

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of May 2, 2013

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Sunderhauf, Mort Katz, Robert Rodman, Bill Kelaher, Russ St. John, Capt. Marc Denno, Ed McAnaney. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Andy Davis, Colleen Kissane, Molly Parsons.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:31 pm. The minutes of the meeting of April 3 were approved as written.

Featured Speaker

Andrew Davis, Transportation Planner at ConnDOT, explained that the Central Connecticut Rail Study grew out of the New Britain Busway study. When Governor Malloy made the decision to proceed with the New Britain Busway, now known as CTfastrak, he also committed to study a passenger rail service option for the corridor. The \$1,000,000 Central Connecticut Rail Study will analyze several passenger rail options between Waterbury and Berlin, where connection to the new Springfield Line rail service can be made, and will also consider transportation management system (TSM) alternatives including a one-seat bus service option in the corridor. The rail options would involve complete replacement of the existing freight track in the corridor as well as new rail stations, passing sidings and other improvements. A study website has been established at www.centraltrailstudy.com

Central Connecticut Rail Study project manager Stephen Gazzillo of URS Corporation, explained that the study corridor offers both regional and national connectivity. To gather public input for the study, two public hearings will be held this spring, with two more hearings next winter. A Study Advisory Committee representing numerous public, private and agency stakeholders has also been established and has met once thus far, with a second meeting tentatively scheduled for June.

The study corridor contains approximately 300,000 residents, mostly residing in New Britain, Bristol and Waterbury. Population growth in the corridor, which also includes Plainville, Plymouth and Berlin, has been slow. Many people in the corridor live and work in the same town. The majority of work trips occur completely within the corridor. Interestingly, 557 New York City residents work in the corridor, likely reflecting the presence of ESPN in Bristol, and 1,750 corridor residents work in NYC.

Gazzillo related that the study corridor supported passenger rail service as late as 1960. Today there is passenger service available only at either end of the corridor, with Pan Am Railway's freight service being the only activity on the line in the study corridor. Metro-North's Waterbury Branch service operates as far north as Waterbury, carrying about 1,000 passengers per day, while Amtrak's Springfield Line service serves Berlin. Pan Am's track, which supports

only 25 mph freight service, would need to be completely replaced for passenger service. Pan Am has freight interchanges with the Connecticut Southern Railway (CSO), CSX, Providence and Worcester, Norfolk Southern and the Naugatuck Railroad, although these interchanges do not all occur from the study corridor.

Transit connections in the corridor are provided by North East Transportation in Waterbury, and by New Britain Transportation and DATTCO in New Britain, Bristol, Plainville and Berlin. There is no fixed route transit service in Plymouth. Greyhound and Peter Pan provide intercity bus service to and from the corridor.

Two focus groups of 18 total participants representing employees, employers and residents in the corridor expressed the priorities to attract riders to any new service as being safe, attractive, easily accessible, reliable transportation, and offering wi-fi service. A high frequency of service was found to be less important than reliable service and a reasonable schedule. There was a lot of interest in travel from the study corridor into Hartford from the focus groups.

The Central Connecticut Rail Study will analyze the No Build Alternative, which is a requirement for analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, the TSM alternative looking at operational upgrades and low cost physical improvements to complement the busway and the Springfield Line service, and three build options: a bus rapid transit extension of *CTfastrak*, a heavy rail option and an light rail option. Power for a light rail option could be from overhead power, a hybrid overhead power/battery power option, or diesel light rail, which is an emerging technology.

The ends of the study corridor have existing stations at Waterbury and Berlin. New stations would be needed in Bristol, Plainville, New Britain and Plymouth. Current thinking is to model the stations after Shore Line East stations. In response to a question about through service to Hartford, Gazillo mentioned that there may be some potential to run through trains into Hartford if time slots on the Springfield Line will allow this.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned that a number of route and schedule changes on the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit went into effect on April 21. Also, a new 3-year labor contract at Connecticut Transit was approved overwhelmingly.

Bill Kelaher said a new tentative contract was reached with Metro-North conductors but was turned down in a rank-and-file vote. Bill also mentioned that Amtrak's classic 'flapper' style schedule board in the lobby here at Union Station is going to be replaced by ConnDOT with a new digital schedule board which will be operated by Metro-North. After this schedule board is replaced, only one flapper style schedule board will remain on the Northeast Corridor, that being in Philadelphia. There has been some discussion of adding the familiar flapper noise as a feature of the new digital schedule board.

Rick Schriener displayed a copy of the just-published HART Transit user guide illustrating how to use the services of HART Transit.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney mentioned a CACT-sponsored transit forum titled "The Last Mile" which will be held May 22 and which will feature ConnDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker among other speakers. Maloney plans to attend this forum. On the same date, the City of Hartford is holding a hearing concerning the closing of the Flower Street crossing in Hartford in connection with the CT*fastrak* busway. Lastly, Kevin mentioned that ConnDOT will be increasing the fares on the Hadlyme and Rocky Hill ferries from \$3.00 to \$6.00 per car.

Old Business

Rodney Chabot of the Metro-North Rail Commuter Council asked what actions the Commission was taking in response to House Bill 6363, which would both eliminate the Commission and substantially reconstitute the Rail Commuter Council's membership and mission. Maloney advised Chabot to work through any legislative connections that he and the Council may have, just as the Commission is doing.

New Business

New CPTC member Marc Denno, who is the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Navy Sub Base at Groton, introduced himself to the Commission. Denno said he joined the Commission because he is concerned about the direction of the state, especially as concerns its economic health and outlook.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.