

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of June 4, 2015

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room B  
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, Richard Sunderhauf, Robert Hammersley, Bill Kelaher, Robert Rodman, Russ St. John, Francis Pickering Nicholas Lownes. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Sherry Osterling, Jim Stutz. **Guests:** Jennifer Carrier (CRCOG), Tim Malone (CRCOG), Terry Hall, Emma Hall, Stephen Troster.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m. The minutes of the meetings of Aril 2 and May 7 were accepted as written.

**Featured Speaker**

Jennifer Carrier and Tim Malone of the Capitol Region Council of Governments gave an overview of their organization and of several specific ongoing studies. Jennifer Carrier, Director of Transportation Planning at CRCOG, first explained that the former 15 regional planning organizations (RPOs) in Connecticut were recently consolidated into nine RPOs through four voluntary mergers and two consolidations overseen by the Office of Policy and Management. CRCOG added four new towns on its eastern end and four towns to the west to expand to 38 towns covering 1,050 square miles. Carrier mentioned that CRCOG has a solid relationship with ConnDOT.

The RPOs also function as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) which are federally-mandated local agencies for transportation planning and setting of priorities. Federal funding passes through the MPOs. Among the key tasks MPOs perform are the development of regional Long Range Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Programs, Unified Planning Work Programs, Congestion Mitigation Programs and undertaking multi-modal planning.

The Long Range Transportation Plan defines transportation needs and sets priorities through 2040. CRCOG completed a minor update to its Long Range Transportation Plan earlier this year. Performance metrics are a new federal priority in Long Range Transportation Plans. Key goals of the Plan are to provide the public with more and better travel choices and to emphasize better management and operation of our roads rather than building new roadways. Among the underlying policies in CRCOG's Long Range Transportation Plan are improved transit, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian systems, linking land use and transportation planning, creating sustainable transportation systems, supporting Bradley International Airport, commitments to freight planning, and continuing support for Environmental Justice programs.

Carrier then highlighted several specific planning projects in the Capitol Region. The first of these is the replacement of the Interstate 84 Viaduct in Hartford. The viaduct is a ¾ mile segment of elevated highway built in the early 1960s and now nearing the end of its useful life.

It crosses the Amtrak railroad line and the Park River, and contains eight ramps within its  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile length. In 2006, ConnDOT proposed the replacement of the viaduct in-kind, but this idea was a non-starter with the City and the community.

CRCOG instituted a study of replacement alternatives, working closely with HUB of Hartford for community involvement. The study is now in the environmental documentation phase and is looking at numerous options including three elevated highway options, 15 options for a lowered highway, three tunnel options and minor alignment relocations. Construction of the new highway segment is planned for 2020-2025. Extensive public outreach is occurring as part of the assessment of alternatives.

Carrier next discussed the Comprehensive Transit Study, looking at all the CT Transit Hartford Division routes in order to better serve existing riders and choice riders. Better integration of CT Transit routes with CT*fastrak* service is one purpose of the study. The study team has gone over the Hartford Division system route by route, getting information from actual riders. Focus group meetings have been conducted. A Study Advisory Committee has held three meetings so far. Carrier listed the study website address as: [www.hartfordtransitstudy.com](http://www.hartfordtransitstudy.com).

Two studies with UConn will kick off this fall. These will involve a look at connections between the Farmington UConn campus and the new downtown Hartford campus and a study of the Route 195 and U.S. Route 44 gateways to the Storrs campus. Major elements of these studies will be community involvement, setting visions and goals, assessing existing conditions, future conditions, identification and analysis of alternatives, and developing a transportation strategy and an implementation plan. The Hartford-Farmington campus connection study will focus on integrating CT Transit and CT*fastrak* service and will look at Route 4 and Interstate 84 as the key highway links. The Eastern Gateway study will look at bike/ped conditions, enhancing safety, capacity issues and access management.

Tim Malone, Transportation Planner at CRCOG, discussed the effort to complete gaps in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, a multi-use trail running from New Haven to Northampton, Mass. The Connecticut portion of the trail is now 70% complete, the Massachusetts portion 60% done. Regionally, there is a big gap in the trail in Plainville, a smaller gap in Southington, and a gap in Farmington which is currently under design. No progress has been made in negotiations with Pan Am Railroad to purchase the unused rail segment north of Plainville center for trail use. CRCOG has initiated a 2-phase "Bridge the Gap" Study, first to analyze all trail alignment options between West Queen Street in Southington northward to the Farmington town line and, secondly, to focus on making a connection between the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail in Plainville and the CT*fastrak* multi-use trail in New Britain. A Request for Qualifications was issued on May 18 and proposals are due June 18. The study is expected to begin this fall.

