

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of July 9, 2015

Thomas A. Cheeseman Transit Facility
Middletown, Connecticut

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Alan Sylvestre, Bob Hammersley, Nick Lownes, Rich Sunderhauf, Robert Rodman, Francis Pickering, Mort Katz, Ed McAnaney **Ex-officio members:** Garrett Eucalitto (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guests:** Andy Chiaravallo (Middletown Area Transit), Jaroslaw Pizunski.

Chairman Kevin Maloney opened the meeting at 1:37 pm. The minutes of the meeting of June 4 were approved as written subject to one change to note that Commission member Mort Katz was not in attendance at that meeting due to an assignment to perform judicial duties as magistrate in New London Superior Court at Norwich.

Featured Speaker

Andy Chiaravallo is serving in his fourth year as Administrator of Middletown Area Transit (MAT). The three previous administrators were Karen Olson, Gene Zeitlin and Andy's predecessor Tom Cheeseman, the former chairman of the CPTC.

MAT owns the Thomas Cheeseman Transit Facility and the downtown bus terminal at 340 Main Street. MAT is not City-affiliated, but does receive support from the City of Middletown, as well as state and federal funding.

Chiaravallo said MAT runs the full spectrum of transit services: fixed route, rural transportation, Jobs Access, paratransit and ADA services. Dial-a-Ride was the most recent expansion when MAT took that over from American Red Cross. MAT serves Middletown, Portland, Durham, East Hampton, and Cromwell. It also operates the Meriden-Middletown Shuttle. Growth of the latter service is currently the chief focus of MAT. Ridership on the Meriden-Middletown service has climbed from 2,000 riders per month to its current 4,000 riders per month.

Chiaravallo has been with MAT for 20 years. During that time, Tom Cheeseman brought MAT's transit services in-house. Formerly the operation of the service was contracted out. The previous bus facility was very old, crowded and inefficient. It took twenty years to make the new bus facility a reality.

Chiaravallo provided some details on the construction of the Thomas Cheeseman Transit Facility. Its construction was a \$12,000,000 project. The site

was a former coal ash dump so \$400,000 of remediation work was necessary to clean it. The site is also in the 100-year flood plain so critical elements of the facility needed to be raised above the 100-year flood elevation. Spongy soils on the site required the driving of 175 I-beams to an average depth of 20 feet to hit bedrock. O&G was the construction contractor for the project. The facility came in on budget but three to four months behind schedule, due partly to severe winter weather.

As to the service and operations of MAT, it runs ten 14-passenger vans for its Dial-a-Ride operations and ten fixed route buses. The current buses are beyond their programmed replacement age but new buses are on order, the first of which is in transit from California for delivery. Excluding Dial-a-Ride, MAT provides 30,000 rides per month, operating Monday through Saturday. The rural service was recently extended to Saturdays. The standard fare is \$1.50; Dial-a-Ride is \$2.00. Major vehicle repair work is farmed out but routine repairs are done in house. The drivers are unionized, the mechanics are not.

Comments from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned the CT Transit and HARTransit did very well in the ROADEO. HARTransit will have one of its drivers going to the national ROADEO while CT Transit will have two drivers competing nationally.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney said the Amtrak-Shore Line East agreement under which Amtrak honors Shore Line East tickets for certain trips to and from New London will be expiring on September 1. The outlook to continue this arrangement is uncertain.

Escalating costs for Amtrak work on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail project have led to a call from Governor Malloy to USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx for an audit of Amtrak's work and costs and for transfer of ownership of the line from Amtrak to Connecticut. The costs of the NHHS project have skyrocketed from \$360 million to \$615 million. The 2016 target date for implementation of the service has been moved back to 2017.

Before moving on to Old Business, Garrett Eucalitto was asked to provide an update on changes to funding the Special Transportation Fund. Eucalitto said that previously the Special Transportation Fund (STF) has been bucked up by transfers from the General Fund. The practice has ended now that a new, more stable source of funding for the STF has been enacted. Beginning with the fiscal year which started nine days ago, 1/2c of the State sales tax will go to the STF, with full allocation of the 1/2c to be phased in over a three year period. Also, the new budget dedicates 100% of the gross receipts tax on petroleum products to the STF rather than the previous arrangement of 50% of the gross receipts tax going to the STF. Eucalitto said that the STF would see a slight drop in receipts in the first

year as the phase in of the ½c begins, replacing the previous STF funding sources. Thereafter revenues will increase. Bob Hammersley noted that the full phase in of the sales tax revenue in year three is beyond the reach of the biennial budget.

Old Business

Fred Riese reported that he and Rick Schreiner had met with two deans at Naugatuck Valley Community College and two representatives of Peter Pan on July 1 to further develop a plan for NVCC students to access Peter Pan buses between Danbury and Waterbury to provide a connection between the NVCC campuses in those two cities at a fare affordable to students. Peter Pan will be getting back with numbers for the discount fare and the availability of capacity on the buses for the seven trips per day it runs in each direction between Waterbury and Danbury.

Fall Public Hearing Sites

Fred reported that the sites for the Commission's fall public hearings will be Derby, Old Saybrook, Windsor Locks and Stamford. Francis Pickering said he would arrange for the Stamford hearing location either at the WCCOG offices or another convenient site in Stamford.

New Business

Fred mentioned that the Commission's August 6 meeting would feature an update on ridership and operations of the *CTfastrak* service to date.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Following the meeting, Andy Chiaravallo led Commission members on a tour of the Thomas Cheeseman Transit Facility including the office area, drivers' lockers, bus storage area, vehicle maintenance bay with its bus lift, and the bus wash bay. The facility incorporates the use of geothermal heat for a portion of the structure and a waste oil burner as an auxiliary heating source.