

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AGENDA

Thursday, August 4, 2005 - 1:30 PM

D.O.T. Headquarters, Conference Room B  
Newington

1. Approval of the July 7, 2005 meeting minutes
2. Featured speaker: Mario Marrero, Jobs Access Project Manager, North Central Region, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)
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, July 7, 2005

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1B  
Hartford

VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair  
Tom Cheeseman  
Terry Hall  
Yvonne Loteczka  
Richard Sunderhauf  
Russ St. John  
Richard Schreiner

GUESTS

Frank Rogers, Providence and Worcester  
Stephanie Reitz, Hartford Courant

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

Carmine Trotta  
Cindy Gollareny

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
Minutes of July 7, 2005

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1B  
Hartford

Chairman Cheeseman called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. He called for a moment of silence for the victims of this morning's London subway bombings. Following this, the minutes of the meeting of June 2, 2005 were approved with one abstention.

**FEATURED SPEAKER**

Tom introduced Frank Rogers, Director of Marketing for the Providence and Worcester Railroad. Mr. Rogers began by reviewing the current state of the American railroad industry. The entire industry is being stressed by a record volume of freight. There is a double digit growth rate for cargo from Asia, and U.S. ports are at capacity. Industry wide, there is a shortage of crews and locomotives. A recent change in Federal law allowed railroad workers to retire with full benefits at age 60, rather than at 65. This law, passed at a time of lower economic activity, is now causing a labor shortage. Railroads will need to hire 40,000 new employees in the next few years.

At the Providence and Worcester, both crews and power are being added. In the next 2-3 years, over half of the locomotive fleet is being replaced. Nine 3,900 horsepower General Electric B-39 locomotives are being purchased to replace 11 older 2,300 hp locomotives. Four B-40 locomotives are also being purchased. P&W is adding and training new crews to cover retirements among the present 60 crew members.

P&W operates a 540 mile system. It currently handles 33,000 carloads and 70,000 intermodal containers per year, of which 40% move through Connecticut. P&W interchanges with the New England Central in Connecticut, and may add a second NEC interchange in Willimantic.

Rogers notes a large volume of trade and rail traffic between eastern Canada and New England in the Interstate 89 and 91 corridors. He cited 100,000 tons of steel moving from Montreal to New Haven as one example. Much of this trade can move by rail and an increasing amount of it is doing so.

P&W began operating on the Wethersfield Secondary in February 2005, with two runs per week. Rogers noted that this line was restored to service with the financial assistance of ConnDOT. His railroad is pursuing economic development opportunities along this line. He also provided an update on the Waterfront Street Industrial Track in New Haven. Construction is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2005, with rail service to the maritime users beginning in the first quarter of 2006.

P&W is also selectively upgrading rail and bridges to meet the new 286,000 pound standard for cars. Fortunately, many bridges are vastly over-engineered and thus already meet this standard. Other system improvements are the approaching completion of clearance improvements to the Port of Davisville in Rhode Island, and the development of a new auto ramp in Worcester.

Rogers cited the high cost of fuel and the limitation on the hours truckers can drive as factors leading to the increase in rail freight volumes. Railroads are seeing an increase in short haul traffic moving 400 miles or less. Trucks could formerly operate for 12 hours, but are now only allowed to move in 10 our shifts, making many movements into two day trips whereas they used to require only one day. The fuel efficiency advantage that trains have over trucks further tips the balance in favor of trains the higher fuel prices rise. Rogers noted that P&W has a very low employee turnover rate.

Waste transport, both construction/demolition debris and municipal solid waste, are growth areas for the P&W. Rogers also said CSX is recovering nicely from the recent bottleneck that developed at Selkirk, NY. Dwell times there were exceeding 60 hours, when they should be less than 24 hours. CSX is pre-blocking some trains before they reach Selkirk to cut down on delays there.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

#### **REPORTS FROM OPERATING ENTITIES**

Chairman Cheeseman noted that the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut governors have extended full police powers across state lines to each other's State Police to enhance security on transit services. He also mentioned that the procurement bill for the new rail cars was signed today. The RFP for these cars will go out in early spring of 2006, with award of the contract in early fall 2006.

Richard Schreiner mentioned that ridership on the Route 7 Link bus service was over 45,000 trips in FY'04, up 21% over FY'03. Similarly, the Ridgefield-Katonah shuttle carried 25,581 trips in FY'04, up 15% over FY'03. Also the Advisory Committee for the Danbury Branch Electrification Study will meet in September to review and discuss the Phase 1 recommendations of that study.

Russ St. John reported that the findings and recommendations of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Implementation Study are out. They call for bi-directional service on one half hour headways during peak hours, three new stations at North Haven, Newington Junction and Enfield, high level platforms, and 18 miles of new passing sidings and double tracking. He mentioned that there has been enthusiastic support for this service in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts.

Carmine Trotta of ConnDOT followed up on this topic saying that ConnDOT is seeking funds for preliminary engineering and environmental studies for the Springfield Line service. On the Danbury Branch Study, Carmine said the large number of alternatives that have been developed in Phase 1 will be screened down to a smaller number for further analysis. He also mentioned two other studies. The Rail Station Governance Study has been completed and the final report is out. A study of the Waterbury and New Canaan Branches of Metro-North is just gearing up, with ConnDOT in the process of getting consultants for this study which will begin early next year.

Carmine also mentioned that ConnDOT will be hosting an informational meeting of the Northeast Rail Operations Study (NEROps) at ConnDOT on July 26 at 10 AM. All stakeholders are invited to attend.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Tom Cheeseman reported, with much satisfaction, that the Dial-a-Ride bill survived the legislative process. He thanked the legislators who helped get this bill passed.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Terry Hall provided an update on funding for Amtrak. The House Appropriations Committee had recommended \$550 million in funding for Amtrak. The full house increased this to \$1.176 billion. This matter now goes to the Senate which could recommend a higher figure. The Amtrak Board, all Bush appointees, is recommending \$1.8 billion, the figure Amtrak requested, but Terry does not think it is likely this amount will be approved.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Fred Riese mentioned that the Stamford Advocate did a nice article on the Commission's public hearing in Greenwich. He will provide a list of sites for the fall hearings at the August meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 P.M.