

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

May 1, 2008 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven

1. Approval of the April 3, 2008 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: James Cameron. President, Metro-North Commuter Council
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 April 3, 2008

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Richard Schreiner, Kevin Maloney, Terry Hall, Richard Sunderhauf, Richard Carpenter, Yvonne Loteczka, John Zelinsky. **Ex-officio members:** Connie Mendolia (DEP), Fred Riese (DEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Albert Martin, Dennis King. **Guests:** Jean Stimolo, Cornell Lewis.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:31 PM. The minutes of the meeting of March 6 were approved as written.

Featured Speaker

ConnDOT Deputy Commissioner Albert Martin imparted the good news that transit ridership statewide is up 4% on top of an increase of 10% in the preceding year and a half. However, this increase in ridership is causing a demand for greater levels of service and the funds to support those services. At this point, the draft State budget includes a \$3,000,000 increase in operating funds for transit, but on the Federal side, capital funding may be cut. The FY 2006-2007 budget included \$7.5 million for the purchase of 36 new vehicles, while another 50 vehicles statewide will be purchased in FY 2008.

Martin next discussed negotiations ConnDOT is having with Amtrak to see if Amtrak's schedule on the Springfield Line can be adjusted to add two trains in the morning commuter hours and two more in the afternoon peak. These trains would be shifted from non-peak commuter hours. Under this plan, Amtrak would lower the fares on the trains to commuter fare levels comparable to Metro-North service. The State of Connecticut would make up the difference in the fares between the commuter fares and Amtrak's intercity fare structure. This would be implemented in advance of the full commuter service proposed by ConnDOT for the Springfield Line. In fact, Martin indicated this commuter fare agreement with Amtrak could be implemented in fall 2008.

Continuing, Martin noted that the first prototypes of the new M-8 commuter rail cars for the New Haven Line service are due for testing by November or December 2009. After completion of testing, ten cars per month will be delivered until all 380 cars arrive. Concurrently, improvements to New Haven Yard will be occurring to handle the new cars. These improvements will extend from 2009 to 2016 with State and Federal funding already in place for a large part of these improvements.

Terry Hall expressed his viewpoint that more parking is needed at Union Station and along the New Haven Line. Deputy Commissioner Martin said that Union Station possesses a substantial potential for transit-oriented development which is being investigated by the City and State. A consultant is developing a mixed use development

concept for the station that includes a new parking garage at the south end of the station, with retail and residential development north of the station. Martin foresees development of the new parking garage commencing within two years.

Along the New Haven Line and the branch lines, real management of parking would require common ownership of the parking facilities, assumedly by the State of Connecticut. Currently, most parking facilities are municipally owned and the parking arrangements vary from town to town.

Martin mentioned that the high gasoline prices have resulted in less gas tax revenue for transportation. Transit ridership is up, which increases revenue, but fuel sales are down, which has the opposite effect on funds for transit and transportation in general.

Regarding the New Haven Line car fleet, yard storage for the new M-8 cars is presently envisioned to occur in Bridgeport on existing State-owned land. ConnDOT expects to exercise an option in the M-8 purchase contract to expand the total car order from 342 cars to 380. Ultimately, ConnDOT envisions a fleet of 595-600 cars in the next 3-5 years, up from a 425-car fleet today. This includes Shore Line East and branch line cars.

In response to a question on the delays in the catenary replacement project due to steel fabrication work being behind schedule, Martin said ConnDOT deals with a Connecticut firm that does good work and good quality and has historically delivered an excellent product. This firm has been told that the late deliveries are a problem which must be fixed.

Comments from the Public

Jean Stimolo of Rideworks said she found Deputy Commissioner Martin's news about the improved commuter service proposal for the Springfield Line to be very interesting from the perspective of her agency.

Reports from Operating Entities

Rick Schreiner reported that HART has submitted a proposal to the State calling for subsidizing commuter use of the existing Peter Pan bus service between Danbury and Waterbury in a fashion similar to what Deputy Commissioner Martin described for Amtrak's Springfield Line. Commuter bus service linking Waterbury and Danbury has long been advocated by the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials. Schreiner mentioned that the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments has submitted a similar proposal for subsidization of the Peter Pan service linking Waterbury and Hartford to make the fares comparable to commuter bus fares.

Tom Cheeseman said Peter Pan, Greyhound and Bonanza are suffering severe financial crunches due to loss of ridership to unregulated carries such as Fung Wah and Lucky Star. Peter Pan and Greyhound will soon be implementing a new low cost intercity service in the Northeast with tickets sold over the Internet. Tom also mentioned that Peter Pan service to Middletown will cease in May. In response to this, Wesleyan

University will operate a shuttle to New Haven to connect to Peter Pan service there. Tom also mentioned that carriers such as Fung Wah are not ADA compliant.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman reported that two years ago the City of Middletown received a \$19 million earmark for transportation improvements. After several other options for the use of this money were costed out and found to be infeasible, this grant may be used to bring streetcar service back to Middletown. Tom will use \$3,000,000 of this grant for a maintenance facility. Either a rail-based streetcar with a catenary or a fuel cell powered vehicle will be used to run a 0.7 mile initial downtown route, and then service would be extended to the riverfront area, and eventually up Route 66.

On another topic, Tom mentioned the transit district is still negotiating with the Teamsters following a certification election held last November.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Kevin Maloney mentioned a proposal by the General Assembly's Finance Committee to charge a 6% tax on all deliveries by any type of company from small operators like his up to FedEx and UPS. Details of the proposal are vague at this point but he is heading to Hartford to give testimony on this proposal.

Terry Hall described a proposal for a Mystic transit center at Interstate 95 where cars and buses could park and passengers would board mass transit vehicles to Mystic. The idea of the proposal is to alleviate the congestion which often clogs the streets of Mystic, especially in the summer.

Progress continues on the replacement of the moveable span of Amtrak's Thames River Bridge. Hall reported that a 4-day shutdown of traffic on the river will commence on June 2 to allow the old span to be removed and the new span placed. The new span is currently being fabricated north of the bridge and will be floated down the river and hoisted up to the bridge. During the bridge outage, Amtrak is not planning to operate any service east of New Haven. This will also affect those Shore Line East riders who take Amtrak service to New London.

Fred Riese reported that Amtrak is in the early stages of alternatives analysis for the replacement of the Connecticut River Bridge and will schedule the initial multi-agency coordination meeting next month.

Chairman Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 2:50 PM.