

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MEETING

Thursday, April 1, 2004 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room A

New Haven, Connecticut

1. Approval of the March 4, 2004 meeting minutes
2. Guest speaker - TBA
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, March 4, 2004

D.O.T. Headquarters, Conference Room B

Newington, Connecticut

VOTING MEMBERS

Dorothy Adamson
Tom Cheeseman
N. Terry Hall
Morton Katz
Yvonne Loteczka
David Reed
Richard Schreiner
Richard Sunderhauf

GUESTS

Linda Osten
Anthony Savino
Stephen Troster

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Fred Riese

CDOT STAFF

Cindy Gollareny
Harry P. Harris
Peter Richter
Mark Foran
Kerri Lacilla

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Minutes

March 4, 2004

(Meeting convened at 1:30 p.m.)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 5, 2004

Accepted as written.

FEATURED SPEAKERS – KEY POINTS

LINDA OSTEN, Principal Community Development Planner, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CGROG), provided an overview of the Hartford-New Haven Busway Station Area Planning Project, funded by the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB). This busway is the first of several proposed in the region and includes 12 stations in Hartford, West Hartford, Newington, and New Britain. The 12 stations are: (1) Union Station, Hartford, (2) Legislative Office Building, Hartford, (3) Sigourney Street, Hartford, (4) Parkville, Hartford, (5) New Park Avenue, Hartford, (6) Flatbush, Hartford and West Hartford, (7) Elmwood, West Hartford, (8) Newington Junction, Newington, (9) Cedar Street, Newington, (10) East Street, New Britain, (11) East Main Street, New Britain, and (12) Downtown New Britain. The project study area includes development opportunities within one-half mile and one-quarter mile walking distance around each of the 12 proposed stations along the busway.

The Station Area Planning Study is the first step in the process of coordinating development around transit stations, also known as Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The primary goal of station area planning is to enhance the transportation investment by working to ensure that the surrounding areas are developed in a way that encourages transit use. A second key goal is to maximize benefits from the busway to the municipalities and neighborhoods along the busway corridor.

Working with CROG, ConnDOT and community representatives, a set of screening criteria has been developed to evaluate each of the sites for TOD potential. Using these criteria, six station areas have been selected for detailed site development plans: Union Station, Sigourney Street, Parkville, Flatbush, Cedar Street, and Downtown New Britain. Screening criteria include the following issues: development opportunity, access and visibility, other transit connections, pedestrian environment, ownership patterns, market strength, population and employment density, neighborhood and political support, and creative funding opportunities. While much of the implementation is municipality-based, the information also assists ConnDOT as they design the stations to better connect to the communities.

Essential system characteristics for TOD include fixed station locations and guideways, frequent reliable service and quality of station environment. Development should include a mix of land uses, high residential (12 units per acre and up) and employment (25-50 units per acre) densities, pedestrian friendly design, and public space integrated with transit station and commercial space. Types of TOD include joint development, adjacent development, co-development, and transit induced development. Successfully implemented TOD increased numerical ridership and the quality of the ridership experience.

One of the major challenges with TOD is there is no direct link between state planning and developmental roles. There are also transit, busway, environmental, and local challenges. However, development is happening and the goal is to direct it and work to leverage every opportunity there is along the busway.

PETER RICHTER, Office of Policy and Planning, ConnDOT, substituted for Edgar T. Hurlle. Mr. Richter reported that Phase I of the CT Rail Station Governance Study has been completed. The Study began in 2001 to develop a governance policy and financial policy which improves current conditions and offers improved quality of service for riders.

The Phase I reports included stakeholder interviews, customer opinion surveys, parking inventory and utilization, engineering conditions surveys, state lease reviews, station operations and management reviews, and station financial reviews.

The summary of the Phase I report includes the summary of existing conditions, evaluation of current governance methods, and directions for change. The evaluation findings include lease inconsistencies and enforcement, quality and identification standards, operations, accountability, management, and town's interest in retaining responsibility. Items to be addressed in a future governance policy include defining responsibilities, consistency in lease terms, consistency in financial information, consistency in customer service and maintenance quality standards, institution of an operating model and procedures, creation of a standard management program, and local needs and concerns.

\$11,162,000 of repairs and improvements has been identified to bring all stations up to a "state of good repair". Of this total, \$7,176,000 is for New Haven Line stations, \$2,032,000 is for New Canaan Branch stations, \$1,012,000 is for Waterbury Branch stations, and 942,000 is for the Danbury Branch.

