

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, November 4, 2004 - 1:30 PM

D.O. T. Headquarters, Conference Room B

Newington, Connecticut

1. Approval of the October 7, 2004 meeting minutes
2. Featured speaker: Mr. Louis Manginni, Transportation Specialist, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's office
3. Comments from the public
4. Report from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old business
7. New business

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE

THURSDAY, October 7, 2004

Union Station, Conference Room A

New Haven, Connecticut

VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair
Richard Carpenter
Tom Cheeseman
Morton Katz
Yvonne Loteczka
Richard Schreiner
Russell St. John
Richard Sunderhauf

GUESTS

Rodney Chabot

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Fred Riese
Philip Smith

CDOT STAFF

Cindy Gollareny
Harry P. Harris
Mark Foran

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Minutes

October 7, 2004

(Meeting convened at 1:34 p.m.)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 2, 2004

Accepted as written.

FEATURED SPEAKER – KEY POINTS

HARRY P. HARRIS, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Public Transportation, Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) reported that ConnDOT took delivery of approximately 15 of the 33 railcars purchased from Virginia Railway Express (VRE). The equipment will be going to Shore Line East and to the Waterbury and Danbury branch lines on MetroNorth. This will free up a near equivalent number of Bombardier cars, which are compatible with equipment operated on MetroNorth.

Prior to the equipment going into service, the pin configurations need to be changed to match the cars with the locomotives. The plan at the time was to utilize Amtrak for the 27 pin (electrical and hydraulic interconnections) configuration changes and then go out to competitive bid for other work that needs to take place on the railcars. The railcars will be taken out of service six at a time. This process will put the cars in service within approximately one month and therefore, the entire fleet should be complete by the spring of 2005, but will be useable in the meantime.

Mr. Harris stated that this is not a solution to the problems encountered last winter when up to 100 cars were out of service at any given time. A combination of the new railcars, as well as transferring the Shore Line East maintenance facility to MetroNorth is the best short term solution. This transfer will allow additional capacity to MetroNorth in terms of their ability to maintain equipment. Currently there are 18 repair bays for 350 pieces of equipment on the MetroNorth system in relation to 12 repair bays for 30 pieces of equipment on Shore Line East. Negotiations have been in process and an agreement has been reached with MetroNorth and is residing with the Commissioner and Attorney General's Office for their review. The contract requires Amtrak to receive 45 days notice to vacate the property.

A problem with the VRE equipment is that in two years we will not have the locomotive power to operate the equipment. ConnDOT is currently in the process of developing a procurement strategy to secure additional locomotives that will run the Shore Line East equipment, branch line equipment and the main line equipment.

In the short-term, four additional dual power locomotives are needed, however it is uncertain if any manufacturer would be interested in building only four locomotives to specifications that cannot be used anywhere else in the world. Failing this, the back-up plan would be to purchase used locomotives from Amtrak and convert them to dual power. Amtrak has P40 diesel powered locomotives for sale and a team will be trying to negotiate a price with Amtrak. This would allow equipment to operate on Shore Line East and the branch lines. The stumbling block is the procurement of dual mode locomotives. The P40 and GP40 cannot go into Grand Central because they are both diesel and not permitted under environmental regulations. Plan C would be to acquire the Amtrak locomotives, leave them diesel power only, and not run them into NYC, but use them solely for Intrastate service.

The long-range solution is more equipment to replace the M2 fleet and to increase the capacity to allow for anticipated growth. The \$1.2 billion plan, which includes the construction of a new maintenance facility, has been endorsed by the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly. This plan is based around MetroNorth's new M7 acquisition, which are DC third rail powered vehicles. The assumption was that all railcars have to be AC-DC dual powered to operate off both overhead catenary wire and DC third rail. MetroNorth engineers believe that the M7 railcars are so overpowered that they can be married with a single AC-DC M8. By marrying two M7's and a M8, the cost of the married triplet is substantially less expensive than three M8's. However, additional testing is needed to ensure that it will work. A contract has been developed with STV Corporation to assist in the specifications for the M8. A total of 342 M7's and M8's would need to be purchased with funds yet to be identified.