### **Reports from Operating Entities**

Rich Sunderhauf reported that two CT Transit buses caught on fire in less than one week. They were 2007 model 40' transit buses, and were very heavily damaged. The starter solenoids were found to be at fault.

Rich Schreiner mentioned that the Transit ROADEO is this Sunday at Buckland Hills.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney mentioned that CTfastrak had a very impressive booth at the Hartford Business Expo, which he attended this morning.

Last night's Commission hearing in Hamden drew five speakers, all addressing paratransit issues. Problems connecting between destinations in different transit districts were mentioned by almost all the speakers.

Kevin then asked newly-appointed Commission member Bob Hammersley to introduce himself and tell us a bit about his background. Hammersley said he has worked for Diversified Technologies Corporation since 2012. Before that, he had worked for Governor Rowland, OPM, the Transportation Strategy Board and ConnDOT. He lives in Southington and has four children ages 2 ½ to 19.

Kevin's mention that the legislative bill for more stringent regulation of Uber had died sparked a discussion on the company and its operating structure. Kevin said that in some locations, Uber is now moving packages, putting it in competition with UPS and FedEx. Francis Pickering said he had recently had a flat tire and needed to call a taxi for a ride. The choices were \$30 for conventional taxi service or \$8.35 for Uber. He opined that the State has spent a ton of money to promote ridesharing and has gotten no traction. Uber does it with no State funding.

Pickering also said the cost of providing paratransit trips when he ran the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency's paratransit program was \$35/trip due in large part to the size of the vehicles which were needed to serve obese passengers who had motorized scooters or chairs. These passengers constituted a very small percentage of the clientele served but necessitated the use of the large vehicles. The general lack of wheelchair-accessible vehicles will make it unlikely that the Uber model will work for paratransit trips or yield any cost benefits for that type of service. Pickering also mentioned that Governor Malloy's office has not yet signed off on approving the new, consolidated MPO boundaries to coincide with the new planning regions. [Note: The Governor's office has signed off on the new Capitol Region MPO boundaries since the June 4 meeting.]

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese received an e-mail from Danielle Herbert of Way To Go CT, last month's speaker, saying that the Legislature had restored the majority of the funding to the Regional Mental Health Boards. Though she did not know the exact amount of the funding at this time, she feels the cuts will be minor and manageable.

### **Report on Spring Public Hearings**

Fred Riese reported that the May 5 Norwich public hearing drew 53 members of the public, about half of whom spoke at the hearing. The two dominant topics were requests to extend Shore Line East service to Mystic and Westerly, and concerns about the preservation of

local bus service on several specific routes. The latter concern was related to Southeast Area Transit's on-going bus route study.

The May 13 hearing in Plainville drew only three speakers. The dominant topics were extension of bus service to serve Route 10, the Northwestern Industrial Area, the Plainville senior center, and the Cancer Center/ Medical Arts Building on Journey Road. Routing of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail through Plainville without the use of the Pan Am rail corridor and a desire for a bus shelter downtown opposite the library were also local priorities.

The Hamden hearing last night drew five speakers. Keeping up with the demand for paratransit service was a key concern, along with the difficulties in arranging trips that go outside the service area of the Greater New Haven Transit District. The limitations on making a Stratford-to-Stamford work commute by Metro-North, and then trying to use local bus service routes toward Shelton which are geared to Jobs Access reverse commute trips were also discussed in detail.

### **New Business**

Fred indicated that the probable speaker for the July 9 Commission is Andy Chiaravallo, Administrator of Middletown Area Transit. He also mentioned that CRCOG has submitted a TIGER grant application for \$15 million for various bicycle and pedestrian improvements and intersection geometry improvements along the CTfastrak busway, principally in areas of the stations.

Bob Hammersley brought up the changes in the funding of the Special Transportation Fund as contained in the just-adopted budget. The dedication of one-half cent of the sales tax to the Special Transportation Fund adds \$436 million in new funding to the Fund but \$371 million of existing funding was redirected to the General Fund, resulting in a net increase of \$65 million, rather than \$436 million to the Special Transportation Fund over the two year budget cycle. This did not seem like much of a downpayment on the Governor's 30-year, \$100 billion transportation initiative. After some discussion, it was decided to have Hammersley draft a resolution on the effects of redirecting existing Special Transportation Fund revenues to the General Fund.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.