

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

THURSDAY, March 1, 2007 – 1:30 P.M.

MIDDLETOWN CITY HALL
DeKOVEN DRIVE

1. Approval of minutes of February 1, 2007
2. Featured Speaker: David S. Ishihara, Federal Security Director, Bradley Airport
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 February 1, 2007

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: **Members:** Terry Hall, Russ St. John, Dorothy Adamson, Tom Cheeseman, Kevin Maloney, Ralph Capenera, Bill Kelaher, Linda Blair, Richard Sunderhauf, Richard Schreiner, John Zelinsky, Yvonne Loteczka, Robert Zarnetske. **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat (OPM), Frederick Riese (DEP). **DOT Staff:** Peter Richter, Dennis King. **Guests:** Neil Schuster, Jean Stimolo.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:33 pm. He congratulated Peter Richter on being appointed the new Bureau Chief for Public Transportation, a position he officially assumes tomorrow.

The minutes of the January 4 meeting were approved subject to the following corrections. Peter Richter clarified that he was aware of the Transportation Strategy Board's proposal for an interlocking at Greenwich. Rich Sunderhauf pointed out that his name was misspelled, and noted that most but not all of the bus runs into Bowles Park have been restored. In addition, corrections were offered by e-mail from Mike Sanders and Carmine Trotta. Sanders noted that on page 2, the next to last paragraph, CTE actually holds the contract with FRA, not ConnDOT. Also, when describing the \$5 million fuel cell grant, change "other components funded by this grant will include" to "may include". The grant scope is not final yet. Carmine Trotta provided a correction that it is Wilber Smith Associates, not Parsons Brinckerhoff, who has been assigned, through an extension of their original contract, to conduct the Environmental Assessment of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Implementation Plan.

John Zelinsky requested that the attendance list be incorporated into the minutes rather than provided as a separate document. This practice is being adopted beginning with these minutes.

Featured Speaker

Commission member Kevin Maloney met Neil Schuster at the annual national meeting of the National Transportation Logistics Association in Phoenix in October 2006. Mr. Schuster is president of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America. Kevin extended an invitation to Mr. Schuster to speak to the Commission and he graciously accepted. With that introduction, Kevin turned the floor over to Neil Schuster.

Schuster said the driving goals of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITSA) are "zero fatalities, zero delays" in transportation. Transportation fatalities currently claim 43,000 lives per year in the US, and transportation congestion costs our economy \$300 billion per year nationwide. Technology is the next quantum leap in transportation safety. The technology needed will link what's on the roadway to what's going on in the vehicle. Such innovations, which are largely available already at non-commercial stages of

development, can show the driver or the vehicle itself what is located in a blind spot or react to an unseen pedestrian. Vehicles can be designed to brake automatically when approaching another vehicle or object at an unsafe speed, or to provide automatic notification of an accident when a vehicle has gone off the road.

A more elaborate application cited by Schuster is the Bay Area Rapid Transit's (BART) ITS system which uses variable messages on the highway to notify motorists of the availability of parking spaces at the next BART station so a motorist can make an informed decision about whether or not to leave the highway and continue the trip via transit. In the future, the system will be enhanced to allow commuters to reserve and rent the parking space from their cars.

In response to a question about tolls, Schuster said toll booths will soon be a thing of the past. Not only can toll collection be done electronically, but can be based on time of day. Collection of a general road use tax electronically is also a possibility. Such a tax could be used to supplant, at least partially, gas tax as a form of transportation support. Alternatively, as is now being tried on Oregon, gas taxes could be based on how you drive, rather than on a fee per gallon. Length of trips or types of roads used could be factors in assessing the fuel taxes. Schuster believed that FHWA has gradually taken a more flexible stance on the use of tolls on federally funded roads without states having to refund the FHWA money used to build them.

A question about motorcycle safety prompted Schuster to note that the Secretary of Transportation is a motorcycle rider and that motorcycle safety issues are getting more attention. Schuster also related that the ITS office within USDOT has been evolving from a sole focus on highway issues to a broader role incorporating transit. The ITS office itself has been moved from FHWA to a new centralized office within USDOT.