Mr. Harris reported that parking continues to be an issue and several initiatives are underway to alleviate the problem: a contract with the town of Fairfield to build a new train station with a 1,500 car parking garage is proceeding; the city of Bridgeport is proceeding with plans to construct two additional floors on the Harbor Yard garage; the TSB has agreed to fund a 600 car parking garage in the town of Stratford; a study has been developed for a parking facility in Milford; a major study for a new train station in Orange or West Haven with a 1,000 car parking capacity is underway; an agreement has been signed with city of New Haven for a 1,200 car parking garage and construction is expected to begin next year; a tiered parking structure in Wilton is being studied for the Danbury Branch; and future development of new stations along Shore Line East with parking attached to them is being studied.

Mr. Harris then discussed the New Haven Line Rail Station Governance Study. When ConnDOT originally took over the New Haven Line, the assumption was that ConnDOT did not want to stay in the rail business. Therefore, agreements were made with the towns to have them run the stations. This worked out better in some towns than in others. The State has now taken over Stamford Station and Bridgeport Station, and will run the new stations in Fairfield and Stratford. Therefore, the Governance Study is looking at a range of solutions from total operation of the New Haven Line stations by the State, to simply tightening and standardizing the leases with the towns.

Also relevant to stations and parking, Mr. Harris reported that the TSB has expressed an interest in investigating the construction of large feeder parking lots to be built north of the Merritt Parkway, potentially in Shelton and Wilton, and connecting these lots to the main line using electric rail shuttles.

Mr. Harris reported that the busway between New Britain and Hartford is currently in the facilities design stage and the price is accelerating considerably from the original budget. Alternatives to cut costs are being examined, but the full-build option is still the preferred option.

In relation to freight, the I-95 Corridor Coalition developed a study of the major bottleneck problems between Washington D.C. and the Hudson River in New York. As a result, several plans were recommended, however these are difficult to implement due to the manner in which federal transportation programs are funded. As an example, Mr. Harris mentioned the Baltimore Freight Tunnels project, which would alleviate congestion in the corridor. Why, he asked, should the state of Maryland solely fund this project when it helps the entire region. This is an issue with many similar large-scale projects. Also, a study has begun from the Hudson River north to Maine to look at the same fundamental issues and consider the inhibitors for improving rail freight in New England as opposed to the Mid-Atlantic States.

In closing, Mr. Harris announced that the Public Transportation Biennial Report for 2002 and 2003 is available on ConnDOT's website at www.ct.gov/dot

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

REPORT FROM OPERATING ENTITIES

Fred Riese reported that an agreement between DEP and Amtrak is being recorded in the Groton land records formally turning over, for a period of 99 years, Amtrak property in Groton that will connect Bluff Point State Park and Haley Farm State Park. In return, DEP will turn over 2,440 feet of the Valley Railroad line to Providence & Worcester Railroad (P & W) to formalize the arrangement where P & W turns their trains around on DEP property.

Richard Sunderhauf reported that the negotiations with CTTransit and the Amalgamated Transit Union locals in Hartford, New Haven and Stamford are ongoing. They will continue to work under the provisions of the recently expired contract until at least October 31, 2004. Mr. Sunderhauf also distributed the September 2004, CTTransit publication of "TRANSIT today".

Richard Schreiner reported that the "Public Transit 101" series has begun in the Northwest area of the state and distributed "Getting On Board" The Northwestern Connecticut Accessible Transportation Guide, produced by the Connecticut Department of Transportation in cooperation with JobLinks (Northwest Connecticut Access to Jobs) and MetroPool, Inc.

Richard Carpenter reported that the railroad freight task force, which has the support of the CSX and CPR, has been successful in bringing the railroads and government agencies together to press forward with necessary improvement efforts, one being an Amtrak project to refurbish the bridge deck of the Hell's Gate Bridge.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Cheeseman is currently involved in several sensitive negotiations and meetings concerning public transportation projects. Mr. Cheeseman is hopeful that there will be an update within the next 30 days.

Mr. Cheeseman announced that the city of Middletown has officially kicked off "Middletown Cares", an ordinance that prohibits panhandling within 25 feet of Middletown Transit District as well as ATM's.

OLD BUSINESS

Linda Blair reported that there is one major block where a bus stop remains to be restored in the city of New Haven.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

(Meeting adjourned at 3:12 P.M.)

Reminder: the Annual Work Session will take place on Thursday, November 18, 2004, 5:00 p.m. at Union Station – New Haven, Conference Room A.