

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

October 4, 2007 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven

1. Approval of the September 6, 2007 meeting minutes
2. Speaker: Gloria Mills, Executive Director, Connecticut Association for Community Transportation
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 6, 2007

Legislative Office Building, Room 1C
Hartford, Connecticut

Attendance: Members: Tom Cheeseman, Kevin Maloney, Yvonne Loteczka, Russ St. John, Mort Katz, Chris Adams, Terry Hall, Richard Sunderhauf, Rick Schreiner, Linda Blair, John Zelinsky. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese. **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Ronald Kilcoyne, Stephen Troster, Donna Hamzy, Hillary Felton-Reid, Susan Halpin.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:32 pm. He welcomed Yvonne Loteczka back to the Commission after her absence of several months and also welcomed Chris Adams to the Commission. The minutes of the meeting of August 2 were approved with no changes and one abstention.

Featured Speaker

Ron Kilcoyne, the chief executive officer of the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, began his remarks by noting that the new Bridgeport Intermodal Center was just opened this past Sunday. The center is one block from the train station but is connected to the station by a walkway. The old bus station was built by the City in 1952 but was not used by any operator until Greyhound moved into it in 1972. Then the Greater Bridgeport Transit District moved in during the 1980s. The Greater Bridgeport Transit District (GBTD) was formed by legislative act in the early 1970s, assuming the operations of four privately-owned bus companies and covering the municipalities of Bridgeport, Fairfield, Trumbull and Stratford. After the GBTD experienced some accounting and record keeping difficulties, it was dissolved on December 31, 1998, with the firing of its board. The new Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) took over the local transit operations on January 1, 1999. The GBTA carries approximately 5,000,000 passengers per year, roughly 15% of Connecticut's total bus ridership.

Until recently, the GBTA's route structure was relatively unchanged from that run by the four private predecessor companies. A study done by a private consultant identified unproductive and low ridership routes which were ultimately eliminated. This produced significant gains in system performance and reliability, including on-time performance, as the Authority's fleet was really stretched to serve the previous routes.

Further gains will be realized with the new intermodal center opening. It has greater capacity than the previous bus station which allows the Authority to implement a true pulse system with all routes converging at the center to allow for transfers. The new pulse system went into place on Sunday with the opening of the terminal. Service was also expanded on the East Main Street route, reducing headways to one half hour. On Sunday morning, the first day of the new service, Kilcoyne found new riders were

already using the service to get to work, despite the low level of publicity about the expanded service. Many buses are leaving the new bus center full, or even with standees, so ridership appears to be headed from some healthy gains.

Kilcoyne next discussed a pair of studies that were done to identify statewide transit needs and costs. The Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) did a study showing that \$20,000,000 in additional annual operating costs and \$120,000,000 of capital needs would be required to address all unmet transit needs statewide. Kilcoyne noted that the train system and the highway system have received large expenditures of funds but the bus transit system to date has not. He, Lou Shulman (Norwalk Transit District), Joe McGee (Business Council of Fairfield County), and others thought it was time to address this, especially in light of a survey undertaken by four foundations to probe the impediments to further workforce development which showed that transportation needs are the biggest impediment to further workforce development, well ahead of child care needs or any other obstacle.

Using the CACT survey as its springboard, 30 interested organizations formed the Transit for Connecticut Coalition. These groups included CACT, AARP, the League of Women Voters, 1000 Friends of Connecticut, the Kennedy Center, the Business Coalition of Fairfield County and the Connecticut Fund for the Environment. A more detailed inventory of Connecticut's statewide transit needs was undertaken by the Transit for Connecticut Coalition. With the Connecticut Fund for the Environment acting as the contracting agency, URBITRAN was hired to assess all transit needs statewide. This inventory of transit needs found that a complete transit system for Connecticut would require an additional annual expenditure of \$63,000,000 in operating funds and \$215,000,000 in one time capital funding. All 169 towns would have some level of transit service under this plan. The ridership projections attached to running a complete statewide transit service postulate another 28,000,000 annual transit riders would result, over and above the existing level of 35,000,000 bus trips statewide.

Kilcoyne said the URBITRAN study numbers were included in House Speaker Jim Amann's transportation bill. Ultimately, the new state budget included an additional \$5,000,000 in transit operating funds statewide in FY'09, above the \$3,000,000 included in the Governor's Transportation Initiative for transit in FY'08.

