

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

July 12, 2007 - 1:30 PM

Legislative Office Building
Hearing Room 1B, Hartford

1. Approval of the June 7, 2007 meeting minutes
2. Featured Speaker: Carmine Trotta, ConnDOT Assistant Director of Intermodal Planning
3. Comments from the public
4. Comments from operating entities
5. Chairman's report
7. Old business
8. New business

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of June 7, 2007

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Russ St. John, Linda Blair, Kevin Maloney, Terry Hall, Rich Sunderhauf, Rick Schreiner, Dick Carpenter, Bill Kelaher. **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat, Fred Riese. **ConnDOT staff:** Jon Foster, Dennis King. **Guests:** Brooke Hoberman.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:32 PM. The minutes of the meeting of May 3 were approved with one spelling correction.

Comments from the Public

Brooke Hoberman of Rideworks had just returned from a trip to Spain. She rode on a high speed train from Grenada to Seville and found the train to be punctual, very clean, very smooth with no vibration, and having excellent food.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John reported that Providence and Worcester may soon be serving a ethanol customer out of ProvPort and expects to begin autorack shipments soon. When asked why the autorack traffic would be routed through Connecticut rather than go directly west on CSX, Russ said P&W has better connections with New England Central, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific than does CSX.

Dick Carpenter has just delivered Volume 3 of the *Railroad Atlas of the United States – 1946* to Johns Hopkins University for publication. Volume 3 covers Ohio, Indiana, lower Michigan and the Chicago area.. Dick mentioned that American railroads carry more ton miles today than they did in 1946.

Bill Kelaher updated the Commission on the Metro-North labor situation. All bargaining units except the Teamsters have come to an understanding on a new contract. The Teamsters unit represents track workers. If the Teamsters strike, the other bargaining units will honor their picket lines. A final Presidential Emergency Board was convened last month to offer recommendations for a resolution of the impasse. A strike date for mid-July is set if no agreement is reached.

Amtrak also could face a strike. Only the Amtrak Police union has reached a tentative agreement. Amtrak's unionized work force had been without a contract for eight years.

Jon Foster of the ConnDOT Office of Rails provided the Shore Line East and New Haven Line performance report for April. Ridership was up 2.4% on the New Haven Line compared to April 2006 and is up 3.2% year-to-date. Shore Line East ridership was up 2.7% in April 2007 and is 5.0% ahead of 2006's YTD figures. On-time performance for April was

96.4% on the New Haven Line and 97.0% on Shore Line East for YTD on-time totals of 96.9% and 96.6%, respectively.

Rick Schreiner reported that HART's second wave of paratransit vehicles are in, completing the replacement of HART's paratransit fleet. The new vehicles are STARTRANS vans. Also, HART will begin some new Job Access services in October and will add a third shuttle to the Harlem Line in March 2008. The new shuttle will run to the Southeast, NY station.

Schreiner said the Danbury-Brewster Shuttle now carries about 250-270 riders per day. Full sized buses are used for the morning peak trips and some of the afternoon trips. The Ridgefield-Katonah Shuttle now carries 140-170 riders per day and uses 20 passenger vans. No mid-day service is run on this route. Parking and geometry constraints prevent the use of larger vehicles to Katonah. Otherwise, more ridership could be achieved on this route with the use of larger vehicles.

Lastly, Schreiner reported that a bus driver from the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority took 2nd place in the National Roadeo in Nashville May 6 in the 35-foot bus class. In the Connecticut Roadeo held June 3 in Manchester, HART drivers took the top three places in the van class. HART drivers also took third place in both the 40-foot bus class and the body-on-chassis class.

Terry Hall provided news from the latest National Association of Railroad Passengers meeting in Washington, DC. CSX is proposing to upgrade its line from Washington to Miami. Washington to Richmond will be expanded to four tracks and the rest of the line to three tracks. Amtrak plans to run 110 mph service over the expanded line.

Amtrak has hired a new maintenance chief who is setting up improved maintenance procedures for the ACELA service. Amtrak is also adding a NYC-DC express train which will stop only in Philadelphia. There is a very heavy demand for ACELA Express service to and from Washington. There are long lines and full trains in Washington. Gas prices are the main driver behind the ridership growth.

In downside news, non-express ACELA ridership is down slightly. Also, Amtrak's on-time performance #'s for their long distance service are taking a big hit due to the heavier use of the freight corridors over which they operate. But even with this situation, the long distance ridership is still growing.