ITSA is a public/private forum with membership from all levels of government (federal, state, local, transit districts), freight carriers, vehicle manufacturers, academic institutions, and others.

The original focus of the intelligent transportation movement was the guided roadway concept where infrastructure in the road would automatically direct the vehicles on it. Though this idea is still being developed, it is no longer the driving focus of ITS development. Rather than burying infrastructure in millions of miles of roads, the same capabilities can be built into the vehicles at much lower cost.

Schuster listed California, Michigan, New York, and Florida as some of the leading states in the application of intelligent transportation. California has set a goal of accommodating the projected doubling of travel on its roads by 2030 without any increase in pollution or congestion above current levels. Florida is committing \$150,000,000 per year for ten years, or \$1.5 billion, of FHWA funds to intelligent transportation applications. Japan and other Asian countries are slightly ahead of the US in ITS development and implementation, while the US leads in crash avoidance technology.

Reports from Operating Entities

Richard Sunderhauf announced that a meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday to resolve the issue of paratransit drivers operating a fixed route service, the Greater Hartford Transit District's ZZ Shuttle. Parties to the meeting are the Department of Social Services, CRCOG, GHTD and the union.

Bill Kelaher related that a fatality had occurred on the New Haven Line tracks in Milford, shutting down the service for 90 minutes. Due to poor communications, the ticket sellers did not know any details about the accident and could not provide commuters with any answers. MTA is trying to upgrade information flow to front line employees.

Most of the Metro-North unionized work force has now gone four years without a contract. The unions were released from mediation in December. The Railroad Labor Act governs the procedures which must be followed for a negotiating impasse on Metro-North. Under the provisions of the Railroad Labor Act, a Presidential Emergency Board was created upon termination of mediation. This board issued its report, containing its findings and recommendations, on January 19. If the parties do not have success in negotiating a settlement by April, a second Presidential Emergency Board would be requested and the process would be repeated, resulting in a second set of non-binding recommendations. If a settlement is not reached by August, the union can call a strike or Metro-North can initiate a lockout. Such action could affect Amtrak and freight service. There is no injunction process under the Railroad Labor Act. Instead, the act requires a Congressional resolution spelling out the provisions of the settlement, including the wage and medical packages. Kelaher cited medical issues as the key unresolved sticking point.

Peter Richter, incoming Bureau Chief for Public Transportation, said this is an exciting time in transit with strong political backing, strong funding, and pressing needs. Richter distributed copies of the January 1, 2007 Shore Line East Expansion Plan proposed pursuant to a legislative mandate. The report proposed a three phase expansion of the service. Phase I would add eight round trips per day on weekends, and an additional daily mid-day round trip and one late evening outbound trip, and could be implemented in 2008/2009. Phase II, scheduled for 2009/2010, would extend all Shore Line East trains to New London. Phase III would provide full service in both directions and would require new stations and equipment. If implemented, this could happen in 2011/2012.

Obstacles to full implementation of the expansion plan are the need for more operating funding, more personnel, and more parking capacity. An agreement with Amtrak requires ConnDOT to have platforms on both sides of the track if service is expanded beyond the peak hours. Expansion to New London is also prohibited under a 2003 agreement for a period of 15 years. Finally, DEP has imposed limits on the number of trains per day over the moveable bridges east of Old Saybrook. Current service is at these limits, so any expansion will require revisions to the conditions set forth by DEP.

Richter noted that Shore Line East ridership has grown by 8% this year. The ridership has also been good on the New Haven Line where a 3% increase has put annual ridership just short of 35,000,000. Metro-North has also achieved its highest level of on-time performance ever for the New Haven Line at 97.1%.

Relative to car availability, 118 cars have now completed the Critical Systems Replacement program. The New Haven Yard running repair shop will be at full staffing by mid-to-late February. Three hundred M-8s are still on schedule for delivery to begin in 2009. Lastly, 14 Virginia Rail Express cars have now been rehabilitated and received back from Kawasaki. This program will be completed by the end of the year. The VRE cars will be used on Shore Line East, with some going through to Stamford, and on the Waterbury Branch. Seven more VRE cab cars will be coming soon from Virginia.

