

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of March 3, 2016

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, Yvonne Loteczka, Morton Katz, Robert Rodman, Chris Adams, Francis Pickering, Richard Sunderhauf. **Ex-officio members:** Garrett Eucolitto (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guests:** Don Stacom.

In Chairman Maloney's absence, Vice Chairman Rick Schreiner called the meeting to order at 1:36 pm. Relative to the February 4 minutes, Fred Riese noted that Mike Sanders had been in attendance at that meeting but was omitted from the attendance list due to Fred's mistaken impression that Mike had left the meeting right after it started. No other corrections were offered to the February 4 minutes.

Featured Speaker

Francis Pickering, Executive Director of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments, provided an overview of the Federal Railroad Administration's NEC Future Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which lays out various visions for the future of the Northeast Corridor. The Northeast Corridor supports the rail operations of Amtrak and eight regional commuter rail operators which collectively provide over 365,000,000 passenger trips per year or over one million trips per day. The DEIS provided a broad, programmatic, non-site specific analysis of the environmental consequences of four alternative for the future of the NEC.

First, the DEIS looked at a No Action Alternative which included currently planned and programmed repair and enhancement work, some of which is funded and some of which is not. The price tag of these currently planned projects is \$20 billion, which would essentially allow the NEC to continue to operate as it does today but in a state-of-good-repair.

Of the action alternatives, Alternative 1 would maintain the role of rail in the corridor but provide enough additional capacity to keep pace with the growth of population and employment. New tracks at existing choke points would provide capacity relief in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey and at the Hudson River, where new tunnels would be constructed. Another element of Alternative 1 would be a bypass route in southeastern Connecticut running a bit inland from the existing NEC alignment from Old Saybrook to Kenyon, Rhode Island. This new alignment would avoid the curvature of the existing corridor and would bypass the five moveable bridges in southeastern Connecticut which are periodically subject to mechanical malfunction as well as representing a conflict with marine transportation interests. Pickering mentioned that Alternative 1, with an estimated cost of \$65 billion, or about \$45 billion above the cost of the No Action Alternative, would provide capacity to meet travel demands to 2040 and would shave 35 minutes off the DC to Boston travel time. The Kenyon Bypass is already generating opposition from fear of its environmental and economic impacts to southeastern Connecticut.

Alternative 2 is designed to grow the role of rail in the Northeast Corridor with service to new markets and to a greater portion of the populace. With the exception of a new loop to provide direct service to Philadelphia International Airport, Alternative 2 would leave the NEC in its existing alignment south of New York City. North of NYC, additional capacity would be provided between New Rochelle and Westport. At New Haven, the NEC mainline would then divert to Hartford on the existing Springfield Line. A totally new corridor would be built from Hartford to Providence via Storrs. From Providence, the existing corridor would be used to reach Boston. Alternative 2, with a cost of \$135 billion, would provide service to new markets in central and eastern Connecticut and address capacity and speed constraints between New Haven and Providence on the existing corridor, thereby shaving an additional 30 minutes off the DC to Boston travel time, above the time savings of Alternative 1. Alternative 2 provides some capacity beyond 2040 corridor needs. The new inland route via Hartford provides system redundancy if coastal storms or bridge malfunctions affect the Shoreline Route. The creation of an entirely new corridor through eastern Connecticut and northern Rhode Island has elicited some environmental and land use concerns.

Alternative 3 would transform the role of rail in the Northeast Corridor into a world class, high speed service on par with international high speed trains. Two route options are considered between New York City and Hartford. One option would extend eastward from NYC to Ronkonkoma, Long Island, then cross Long Island Sound via a tunnel, and then use the existing route from New Haven to Hartford. The second option would extend northeast from NYC to White Plains, cross Westchester County into Danbury, then extend via Waterbury to Hartford. Two new alignment options are evaluated to reach Boston from Hartford, one going via Worcester and another via Providence. Alternative 3 would serve several new travel markets and would offer service to Philadelphia International Airport and T. F. Green Airport (Warwick, RI). With train speeds up to 220 mph, travel times from DC to Boston would be cut almost three hours from existing times and excess capacity on the corridor would be provided beyond 2040 travel needs and 141 million trips would be diverted from other modes to rail.

Pickering noted that the DEIS did not discuss the impacts of induced growth. Construction and operation of the new alignments would shift the locus of new development from existing dense urban areas along the coast to substantially less developed areas, thus encouraging sprawl. There are also environmental concerns on both land and along crossed waterways and Long Island Sound.

A discussion of the feasibility, on political and funding grounds, of the pursuit of the more aggressive build options followed Pickering's presentation. It was also noted that the new corridors would support a mix of types of service. Not all trains would serve all stations. For instance, high speed trains would not likely stop in Danbury and Waterbury.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf distributed copies of the February CT Transit Connections newsletter.

Rick Schreiner reported that HARTransit received a CMAQ grant, supplemented by support from Belimo Aircontrols, to operate a circulator bus through The Reserve, a large office/executive park which was formerly the Union Carbide corporate headquarters. The service, which will begin this spring, will connect to the HART route system at the Exit 2 commuter lot where it will meet HART's Brewster shuttle.

Spring Public Hearings

The schedule for the Commission's spring public hearings was announced. Three hearings will be conducted this spring as follows:

- Bristol on Tuesday, May 10 at Bristol City Hall
- Willimantic on Monday, May 23 at Windham Town Hall
- West Haven on Tuesday, June 7 at West Haven City Hall

All hearings will begin at 7:00 pm.

Old Business

Fred Riese mentioned that he attended the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation Legislative Breakfast held at the Capitol on February 23. ConnDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker gave a broad outline of the functions of that department and various recent accomplishments. Among his goals are a broader use of design/build contracts and other innovative construction methodologies to speed the delivery of transportation projects.

New Business

Rick Schreiner mentioned that the Connecticut Construction Industries Association is sponsoring a Connecticut Congressional Delegation Transportation Breakfast, March 11, 8:30 am at the North Haven Best Western Plus. The entire 7-member Connecticut Congressional delegation is expected to attend.

Fred Riese brought up that a strike may occur on New Jersey Transit March 13 unless a new labor agreement is reached before that date.

Vice Chairman Rick Schreiner adjourned the meeting at 2:41 pm.