

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of March 5, 2015

Fourth Floor Conference Room C
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Al Sylvestre, Richard Sunderhauf, Chris Adams. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Bruce Olmstead, Rob Armstrong, Tim Sullivan, Albert Campagna. **Guests:** Rob Canestra (Parsons Brinckerhoff).

Chairman Kevin Maloney opened the meeting at 1:36 p.m. in Conference Room C to which the meeting had been relocated for purposes of the featured presentation on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield passenger rail service project.

Featured Speaker

Bruce Olmstead is the ConnDOT Project Manager for the NHHS passenger rail service project which is now formally branded as the Hartford Line service. Olmstead began a PowerPoint presentation with a slide of the new Hartford Line logo.

At present, Amtrak runs six trips per day between New Haven and Springfield over a single track line, the second track having been removed in the 1980s. There has been continued growth in freight traffic on the line. A second track, initially only between New Haven and Hartford, is being restored to provide greater windows for freight service and greater flexibility and capacity for passenger service. ConnDOT's long-term goal is to have 25 round trips per day on the line. ConnDOT's initial plan is to operate 12 round trips daily (these being in addition to the Amtrak service) beginning in late 2016. The Hartford Line service will allow for connections to be made to Grand Central Terminal, Penn Station, Boston and Montreal. At Springfield, connections can be made to the recently expanded Knowledge Corridor service between Springfield and Brattleboro. The new service will also provide a second connection, via the Inland Route, from New Haven to Boston. The Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative, a cooperative venture between MassDOT and the Vermont Agency of Transportation, will be adding either four or eight round trips per day between Springfield and Boston, providing additional connections to those offered by the existing Amtrak service.

To enhance connectivity to the airport, a bus shuttle service will be added between Windsor Locks station and Bradley Field. Other features of the new service mentioned by Olmstead were the new communications and signal system, which is now 95% complete, and positive train control (PTC) which is an FRA requirement for all passenger services sharing lines with freight service. Bridges, culverts, drainage and grade crossings will also be upgraded.

Regarding stations, Olmstead first mentioned that the historic Berlin station is being upgraded and may need to be closed during the course of the work, though passengers would continue to be picked up and dropped off there. [Note: This closure is not the closure that began March 9 to repair storm damage at Berlin Station.] All new stations along the line will be ADA-compliant and all stations will have high level platforms to facilitate quicker boarding and

unloading of passengers. Parking will be increased at rail stations along the line and stations will offer automatic ticketing.

Committed funding for the Hartford Line service stands at \$434,000,000. This figure includes three new stations at close to \$30,000,000 per station, including design and environmental work. The new stations for which funding currently exists are Wallingford and Meriden and upgrading of the Berlin station. Later project phases will include new stations at North Haven, Newington, West Hartford and Enfield (Thompsonville), and the addition of a second platform and an up-and-over crossing at State Street Station in New Haven. Work on a new station at Hartford will be dependent on a location being selected once decisions are made on the Interstate 84 and railroad viaduct projects. The committed project funds do not include the replacement of the Connecticut River bridge north of Hartford, a project which may cost a half billion dollars.

At the commencement of the new service in late 2016, there will be 17 round trips per day, including Amtrak service, between Hartford and New Haven. North of Hartford, which will remain a single-tracked line at that time, there will be 12 total round trip trains per day.

Contracts for station work at Berlin, Meriden and Wallingford have already been awarded. Work at Union Station in Hartford is currently being bid. The Union Station work will cover needed short-term improvements until a new Hartford Station can be sited and constructed.

Olmstead noted that Hartford Line service will establish the foundation for a multi-state rail system and will offer connections to Metro-North, Shore Line East, Amtrak, CTfastrak, Bradley Airport and local bus service. It will also underpin transit-oriented development initiatives in Springfield, Enfield/Thompsonville, Windsor Locks, Windsor, Meriden and Berlin. He also noted that Shore Line East has experienced a long-term ridership growth of 3-5% per year.

