

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

September 6, 2007 - 1:30 PM

Legislative Office Building
Hearing Room 1C, Hartford

1. Approval of the August 2, 2007 meeting minutes
2. Featured Speaker: Ronald Kilcoyne, CEO, Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority
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 August 2, 2007

Housatonic Area Regional Transit
62 Federal Road, Danbury
Second Floor Conference Room

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Morton N. Katz, Russ St. John, Linda Blair, Kevin Maloney, Terry Hall, Rich Sunderhauf, Rick Schreiner, Dick Carpenter, Dorothy Adamson, John R. Zelinsky. **Ex-officio members:** Susan Simmat, Fred Riese. **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Eric Bergstraesser, Jonathan Chew

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:30 PM announcing that he was asking Mr. Katz to conduct the meeting due to the fact that he was still recovering from a recent illness. The minutes of the meeting of July 12, 2007 were approved with several corrections.

Comments from the Public

Jonathan Chew of Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) spoke on the 2005 revisions to the General Statutes covering regional and municipal land use plans. All such land use plans must now address transit-oriented development (TOD). HVCEO will study the TOD measures for the Branchville and Bethel Stations. A draft of the HVCEO Plan of Conservation and Development including promotion of TOD was distributed to the Commission members. In response to a question from Mr. Carpenter, the HVCEO plan would not study upgrading rail service to the west.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John had no report for P&W.

Rick Schreiner reported that, due to the frequency of changes to the schedules, Metro-North is now printing and distributing the Harlem Line shuttle schedules in lieu of HART.

Beginning July 07, there were two additional trips added on the Brewster Shuttle. Metro North will be covering the cost of these new trips. As of fiscal year 08-09, the State of New York will pick up the cost for the additional service. There were 6,000 trips on the Brewster Shuttle during the month of July, representing the highest number YTD.

Richard Sunderhauf reported that there were minor tweaks in the CT Transit Hartford Division route system, nothing major. Handouts of recent service changes in Hartford were distributed. The Commission was also advised that all bus routes in Hartford would change from letter routes to numbers over the next couple years.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman reported that he, along with several other honorees, was recognized by the Office of Protection and Advocacy and the Disability Council for his work involving ADA transportation. The Chairman also reported that the Bond Commission approved State funding to advance work on the Torrington and Windham bus garages.

Old Business

Fred Riese reported slow but continued progress in the effort to craft an agreement to cover Providence and Worcester Railroad's use of a portion of the DEP-owned Valley Railroad line in Old Saybrook.

New Business

Dick Carpenter referenced the "Government to Help Fund the Norfolk Southern Expansion" article in the September issue of Trains Magazine in terms of the congestion reduction. He would like to see this upgrade extended northward into New England in an attempt to enhance north-south intermodal service.

Dorothy Adamson reported that she is currently working on awareness for the public hearing in Torrington. She believes that posting notices in libraries, town halls and community centers would help in terms of participation and turn out. Local planning agencies may be able to assist in the distribution of information concerning the hearings

Kevin Maloney commented on the editorial in the Hartford Courant recommending changes at Bradley International Airport including adding a cell phone parking lot. He noted that Bradley is one of only two major airports nationally that are owned and run by state government.

Fred Reise reported that the FHWA has approved the environmental impact statement for Route 11 in southeastern Connecticut. Fred also mentioned that State Senator Finch and the Mayor of Bridgeport are requesting an environmental study on the Bridgeport container feeder barge service proposed for Bridgeport based on community opposition to the project. Fred also commented on the increased use of roundabouts in Connecticut and other northeastern states and related that a caller to WTIC this morning had advocated restoration of the Poughkeepsie railroad bridge as a solution to provide an alternative to trucks moving freight on our highways. Fred reminded the members of the commission to get their reimbursement information to him for approval.

Featured Speaker:

In lieu of the late arrival of the scheduled guest speaker, Rick Schreiner gave a brief history of Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART). HART has 7 urban fixed routes that run between 6am and 6pm Mon-Fri. and 8am-5pm on Sat. In addition, HART operates two commuter shuttles, one between Ridgefield and Katonah and the other between Danbury and Brewster, to provide access to Metro-North's Harlem Line service.

Along with the shuttle service, there are three LOOP routes for Job Access, the Danbury-Norwalk LINK, and the much used Dial-a-Ride/ADA service. In all, HART has a 60 vehicle fleet, most of which are small buses. In total, HART provides 900,000-1,000,000 trips per year. Rick commented on the fact that HART was one of only a few transit systems still receiving Section 5307 funds (\$450,000 per year) from the federal government. He pointed out that significant funding comes from municipal investments from surrounding towns.

HART is one of the few transit districts in the state with trackless trolleys. It owns two such vehicles of 16 passenger and 22 passenger capacity. These trolleys were originally intended to be used to generate downtown tourism, running in downtown only, but they are now mostly used for seniors. HART is working with CityCenter Danbury to revise the service this fall. Both Rick and Chairman Cheeseman commented on the cost of running trolley service without the support of ridership; the novelty wears off in about 15 months.

HART's base fare for fixed route service is \$1.25. The dial-a-ride service is \$.60 for local trips and \$.70 for inter-town transportation. Member municipalities cover a portion of the subsidy for both urban fixed route and dial-a-ride services. The trolley cost is subsidized entirely by the City of Danbury. In addition to funding a significant portion of the operating cost of the dial-a-ride service in its town, Ridgefield pays for dial-a-ride passengers fares so its citizens ride for free.

Eric Bergstraesser, Chief Operating Officer of HART for 11 years, provided additional insight on the agency. HART was created in 1972 and was originally run by the HVCEO. He explained how HART was able to obtain its current facility location and the history therein. When Mr. Bergstraesser began his career with HART in 1996, it had a total of 40 buses. There is currently a staff of approximately 90-95 consisting of 65 drivers, 15 maintenance employees and the rest of the staff being administration and finance. HART has an annual budget of approximately 5.2 million dollars.

He noted that the MPO and HART have a unique relationship, with HART receiving FTA funds through HVCEO for transit planning work being done at HART. In addition to the 14 fixed routes and the paratransit services, HART does maintenance contract work for other non-profit transit operators in the area and provides office space for MetroPool and the Kennedy Center.

With a total of 75 vehicles (including maintenance and service vehicles), all of HART's routes are running strong and the fixed route ridership has increased 3% over the last year. He reported that the shuttle's numbers have increased by double digits and a New Fairfield to Southeast, NY route is being considered as an additional transit route to access Metro-North's Harlem Line. HART also plans additional LOOP service for Job Access.

Linda Blair reported that, with the exception of the locations which are no longer available because of Homeland Security rules, virtually all of the bus routes in New Haven have returned to the New Haven Green, bringing the number of stops there back to 1998 levels.

John Zelinsky reported that he received his reimbursement check.

Mr. Katz adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.