

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

February 7, 2008 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven

1. Approval of the January 3, 2008 meeting minutes
2. Featured Speaker: Andrew Anastasio, Jr., A. Anastasio and Sons Trucking Company
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
6. Old business
7. New business

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of January 3, 2008

Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington
Conference Room B

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Mort Katz, Kevin Maloney, Terry Hall, Rich Sunderhauf, Rick Schreiner, Yvonne Loteczka, Bill Kelaher, Chris Adams, John Zelinsky **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat (OPM), Fred Riese (DEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Michael Sanders, Dennis King. **Guests:** Stephen Troster.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:33 PM. The minutes of the meeting of December 6, 2007 were approved with minor corrections.

Featured Speaker

There was no featured speaker for this meeting.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Susan Simmat said the report on the reorganization of ConnDOT was expected to be released shortly.

Richard Sunderhauf mentioned that he saw a notice at Connecticut Transit this morning that the issuance of paychecks would be delayed slightly today because funds from the State Treasury had not yet been transferred to Connecticut Transit. Rich has never seen this before in his seventeen years as a driver for the company.

Bill Kelaher reported that the Presidential Emergency Board submitted its report to President Bush on December 31, starting the 30-day clock toward a possible strike against Amtrak. Unless both sides accept the contract provisions contained in the Board's report, a strike could occur anytime after January 30.

Kelaher attended a convention in New York City last month at which NYC Department of Transportation Commissioner Kahn gave a presentation on a proposed congestion pricing program to be implemented in Manhattan for all areas below 86th Street. Under this proposal, an \$8 daily fee would be charged on vehicles entering this portion of Manhattan. At this point, this is just a recommendation of the NYC DOT. It still requires approval at the state level. The objective of this plan is to free up the roads for better bus and taxi service. London has instituted a similar plan. Kevin Maloney mentioned that since London adopted a similar program, license plate thefts there have gone up from 100 to 6,000 per year since billing for violations is based on photographs of license plates.

Richard Schreiner distributed the new schedules for Housatonic Area Regional Transit's City Center Trolley. The trolley enjoys strong support from the City Center Taxing District, despite relatively low ridership. Rick believes that the trolley has lost some of its ridership to Jobs Access transit services which meet some needs better than the trolley does.

Tom Cheeseman noted the problems that the Greater New Haven Transit District is having with its electric trolleys. The batteries on those trolleys were supposed to last for 10 years but now need replacement for the second time in five years at \$70,000 per trolley. Tom's Middletown Area Transit system formerly ran one trolley but found that after the novelty of the vehicle wore off, the ridership declined significantly, despite the low fare of fifty cents, and only twenty-five cents for senior citizens.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman mentioned that a nationwide search is being conducted for a successor to DOT Commissioner Carpenter, who announced his retirement. Emil Frankel will be serving as interim commissioner.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Terry Hall reported that no specific dates have been set yet for the four day closure of Amtrak's Thames River Bridge in connection with the replacement of the moveable span. Amtrak does not plan to run any service on the line during the four day closure but Terry believes this decision may change. There are very stiff damage penalties in the construction contract if the bridge outage goes beyond 96 hours. Terry continued by noting that Amtrak funding will be \$1.325 billion in the new budget as passed by Congress. This includes a reduction of \$31 million in operating funds, an increase of \$70 million for capital projects, and a total of \$285 million for debt service.

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned hearing about an inspection program for Metro-North's M-4 cars. Fred Riese explained that the inspection was chiefly for the undercarriage of the cars to look for stress, cracking or other signs of fatigue. It is not in response to known problems but is being done simply because these cars are now 20 years old.

Terry Hall added that Metro-North will be testing some airline type toilets on its trains to evaluate their effectiveness. The toilets have already been ordered.

Mike Sanders, ConnDOT's Transit and Ridesharing Administrator, informed the Commission that by 2010 Connecticut Transit's Hartford Division will have six fuel cell buses in service which should be the largest number operating anywhere in the nation. With our current fuel cell bus, Connecticut Transit maintains all aspects of the bus except the fuel cells, which are maintained by United Technologies. We will need to train a workforce for the new bus technologies so that we can maintain the buses when they move beyond the R&D phase.

Sanders mentioned that there may be a seventh fuel cell bus in Hartford which would be what is called a battery dominant fuel cell bus. Two fifteen watt fuel cells would charge a battery which would drive the electric motor of the bus. At this point, this design is still conceptual.

The electric engine on the existing fuel cell/ electric hybrid bus develops more torque than a standard diesel bus engine does. Therefore, a transmission retarder is used to prevent wheel spin on icy or slippery roads.

On the New Britain Busway, final design contracts have been awarded on ten of the eleven busway segments. The eleventh segment, the Flatbush Avenue overpass over the busway and Amtrak line, has been separated out as an FTA-funded project of independent utility since it eliminates a busy at-grade crossing. ConnDOT will apply for a full funding grant agreement in early 2009 for the busway. This will require re-running the ridership model. Sanders ventured an estimate of early 2013 for the opening of the busway. Twelve of the seventeen full property takes necessary for the busway have now been acquired by the department. These include three gas stations, a car dealership, a car wash and an oil change shop. Partial and sliver takings remain to be acquired.

New cell phone parking lots of the type recommended for Bradley Field in the Commission's 2006 and 2007 Annual Reports have recently opened at the Savannah and Tampa airports according to Terry Hall and Kevin Maloney, respectively.

In response to a question about articulated buses, Sanders said that ConnDOT may purchase 6-10 articulated buses for use in the Stamford Division of Connecticut Transit. Seattle has placed a large order for such buses and ConnDOT may add several buses to that order. A recent change to the Connecticut General Statutes concerning the definition of tractor trailers was necessary before articulated buses could be legally used in Connecticut.

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 2:41 PM.