Fred Riese reported significant progress in efforts to reach an agreement between DEP, P&W and the Valley Railroad covering P&W's use of the State-owned Valley Railroad immediately north of the Old Saybrook Wye. Valley Railroad and Amtrak are working separately on an agreement to cover Valley's occasional use of the Old Saybrook Wye, which is owned by Amtrak.

Fred also discussed the latest meeting of the ConnDOT-sponsored advisory committee for the reconstruction of the Interstate 84/ Route 8 interchange in Waterbury. Alternatives have

been narrowed to three: a low capital project to improve local street connections and enhance transit, bicycle and pedestrian use, and two full build complete replacements of the interchange, both with the current vertically stacked arrangement of I-84's eastbound and westbound lanes replaced by a horizontal layout. Frontage roads along I-84 would separate local traffic from through traffic. One alternative would shift Route 8 through downtown Waterbury from the west side of the Naugatuck River to the east side, while the other alternative would keep it in its existing location.

Richard Sunderhauf reported that a new 3-year labor agreement for Amalgamated Transit Union represented workers of Connecticut Transit has been ratified and is now in place. Health care issues were the big area to be ironed out. Rich is also driving a new bus run on a 4:30 AM to 12:30 PM schedule.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman reported that post-Katrina communications problems in the storm-affected area was a major topic at the Community Transportation Association of America convention he attended in Reno last month. The loss of phone service including cell phones after the storm caused severe problems. Satellite phones were the only reliable means of communications. It was recommended that transit operators acquire such phones for emergency situations.

Emergency evacuation planning for the hurricane had not incorporated Mississippi and Alabama into the planning and had relied on private bus carriers, many of which had substantial numbers of vehicles already committed to out-of-region trips at that time. FEMA had overlooked transit districts and public carriers in their evacuation planning.

Tom also mentioned that DMV is requiring upgraded commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) with higher endorsements for van and bus drivers. Tom felt that the new requirements should not be applied retroactively to current drivers but only to new ones. Current drivers should be grandfathered under the old standards. Rick Schreiner reported that it takes four months now to get CDL tests from the date of application due to the backlogs at Department of Motor Vehicles. HART often hires qualified people even if they don't possess a CDL and then trains them, but it is taking forever for them to receive the CDLs and start driving. Kevin Maloney said the problems at DMV extend across the spectrum. He spent six hours at the Enfield office to register a boat trailer. He is self-employed but for someone else, this would require taking a day off from work to perform such a task. Continuing the theme, Rich Sunderhauf reported that a friend of his visiting the Wethersfield DMV office took his customer number, left and went out to play nine holes of golf, and returned to find his number still had not been called.

Old Business

Fred Riese reported that the public hearings in Stamford and Enfield had 3-4 speakers each but provided some useful testimony. He also inquired of Jon Foster concerning the issue of improper tie-down locations on the VRE trains raised by Linda Blair at the last meeting. Jon has begun looking into this and will have a report for the next meeting.

John Zelinsky asked that the minutes note he went to ConnDOT on May 3 rather than Connecticut Transit, based on the original meeting schedule for 2007, and thus missed that meeting.

New Business

Linda Blair took a trip to Boston last month using Amtrak to go to Boston and Peter Pan to return. The reason she took Peter Pan back was that the Amtrak website erroneously showed 1:45 PM as the last train back. She cautioned people not to rely on the Amtrak website for schedule information but to consult the written schedule.

Fred Riese encouraged members to attend the upcoming public hearings in Groton on June 20 and Milford on June 26. He also mentioned an item from the April Connecticut Transit Performance Statistics that the Hartford Division had received a one-time rebate of over \$500,000 from the Metropolitan District Commission for overbilling of water use for an extended period of time due to a faulty meter.

Fred also mentioned that he participated in an advisory committee meeting for ConnDOT's Rest Area and Service Plaza Study on May 31. ConnDOT is seeking to develop a master plan for its rest areas and service plazas to determine what amenities should be provided to travelers at the 23 service plazas and 8 rest areas. Opportunities to reconfigure existing facilities to achieve expanded parking capacities, especially for trucks, are being evaluated. Up to seven new rest areas are also being proposed to fill in large gaps along our limited access highways where no facilities exist. Some possible trucks-only facilities may be proposed to address the deficiency in overnight truck parking capacity in Connecticut. Sue Simmat reported that the first selectman of Fairfield expressed adamant opposition at that meeting to plans for an over-the-highway service plaza facility for Interstate 95 in his community.

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 2:48 PM.