broke in on the Long Island Railroad, that

railroad was operating M-1 cars.) The M-8 cars can run on catenary or third rail power and could be used to access Penn Station if Metro-North service were to be extended there. Fifty bicycle racks have been installed on the M-8 cars so far. About 10 racks per month are being added. In addition to the newly-received M-8s, the department is in design for the next generation of its diesel fleet for Shore Line East and branch line service, though its longer term plan is to increasingly use the M-8 equipment on Shore Line East.

Shore Line East operates 34 trains per day to Old Saybrook and/or New London. On-time performance is 90.7%. Annual ridership is 658,297. Station improvements have been made at Branford, Guilford and Clinton.

Jackson next discussed improvements being made at New Haven Yard to provide state-of-the-art storage, servicing and maintenance facilities for the New Haven Line and Connecticut Commuter Rail fleets. The \$1.178 billion dollar upgrade is approximately one-third complete. Ultimately, 1,600 workers will be employed at New Haven Yard.

Jackson described some of the main facilities being added at New Haven Yard. The Independent Wheel Truing Facility will double the capacity to true train wheels. It will eliminate the need to send cars to Harmon Yard in New York for this service, and will even result in some cars from New York being sent to New Haven for wheel truing. This facility has just come on board. It will be a big help during leaf season when foliage falling on the tracks is a major cause of wheel wear.

The 300,000 square foot Component Change-Out Shop to maintain the M-8 fleet will open in spring of 2016 and is already partially open. Among other capabilities, it will include a paint shop and truck repair capability, as well as hosting ConnDOT Office of Rail administrative space when it is fully open. A Central Distribution Warehouse built in front of the Component Change-Out Shop will maintain the vast parts inventory for the fleet. Automated delivery robots will deliver specific parts to the shop floor as needed.

Lastly on the New Haven Yard, Jackson said the power system for the yard will be upgraded with the construction of a new substation.

Jackson next discussed the Freight Rail Improvement Program which provides grants to improve rail infrastructure in Connecticut. One goal of the program is to increase rail freight usage by 20% in order to reduce truck traffic and energy consumption. ConnDOT seeks to coordinate with the freight railroads and to better understand their needs. ConnDOT is currently funding freight improvement projects with the Providence and Worcester, New England Central, Central New England, Housatonic and Naugatuck Railroads.

The Let's Go CT initiative announced by Governor Malloy includes a large rail component, including \$1.75 billion as part of the initial 5-year ramp-up. Thus far, funding has been approved for three rail projects: \$70 million for various Hartford Line project work elements, \$20 million for design of the replacement rail diesel equipment including \$12 million for the overhaul of rolling stock from New Jersey Transit, and \$4 million to design and construct

a new dock yard on the Danbury Branch. The initial design work on the new diesel fleet will start in 2016.

On the Hartford Line passenger rail service project, implementation of the new service is planned for 2018. Remaining infrastructure work includes the completion of double tracking to Springfield and new stations for Windsor and Windsor Locks. At Berlin, Meriden and Wallingford, new stations will have high level platforms, pedestrian bridges over the tracks, elevators, expanded parking and new ticket vending machines. Longer term plans for the Hartford Line include stations at North Haven, Newington Junction, West Hartford and Enfield, and a new north side platform at State Street Station in New Haven.

Replacement of the Walk Bridge is currently in design. This 565-foot bridge was built in 1897 and has become increasingly unreliable. The type of bridge to be used as a replacement is yet to be determined.

Two other New Haven Line projects on the horizon are the new Barnum Rail Station in Bridgeport for which Federal design money has recently been released, and a new parking facility at New Haven Union Station, currently in the environmental scoping phase.

Lastly, Jackson mentioned that the deadline for the installation of positive train control (PTC), a requirement under PRIIA, has been extended for three years, from December 2015 to December 2018. Updates from passenger railroads and Class I freight railroads as to where they stand in meeting this requirement are due on January 27, 2016 per USDOT mandate.

Comments from the Public

Terry Hall mentioned that the National Association of Railroad Passengers will have a meeting March 12, 11:00 am at the New London Holiday Inn. John Bernick, the Assistant Administrator of the ConnDOT Office of Rail, is the tentative speaker.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rick Schreiner distributed the newly printed HART system map which was designed in-house and uses a subway system format to present the route structure.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney presented updates on several State transit projects. The State has approved an additional \$174 million in funds to finish the Hartford Line. This total is in addition to the Federal contribution of \$191.4 million and the \$244 million already committed by the State. Included in this funding is \$135 million to be spent for additional construction, \$20 million for design and engineering on four new stations and funding for the construction of a new platform at the State Street Station in New Haven, and a study of moving a section of the track in Hartford northward to accommodate the rebuilding of Interstate 84 at the Aetna viaduct.

Separately, Amtrak has agreed not to exceed the new budget of \$570 million on the Hartford Line and to have the project completed by January 2018.

In an interesting move, General Motors has invested \$500 million in Lyft, marking the first instance in which an automaker has invested in this type of company. GM is ultimately looking at a service where Lyft would provide autonomous cars on which passengers would order rides through their smartphones. This would be a large scale deployment of an on-demand, rideshare platform using autonomous vehicles.

There have been an increasing number of calls for a constitutional amendment to be added to the November 2016 ballot to create a lockbox for the state Special Transportation Fund. The CT Post has joined the chorus calling for this amendment.

Lastly, Kevin spoke of the increasing publicity surrounding what appears to be a significant increase in the operating budget for *CTfastrak* from \$10 million to \$17.5 million. ConnDOT insists that it cannot isolate the revenue and expenses of *CTfastrak* from its overall operating expenses, prompting no small amount of criticism from a number of entities. Back when Mike Sanders spoke to the Commission in August, there was a general feeling that insufficient time had unfolded to really get a handle on how well or how poorly things were going. Kevin would like to schedule Mike Sanders again for an update on this issue.

Old Business

Fred Riese mentioned that the Federal Railroad Administration will be holding a public hearing on January 13, 4:00 – 7:00 PM at the Lyceum in Hartford to present the findings of its Tier I environmental impact statement on the NEC Future study and to take public comment on the study. Fred is continuing his review of the EIS for the DEEP.

New Business

Fred said that he would prepare a list of public hearing sites for the spring hearing season and present it at the February meeting. He also asked if he should prepare a press release covering the 2015 Annual Report recommendations and was given the go-ahead to do this.

Lastly, he asked Rick Schreiner to let the Commission know about the speaker for the February 4 meeting. Rick said that Matt Powers, General Manager for Connecticut operations for Uber, will explain that company's business model and operations at the February meeting.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 3:19 pm.