

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of May 7, 2015

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Bill Kelaher, Russ St. John, Francis Pickering, Robert Rodman. **Ex-officio members:** Garrett Eucalitto (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guest:** Danielle Herbert.

Vice chairman Fred Riese called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm. Discussion and acceptance of the April 2 minutes was deferred until next meeting.

Fred welcomed Garrett Eucalitto to the Commission and asked him to give a thumbnail version of his duties at OPM. Garrett is the Undersecretary for Transportation at OPM and will be working to coordinate transportation efforts among State agencies and to oversee Governor Malloy's new transportation initiative for OPM.

Featured Speaker

Danielle Herbert is the Program Coordinator for Way To Go CT, a Mobility Manager and Transportation Ombudsman for 37 towns in north central Connecticut. This program is run under the auspices of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board. The Board has been in existence for 40 years and is comprised of over 100 volunteers including mental health and addiction service providers, users of these services, their families, clergy and concerned citizens. They evaluate state funded mental health facilities and programs to identify gaps in the services. Transportation needs have constantly been identified as among the top five unmet service needs. Way To Go CT was created to help people with disabilities, seniors, veterans and even the general public navigate transportation options. The program is entering its third year of a five-year funding grant.

Herbert works with seniors, the disabled and veterans to provide one-stop shopping to meet their travel needs including travel for medical needs, social services, shopping or employment. This is done through three principal outlets: a website, a printed mobility guide and a call center. The web site www.waytogoct.org contains links to services in all 37 towns and is updated monthly. The site has had over 45,000 page views in the last 18 months. A click on a town link reveals the services that are available, costs and eligibility requirements. Over 1,000 copies of the printed resource guide have been distributed. In addition to English, the guide is being translated into Spanish and Polish. Particularly in New Britain, there is a large Polish community that does not speak English.

A major component of Herbert's job is outreach to inform and educate seniors, people with disabilities, veterans and service providers. In this role, she works with the human service agencies, state agencies, North Central Area Agency on Aging, the Veteran's Administration, other mobility managers, and transit districts, among others. She travels to senior centers, community centers, housing authorities, shelters, fairs, forums and commissions. She also uses social media, community access television, and newspapers to get information out.

The Way To Go CT website (www.waytogoct.org) provides information by town on Dial-A-Ride services, ADA transportation, non-emergency medical transportation (i.e., Logisticare), public transportation, the taxi voucher program, travel training, private providers, and non-profit and volunteer agency programs. Herbert also has created a touch screen kiosk program for website information. The first two kiosks are already in operation at the Chrysalis Center in Hartford, and Community Health Resources in Manchester, with others in the works in East Hartford, and at Union Station in Hartford. The Kennedy Center plans a similar program soon, with a kiosk in Bridgeport. They are adopting Herbert's model.

Way To Go CT has a steering committee which provides feedback on the program, guidance, and leads on funding opportunities. Members include the North Central Area Agency on Aging, ConnDOT, the DSS non-emergency medical transportation coordinator, users of the services and others.

Way To Go CT also has a call center staffed by trained volunteers. Agency case workers are among the most frequent callers. For callers with limited or no proficiency in English, Herbert has translators available covering over 200 languages. A large number of calls were received concerning CTfastrak when that service began in late March. The majority of overall inquiries still come in via the website rather than the call center.

The Kennedy Center maintains a mobility manager program analogous to Way To Go CT for 18 towns of the former Southwestern Connecticut (SWRPA) and Greater Bridgeport planning regions. This program is called Know How To Go and is run by Margaret Mixon, the Kennedy Center's Director of Mobility Services. The Kennedy Center recently expanded its mobility management program to cover the South Central Connecticut Planning Region as well as the former Connecticut River Estuary Planning Region. Christine Maguire is the Mobility Manager for these 20 towns. The Kennedy Center also conducts travel training programs statewide to teach clients how to use public transportation for given trips.

Connecticut's third Mobility Manager, covering 41 towns in the eastern part of the state, is the Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium, operating out of Norwich. The Consortium's Mobility Manager is Ginger Morse. The Consortium, is also a transportation provider, operating senior and medical transportation and also serving as SEAT's ADA transportation subcontractor.

Diane Bilyak of ARC Connecticut received a grant to do mobility management for all 169 Connecticut municipalities. Because of the overlap in her mission with that of the other mobility managers, she is working closely with them in the development of her program.

