

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

July 13, 2006 - 1:30 PM

Legislative Office Building
Conference Room B
Hartford

1. Approval of the June 1, 2006 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: Jayne Kleinman, Transportation Project Facilities Manager, UConn-Farmington
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 June 1, 2006

Union Station, New Haven
Fourth Floor Conference Room

Administrative Vice-chairman Fred Riese called the meeting to order at 1:36 pm. The minutes of the meeting of May 4, 2006 were approved..

Featured Speaker

Robert Santy, President of the Regional Growth Partnership, was introduced. Santy noted that Connecticut has no intermediate level of government between the 169 municipalities and the state. Yet the municipalities are often ill-equipped to handle issues which go beyond town lines such as economic growth, utilities, transportation, and commuting patterns. Fifteen towns in the greater New Haven area formed the Regional Growth Partnership to deal with these problems.

Santy said his foremost intention for this meeting is to discuss public policy and land use philosophy. To introduce this topic, he cited Jobs Access transportation as an “anti-smart growth” program. Though he feels this program is needed and worthwhile to address the consequences of our land use patterns, he said it is an example of the problems our current land use and development patterns create. It fosters more commuting by taking workers from the cities out to the suburbs, where most of the newly created jobs are located. This is not smart land use planning.

One study by the Center-Edge Coalition found that Connecticut is using up land at eight times the rate of its population growth. Connecticut has had very little population growth in the last 15 years but we are spreading out our development patterns, which makes it increasingly difficult for public transportation to serve our needs. Our resulting development densities will not support public transportation. Paralleling this problem is the tendency of municipalities to augment their tax bases with big box retailers, age restricted housing, or other development which can generate tax revenues while putting minimal strain on municipal services.

Santy singled out the further development of Tweed Airport as the top transportation issue in the New Haven region. Better rail transportation is the #2 issue. Shore Line East’s through service to Bridgeport and Stamford has been a huge benefit to the region.

Housing affordability is another important issue locally. Southern Connecticut State University has had trouble recruiting professors because of local housing costs. A recent statewide study found that in 104 of Connecticut’s 169 towns, the median income in the town was not sufficient to support the cost of the median priced house in that town.

Though there are many ways of defining smart growth, Santy gave his definition as “using the infrastructure that you already have invested in more effectively, and protecting your natural resources”.

Relative to the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program, Santy noted that this is still officially a pilot program, though it began in 1998. When does a pilot program end, he mused. If we have proven the value of this program, should it not be part of Connecticut’s budget?

Santy mentioned that he formerly served as Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development, and is currently a member of the Interstate 91 Corridor transportation investment area (TIA) board. He is a firm believer in the value of the Transportation Strategy Board as a vehicle which can incorporate land use issues into transportation planning. He believes the proposed Springfield Line commuter rail service would be well used by travelers and commuters, in part because Meriden offers the lowest priced housing stock in the region and will increasingly be the residence of workers in the New Haven and Hartford job markets.

Regarding the Jobs Access Transportation Program in the New Haven region, Santy said the Regional Growth Connection initially relied heavily on vans operated by the Greater New Haven Transit District. Taxicabs were also heavily used initially. Over time, enhancements to CT Transit bus routes became the main vehicle to implement the program. Santy cited the ‘M’ Link route between Middletown and Meriden as a current example of a successful Jobs Access service. He feels there is a market for a Meriden-Cheshire bus link as well as service from New Haven to the lower Naugatuck Valley.

Department of Social Services funding for New Haven area Jobs Access services flows through the Regional Growth Connection. DSS is now requiring funds to be used specifically for TANF clients, which is a significant limitation on who services can be provided to. ConnDOT has helped by providing FTA funds when needed to compensate for services that no longer qualified for DSS funding.

In response to a question on why growth patterns are favoring suburbs over downtowns, Santy said it comes down to costs: costs for land, parking, and greenfields vs. brownfields development. However, he noted that a new Church Street condo development is selling loft units for \$500,000 to \$800,000 each. In contrast to Hartford, developers in New Haven are building downtown housing without any subsidies.

Regional tax base sharing is one way to alleviate the pressures driving development to the suburbs. Connecticut has extremely minimal experience with such arrangements. Two studies have been undertaken in the New Haven area on tax base sharing for very specific, limited purposes. Santy noted that two other towns volunteered to cover the extra costs for rebuilding of New Haven’s Ferry Street bridge when that project came in over estimates. This demonstrates that some infrastructure projects in the city are perceived as regional needs.

In closing, Santy explained that the Regional Growth Partnership, of which he is president, is a quasi-public economic development group. The Regional Growth Connection,

which oversees New Haven area Jobs Access services, is a subsidiary of the Regional Growth Partnership.

Comments from the Public

None.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John noted that the Providence and Worcester has resumed revenue freight service across the Tomlinson Bridge in New Haven Harbor.

Richard Sunderhauf passed out booklets outlining the national legislative agenda of the Amalgamated Transit Union. He pointed out how closely many of the ten legislative recommendations mirror recommendations of recent CPTC Annual Reports.

Bill Kelaher of the Transportation Communication Union said not much has changed in the status of Metro-North's contract renewal. The coalition of unions is still waiting to be released from mediation.

Jon Foster of the ConnDOT Office of Rails said Shore Line East on-time performance for April 2006 was 97%, and year-to-date on-time performance has been 97.7%. April Shore Line East ridership averaged 1,720 daily trips, with the year-to-date daily ridership being 1,709. Ridership on Shore Line East's through service to Stamford was 1,015 per day in April, with the YTD figure at 963.

Carmine Trotta of ConnDOT's Office of Intermodal Planning said the notice to proceed for the Buckland Area Transportation Study will be going out very shortly.

Old Business

Terry Hall said Amtrak's annual budget battle in Washington is off to its typical start with the Administration offering a low funding level not sufficient for continued operation. This number can be expected to be negotiated upward to a level that will allow Amtrak to actually continue its operations.

New Business

Linda Blair related that she and Elaine Kolb were in Hartford three weeks ago and were waiting downtown for a bus back to New Haven. When the bus arrived, the driver deployed the lift and attempted to bulldoze a small mound of dirt with it to produce a flat surface rather than move the bus forward slightly beyond the hump of dirt. This damaged the lift and another bus had to be called. After a 20-25 minute wait, the second bus arrived but its lift did not work. Another 20 minutes were required before a third bus arrived with a functional lift. As they departed on this last bus, the mechanic was just arriving to work on the damaged lift of the first bus.

Fred Riese reminded members of the upcoming public hearings in Niantic on June 6 and Derby on June 20, and encouraged members to attend.

Vice chairman Morton Katz adjourned the meeting at 3:04 pm.

The next meeting of the Commission will be July 13 at 1:30 pm at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford.

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Thursday, June 1, 2006

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven, Connecticut

VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair
Tom Cheeseman
Morton Katz
William Kelaher
Yvonne Loteczka
Terry Hall
Richard Sunderhauf
Richard Schreiner
Dorothy Adamson
Russ St. John
Richard Carpenter
Robert Zarnetske
Ralph Capenera

GUESTS

Robert Santy
David Bauer

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

Carmine Trotta
Dennis King
Jon Foster