In response to questions from Commission members, Olmstead noted the following points:

- A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has gone out soliciting responses from potential operators for the Hartford Line service. Potential respondents go beyond Amtrak and Metro-North and may even include some foreign firms.
- The double tracked portion of the corridor will be at 15-foot centers. That is why the existing Connecticut River bridge, which once supported double track operations, would need to be widened or replaced to accommodate double tracking again.
- Four to six locomotives will be rehabbed for the Hartford Line service, with an additional four used locomotives to be purchased for the service. ConnDOT has sufficient coaches available to meet the needs of the new service.

Acceptance of February Minutes

Following Bruce Olmstead's presentation, the Commission returned to the Fourth Floor Conference Room for the remainder of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting of February 5 were approved as written.

Reports from Operating Entities

Richard Sunderhauf distributed information on Hartford Division route and schedule changes which went into effect on March 1. In preparation for the beginning of CT*fastrak* service on March 28, several route and bus stop changes are being made on the Berlin Turnpike and in downtown Hartford.

Rick Schreiner distributed copies of the *Guide to Ride* for the Greater Danbury region. The *Guide* is a specialized transportation resource produced by HARTransit detailing transportation services available to seniors and persons with disabilities in the Danbury region.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney noted that one of the projects which is not in the Governor's LET'S GO CT transportation initiative is the upgrade of the Berkshire Line between Danbury and the Massachusetts border for passenger service. This omission is likely to derail the \$47,000,000 commitment that former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick has made to his state's portion of this line.

Kevin mentioned that Uber has expanded its service in Connecticut from Fairfield County and is now offering service at the Mohegan Sun casino.

ConnDOT has purchased 48 buses for the CT*fastak* service including 30', 40' and 60' hybrid diesel-electric buses. These buses will be equipped with GPS tracking and free Wi-Fi service.

While the Legislature adequately funded existing levels of bus transportation, including funding for CT*fastrak*, going into 2015, it reduced the Transportation Employment Independence Program funding by \$500,000. In addition, Governor Malloy announced \$126,000 in TEIP funding cuts last November as part of his rescissions package. Several Commission members mentioned that this program is likely going to be moved from DSS to ConnDOT, although some of the Jobs Access services supported by the program may not be continued. Jobs Access programs that are client-based and are not reliant on public transportation services are not likely to be picked up by ConnDOT.

Kevin attended the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation's Legislative Breakfast on February 25 at the State Capitol. Commissioner Redeker gave a presentation of the transportation initiatives announced by the Governor. The Governor's LET'S GO CT initiative envisions a \$100 billion commitment over the next 30 years, with a \$10 billion 5-year ramp up effort. Among components mentioned by Redeker were a \$7 billion pavement preservation effort, \$23 billion to preserve bridges, a 25% increase in bus service, expanded overnight parking for trucks, and attainment of the national 286,000 pound per car standard for rail lines and a 100,000 pound per vehicle highway bridge standard.

Spring Public Hearing Locations

Seven public hearing sites for 2015 were tentatively suggested. These are Ansonia/Derby, Bridgeport area, Plainville, Norwich, Windsor Locks, Old Saybrook and Hamden. An eighth site may be added as issues develop during the year. Plainville, Hamden

and Norwich will be the sites of the spring hearings. Following up on discussions from last fall, it was decided to revise the traditional hearing start time from 7:30 pm to 7:00 pm for all hearings except those in Fairfield County.

Old Business

Fred Riese reported that he had the opportunity to present the recommendations of the Commission's 2014 Annual Report at yesterday's Quarterly Transit Meeting at ConnDOT. He also was interviewed on February 17 for the Waterbury Area Bus Route Study. After that interview, he was told that the points that he shared with the study's consultant were consistent with other testimony the consultant had received. Fred's comments were taken largely from testimony received at the Commission's 2012 and 2014 hearings in Waterbury as well as testimony at the Commission's 2014 Meriden and Torrington hearings about bus connections to Waterbury.

New Business

Fred noted that a rally will be held at Union Station in Hartford at 10:30 a.m. on April 9 as part of Stand Up for Transportation Day, an APTA-sponsored event intended to convey to members of Congress the importance of transportation and of adequate funding to support it.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 3:14 p.m.