

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

October 5, 2006 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven

1. Approval of the September 7, 2006 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: Heidi Green, President, 1000 Friends of Connecticut
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 September 7, 2006

Legislative Office Building, Room 2B
Hartford, Connecticut

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:33 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of August 3, 2006 were approved.

Featured Speaker

Chairman Cheeseman welcomed ConnDOT Deputy Commissioner James Boice and thanked him for taking the time to speak to the Commission. Boice provided a progress report on many transit projects and initiatives the Department has underway. First, ConnDOT is moving ahead with two new bus garages in New Haven and Waterbury, with the New Haven garage project expected to go out to bid within the next year. The New Britain Busway project has received another \$7,000,000 FTA grant which will allow it to proceed from the current 30% design to the 60% design stage.

ConnDOT is also beginning a study of New Haven Line railroad stations to see what needs to be done to upgrade each one. One goal of this effort is to standardize the appearance and amenities of the stations. Some platforms may also be lengthened. Without waiting for the study, the Department has added benches at several stations.

Continuing, Boice mentioned that the contract for 300 new M-8 cars has been awarded to Kawasaki. The first phase is actually for 90 cars, to be delivered in 40 months, with an option for 210 additional cars. Progress is also being made on car maintenance with the new repair shop at New Haven to open next month. Rehabilitation work is also continuing on the existing New Haven Line fleet. Ultimately, ConnDOT will have a fleet of about 500 new and rehabilitated cars, giving it the flexibility to institute new options such as more intrastate service or the use of electrified equipment on Shore Line East. Also underway is an engineering study of the high level platforms. The platforms were last rehabilitated 10-15 years ago and most appear to still be in very good condition.

Boice concluded his upbeat assessment of transit improvements by noting that the Springfield Line Commuter Rail Service project is progressing. He foresees this service beginning operation in a time frame of approximately 4 years (2010-2011). As new electric cars go into service on Shore Line East, this will free up coaches for use on the Springfield Line service.

In response to questions from Commission members, Boice mentioned that an enhanced marketing campaign is contemplated to coincide with the introduction of new rail equipment on the New Haven Line and Shore Line East. In addition to working with the ridesharing brokerages, there will be a new marketing campaign coming out of

ConnDOT as well. Also, although the New Britain Busway will be ConnDOT's focus in the Hartford region for the next 3-5 years, other elements of the CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy are still being evaluated. Studies have been done on busways along the Griffins Line and east of Hartford. The Department may work with CRCOG to update the previous Regional Transit Strategy report. The Department is also in the consultant selection stage of the Norwich to Worcester passenger rail planning study which is an element of the Governor's Transportation Initiative.

Boice also mentioned that next week the U.S. Senate will debate a 6-year funding package for Amtrak. ConnDOT has provided comments to our Congressional delegation on this bill, which would total \$11-12 billion over the 6 years and allow Amtrak to budget and plan more efficiently than their present year-to-year allocations allow.

Robert Zarnetske thanked Boice and ConnDOT for their help given to the Southeast Area Transit District in its effort to get Direct Federal Recipient status so it could receive FTA funds for the demonstration study of new fuel technologies for transit. He asked Boice what technology enhancements ConnDOT is looking at that might be relevant to employment by SEAT. Boice listed the new e-alert program to get transit info on delays or other events out to the public via its website, the testing of new vehicle locator technology on the buses of the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, and an investigation into the installation of variable message signs for travelers at key stations on the New Haven Line.

In response to a question from Tom Cheeseman regarding the possible use in the Coastal Link service of any of the 25 new buses to be purchased under Governor Rell's Transportation Initiative, Boice did not know offhand where the new buses will be assigned but promised to get that information. He noted that \$3.5 million of the total \$7.5 million funds for these buses is now in hand.

Terry Hall asked what steps might be taken to improve travel times on the Connecticut portion of the New Haven Line. Boice ruled out any acquisition of new right-of-way to improve alignment but said ConnDOT is tweaking curves and improving alignment wherever possible within the existing right-of-way. He also noted that the new cars will be capable of 90 mph operation and that the catenary improvements are designed for 110 mph.

Comments from the Public

None.

Comments from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf noted that this is the 1-year anniversary for the Star Shuttle service in Hartford.

Richard Schreiner informed the Commission that new ridership records have been achieved on the Harlem Line shuttles. Ridership in August reached 3,300 on the Ridgefield-Katonah shuttle and 5,700 on the Danbury-Brewster shuttle. This represented gains for 29% and 16%, respectively, over the August 2005 levels for these two services.

Chairman's Report

Tom Cheeseman reported that this has been a troublesome month for Middletown Area Transit due to multiple road closures for both state and local road projects. This has necessitated changing many bus routes. Nevertheless, Tom reported that ridership on the Middletown-Meriden bus route is up 26% YTD. Middletown Area Transit just received a new bus from ConnDOT for this route, replacing a 7-year old bus with 297,000 miles on it. Tom feels ridership will soon outgrow this new bus.

Old Business

Fred Riese encouraged members to attend the upcoming public hearings in Waterbury (September 13) and Plainville (September 27). John Zelinsky requested that the Commission add a public hearing in Stamford. Fred promised to look into scheduling that extra hearing. If that did not work out, Stamford will be a site for a spring public hearing in 2007.

New Business

A draft schedule for the 2007 Commission meetings was distributed. There was some discussion of using Connecticut Transit in Hartford or HART's facility as possible meeting sites. This will be finalized by the October meeting.

Terry Hall mentioned that Amtrak and the State of Vermont have been discussing the purchase of DMU cars for use on the Vermonter route. The cars would be purchased with a combination of Amtrak and State funds and a loan from the Federal Railroad Administration. Terry feels this could become a model for how Amtrak works with other states to jointly fund some services.

Fred Riese related that Dick Carpenter had met yesterday with Bob Hammersley of the Transportation Strategy Board and Phil Smith of OPM to discuss the history of rail freight in Connecticut, the current situation in that regard, and ideas for future improvements. Dick displayed some colored maps and discussed the implications of freight service over the New Haven Line and the Northeast Corridor in general, the cross harbor tunnel study in New York City, and the New York Harbor car floats. He reported that it was very pleasant meeting and he expressed his gratitude to Hammersley and Smith for taking the time out to discuss these important issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE

September 7, 2006

Legislative Office Building, Room 2B
Hartford, Connecticut

VOTING MEMBERS

Linda Blair
Tom Cheeseman
Morton Katz
John Zelinsky
Yvonne Loteczka
Terry Hall
Richard Sunderhauf
Richard Schreiner
Dorothy Adamson
Russ St. John
Robert Zarnetske

GUESTS

Robert Hammersley
Stephen Troster
Hilary Reid

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

James Boice
Peter Richter
Dennis King