Russ St. John reported that mild weather has allowed work on the Willimantic Branch to proceed ahead of schedule. The line should be open for revenue service in March.

HART has received 12 new body-on-chassis buses, with delivery of 20 more by April. Rich Schreiner reported that 10 new low floor transit buses are expected to be delivered in November.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman asked Susan Simmat to introduce herself. Simmat recently moved from the Department of Social Services, where her duties included working on the Jobs Access transportation program, to the Office of Policy and Management. She is in OPM's new Office of Transportation, which consists of herself, Phil Smith and Bob Hamersley. Simmat was representing OPM for this meeting in place of Phil Smith, but was unsure if she would be acting as OPM's designee for future meetings.

Cheeseman reported that USDOT funds may be frozen at last year's levels. This would not affect any Connecticut transportation projects in the near term.

On February 14, Tom will be meeting with House Speaker Jim Amann to discuss transportation bills.

A hearing on tolls was held at the Capitol yesterday. ConnDOT said that it could implement tolls, if so directed, within five years. Cheeseman also reported that a new policy from Washington may open Section 5310 vehicles to use by all members of the public in FY07. This would cause dramatic capacity problems very quickly on these vehicles.

Lastly, Tom expressed concern that our Shore Line East expansion plans could be held hostage by Amtrak. Peter Richter responded that ConnDOT would not have proposed this expansion plan without repeated consultation with Amtrak. Amtrak has raised no objections and has wished the department well on this project. Design of the double-sided stations has begun and is currently at the 30% stage. The Bond Commission provided money for this design work in late 2006. Also, Amtrak will derive trackage fee revenue from the Shore Line East expansion.

Terry Hall added that there have been changes in the upper levels of Amtrak in the last six weeks. He predicted that Amtrak will be more receptive and cooperative in its relations with the states. He also mentioned that the Thames River Bridge replacement project has been delayed until 2008 rather than 2007. The bridge piers are being stabilized with cement around their bases. Terry also reported he is hearing increasing talk of a new bridge over the Connecticut River rather than rehabilitation of the existing bridge. The new

bridge would provide greater clearances for vessels on the river, and its construction would be less disruptive to train service than would rehabilitating the existing bridge.

Old Business

Fred Riese inquired of Peter Richter as to the status of ConnDOT's responses to the Commission's Annual Report recommendations. Richter replied that they had been prepared and signed and were being sent out. Fred also mentioned that a proposal for enhanced incentives for State employees to use transit for commuting had been developed by the Capitol Region Council of Governments and a bill promoting this concept has been submitted by Rep. David McCluskey of West Hartford. The Transportation Strategy Board has also endorsed this concept. Lastly, Fred mentioned that the reactivation of Providence and Worcester's Willimantic Branch, as discussed by Russ St. John, will require DEP to obtain permission for access across this line into DEP's Salt Rock Campground in Sprague. ConnDOT's Office of Rails has informed DEP that it foresees no difficulty in granting this access.

Terry Hall observed that the New Haven Coliseum has now been demolished and will be used as a surface parking lot initially, but this might be a good time to start planning a parking garage at that site.

New Business

Fred Riese mentioned that an article in this morning's Waterbury Republican-American discussed the relocation of the offices of the Northwest Connecticut Transit District out of Torrington City Hall, which will occur February 9. The District is moving to larger temporary quarters.

Terry Hall distributed 2005 and 2006 Amtrak ridership figures for Connecticut. Overall, Connecticut ridership on Amtrak was down slightly, from 1,459,068 in 2005 to 1,454,616 in 2006. However, revenues from Connecticut ridership were up, reflecting greater ridership on the ACELA Express, while regular ridership was down. Stamford ridership was up, while the New Haven and Hartford figures were down slightly.

Russ St. John mentioned a New Jersey Transit proposal for a new passenger rail tunnel beneath the Hudson River from Palisades to 34th Street and Penn Station. The nine mile tunnel would tie into a new rail station proposed to be built adjacent to Penn Station.

Chairman Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 3:29 pm.