Phase II of the Study will include surveys of industry practices, surveys of private parking and the presentation of alternative methods of governance. Phase II is expected to be complete at the end of April 2004 and the Final Report is expected to be complete at the end of June 2004.

Mr. Richter mentioned that New Haven line ridership has been increasing at an average rate of 1.5% per year. ConnDOT is looking at the possibility of adding structured parking in Stratford to accommodate 465 vehicles, potentially to be funded by the TSB. Mr. Richter also mentioned that 200 to 300 new spaces added for Shore Line East in Old Saybrook are being heavily used.

Details pertaining to the study are available at www.ctrailgovernance.com.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

REPORT FROM OPERATING ENTITIES

Harry P. Harris, Bureau Chief of Public Transportation, ConnDOT, reported that Governor Rowland announced a two-part plan for the immediate purchase of additional railcars on MetroNorth. Phase I of the Governor's directive involves the immediate purchase of 2,000 seats, equating to the order of 20 coaches and approximately 4 locomotives to power them. It is anticipated that \$60 million will be available in the month of April for the purchase. Consequently, there are three strategies for obtaining the coaches: (1) explore the country for used equipment that is currently available for purchase and is compatible with both the Northeast Corridor and our existing equipment; (2) explore the country for other railroads that are currently purchasing new coaches that we may be able to "piggy-back" on their order; and (3) go out to bid for someone to build the coaches, which would be the most time consuming and expensive approach.

Phase II of the Governor's directive is to prepare a long-term fleet replacement strategy within sixty (60) days to include a timeline and cash-flow analysis for ordering the equipment (M-8's). It would also involve the purchase of a maintenance facility to accommodate the approximate 400 railcars. However, ConnDOT Commissioner Byrnes, has requested the report by the end of the month so he can deliver the report to the Governor prior to his leaving office effective April 1, 2004.

Mr. Harris announced that Amtrak has been notified of the Department's intent to transfer the Shore Line East maintenance facility in New Haven to MetroNorth. This will provide MetroNorth with additional bays to maintain their equipment. They will also maintain the Shore Line East equipment.

Richard Sunderhauf reported that CTTransit Hartford/New Haven/Stamford divisions are in the process of negotiating a new union contract.

Richard Schreiner reported that Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART) will be making their final inspection of the Orion VII low floor bus that they will be taking delivery on in the near future.

Fred Riese attended a Southeast Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting and reported that the study has been extended for an additional three months, moving the completion date to September 2004.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Cheeseman attended the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT)/Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Legislative breakfast at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) on February 19, 2004. In attendance were several individuals in the industry, staff from some of the legislators and various legislators. Mr. Cheeseman deems the message is apparent regarding the needs for monies for public transportation and encourages all to continue their efforts.

Mr. Cheeseman traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the "kick-off" of the leadership forum consisting of high-level policy and decision-makers from the 50 states to discuss the coordination of the 62 different programs at the federal level that receive transportation money. Mr. Cheeseman does not foresee immediate results, however he is confident that we will begin to see some of these coordination results in the near future.

Mr. Cheeseman reported that Middletown Transit District (MTD) will experience a town budget cut of only \$989.00, despite a year of tight budgetary constraints.

On Capitol Hill, there is a bill sponsored by Senator Edith Praque to eliminate funding for the Jobs Access program which takes employees to work at Foxwoods casino. Apparently there is a State statute that forbids the State from spending money to transport individuals to any place where they do not have full employment rights. Mr. Cheeseman is concerned that the individuals who are currently being transported are being caught between organized labor, the legislator, and their need to be fully employed. Mr. Cheeseman is hopeful that when the final vote is taken, the needs of these individuals will be taken into consideration and they will be ensured full employment elsewhere in the event the bill is passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Elaine Kolb, who addressed the Commission at the February 5, 2004 meeting, has been working very closely with CTTransit, New Haven Division, for quite some time, which was not brought to the attention of the Commission at that meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Terry Hall commented on the proposed ethics bill recommending that individuals who are employed or volunteer on a board of any kind submit a statement of their assets along with the assets of their spouse and children. He foresees major reluctance on the part of many voluntary officials to continue to serve if this requirement becomes law.

Fred Riese recommended the following locations for the spring public hearings: Stamford, Danielson, New London, and Milford. Mr. Cheeseman made a motion to approve the same. Ms. Loteska seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion. Cindy Gollareny will begin the process of obtaining locations and dates for these hearings.

(Meeting adjourned at 3:35 P.M.)