Herbert reported that Governor Molloy's proposed budget includes a 95% cut in funding for the Regional Mental Health Boards. Such a cut would not end DOT funding for Herbert's program. The North Central Regional Mental Health Board has some funds in reserve that could be used for a brief interim, and/or Way To Go CT could find a new 501c3 agency to work under. Herbert and others have been working with the Appropriations Committee to get their funding restored and are now looking at potentially only a 5% cut. Herbert noted that the Regional Mental Health Boards' priority and recommendations setting process is the means by which the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Service conducts the bi-annual needs assessment required for its application for Federal

funding each year. Federal funding provides \$24,000,000 each year for Connecticut's mental health, addiction, and prevention services.

Reports for Operating Entities

Bill Kelaher said things are pretty quiet on the rail labor front. Negotiations are continuing with Amtrak. The previous Amtrak labor agreement has expired.

Chairman's Report

In Chairman Maloney's absence, Fred read the chairman's report which Kevin had submitted.

"You may remember that a representative of the Historic Preservation Trust appeared before us at a Torrington hearing to talk about the viability of preserving the Hendey Machine Company building on Summer Street and utilizing all or part of it for the new bus maintenance facility that the DOT is proposing to build on that site. The Trust is holding a symposium on this issue on May the 8th at the Warner Theatre in Torrington and has invited both state and local authorities to attend.

I attended the "Stand Up for Transportation" rally which took place at Union Station on April the 9th. I talked to Commissioner Redeker and Mike Sanders, both of whom were pleased with the initial number of riders utilizing the CTfastrak system, although the "free ride" period had just ended and everyone had yet to see just where the numbers would end up when the fares kicked in. Both shared conversations they had with existing bus riders who were happy with the amount of time they saved traveling on the new system, but the busway will have to add riders to be economically viable. I also talked with one of the bus drivers who described his bus as "packed".

The free period drew a significant number of college students to sample the system and one Hartford night spot reported new customers who had used the system to come in to Hartford for entertainment. Commissioner Redeker also made the comment that while it is only conceptual in nature at this time, consideration is being given to connecting the UConn campus to the CTfastrak system. This would address a need that various members of the public have expressed to us at a number of our public hearings in that area.

The Transportation Funding Panel met with the Governor for the first time and the Governor laid out his 30 year plan which covered all facets of transportation. \$2.8 billion of the plan is dedicated to the improvement of bus services, including extending CTfastrak east, north and south of Hartford.

There are a couple of things afoot at Bradley International Airport. The demolition of the Murphy terminal has begun, which will be followed by a road realignment project and the construction of a ground transportation center, projected to be finished by 2018, which will house rental car facilities and provide bus service to the Windsor Locks train station.

The Connecticut Aviation Authority has been negotiating with Air Lingus to provide nonstop service to Dublin, Ireland. Aer Lingus is looking for State to ante up a five million dollar guarantee against losses before they will commence service, an amount that may not fly (I'm channeling Tom Cheeseman again) given the multi-billion dollar deficits projected for the state budget in the coming years. The CAA is also looking to provide customs clearance at the Waterbury-Oxford airport as well as adding commercial airline service to the Groton-New London Airport."

Old Business

Fred reported that this past Monday he had taken the commuter bus from the Waterbury train station to Hartford via the CT*fastrak* busway. It was a good experience despite a substantial delay due to the closure of Interstate 691 that morning for an accident. The Waterbury-Hartford bus uses I-691 to access two commuter lots on Route 10 in Cheshire and Plantsville as part of its route. Fred did note seeing a Toyota Camry heading southbound on the busway in New Britain as his bus was heading northbound to Hartford. When he mentioned that incident to the evening bus driver, that driver said it was not uncommon to see cars mistakenly driving on the busway. More signage to inform drivers that this is a 'bus only' roadway may be needed.

Spring Public Hearings

Fred reported that Tuesday's Norwich public hearing drew 53 attendees plus two reporters. The two dominant issues at the hearing were a desire to see Shore Line East service extended to Mystic and Westerly, and concerns about Southeast Area Transit's routes and service. In particular, the on-going bus route study for the SEAT system led multiple speakers to fear that their existing routes were going to be eliminated.

Fred encouraged members to attend the Plainville hearing next week on May 13 and the June 3 Hamden hearing.

New Business

Fred noted that the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering study on winter highway maintenance procedures will be wrapping up with a final report and recommendations on best practices for maintaining our State roads during winter storm events. The use of magnesium chloride as a pre-wetting agent for the rock salt (sodium chloride) seems to be here to stay. The switch from a sand/salt mixture to salts only had been made by pretty much every state in the northeast. Some best management practices have been implemented which minimize the amounts of chemicals used. Many municipalities still use sand/salt mixtures on their roads.

Vice chairman Riese adjourned the meeting at 2:41 p.m.