Several Commission members had questions for Kilcoyne which elicited further information on the following subjects. The bulk of new ridership growth in transit is occurring in off-peak hours and meeting new markets and demands other than work trips at traditional times. For the Bridgeport market, the key interregional links that would be of value would be service to Danbury and express service within the Coastal Link corridor. Two new services will begin in October using funding from the Governor's Transportation Initiative. These are service to Shelton via Bridgeport Avenue and service between Stratford and Derby along Route 110. Also, service is being increased on two of the five routes serving the Trumbull Mall.

Regarding the timeliness of reimbursements from ConnDOT to the transit districts, Kilcoyne noted the new reimbursement system got off to a rough start due to the scrutiny the contracts received at the Attorney General's office, much of which simply reflected a lack of understanding of the system. Now a bigger issue for the districts is simply not knowing how much funding to expect when GBTA or other districts draw up their budgets. Some of this uncertainty is due to waiting for the Legislature to set the funding levels. So overall there is a lot of uncertainty in developing budgets because funding levels are not known in advance.

Asked to compare ConnDOT's relationship with Connecticut Transit to its relationship with GBTA, Kilcoyne said the biggest difference he sees is with regard to unanticipated expenses, such as a big increase in fuel costs. Connecticut Transit is covered in these situations while other operators are not. Overall, GBTA has good relations with ConnDOT. Kilcoyne would like to have the ability to hold over unexpended funds from one budget year to the next. For example, GBTA had \$255,000 in unexpended funds last year which he would have preferred to carry over into this year rather than use it to stock up on supplies.

Previous to coming to Connecticut, Kilcoyne was the general manager of the Santa Clarita (Calif.) transit system, a system that he oversaw the formation of in 1992. It now carries over 3,000,000 riders annually in a town that was not laid out for transit.

Chairman Cheeseman noted that late reimbursement payments from ConnDOT still lead to some transit districts needing to borrow money to cover operations until the reimbursements are received. Middletown Area Transit is now using the town contributions share of its funding until it receives its check, otherwise it would be in that situation also. If the ConnDOT check is delayed beyond October, MAT will have to borrow funds. And Tom is still not sure how much money his system will receive. Initially he was told to expect a 3-5% increase over last year, but then that each transit system will be evaluated individually to assess its needs and funding.

Lastly, asked about his feelings on light rail transit systems, Kilcoyne said that the criticism of light rail transit is that it is not flexible. But this is also the strength of light rail transit; it will not move. So it has real estate benefits that buses do not possess. The jury is still out as to whether fixed guideway bus systems, i.e., busways, can also affect land use in the same way. Kilcoyne sees good ridership on California's light rail transit systems and also on the system in Denver which he just saw during a visit there for a conference. Denver's system carries 68,000 riders per day and the rail cars are packed. It is also seeing development around its rail stations.

Comments from the public

None.

Comments from Operating Entities

Richard Sunderhauf reported that 40 new New Flyer buses have been received by the Hartford Division of Connecticut Transit. Some are already on the road while

others are being outfitted with fareboxes. Also, the new buses have bicycle racks. The whole Hartford Division fleet will have bicycle racks by Thanksgiving. The racks work very well. The drivers do not have to get out of the bus as the cyclists can affix and remove their bicycles. Lastly, all Connecticut Transit drivers will be taking a new course on defensive driving.

Rick Schriener reported that Housatonic Area Regional Transit is working with MetroPool on a new marketing effort for the Route 7 LINK service between Norwalk and Danbury. MetroPool is also assisting HART in the update of its website.

Fred Riese reported that Marie Angelini, legal counsel for the Providence and Worcester Railroad, has reviewed and supplied comments on the latest version of the lease agreement between DEP, P&W and the Valley Railroad to give P&W access to the Old Saybrook Wye. He also reported that FHWA has approved the Route 11 Environmental Impact Statement for release but due to problems in the reproduction of the EIS, it has not yet been publicly released.

Russ St. John of P&W reported that DEP Bureau Chief Tom Morrissey had given an excellent talk at the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce meeting on the possible freight use of the Valley Railroad line. DEP is currently going after encroachments on its property along the ROW and is working with ConnDOT to plan for the restoration of the entire line. Any freight use of the line would be perhaps five years off.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman said the Transit for Connecticut Coalition is planning to conduct five regional fora and that he had received an invitation to the New Haven forum at the Hall of Records on October 2. He did not have the dates or locations for the other four fora.

He also presented the dates and locations for the Commission's four fall public hearings and solicited members to act as moderators for the hearings. Tom volunteered to act in that role for the Putnam hearing on September 11. The other hearings will be in Bristol (Sept. 25), Bridgeport (Oct. 10) and Torrington (Oct. 23). Mort Katz, Russ St. John and Fred Riese, respectively, volunteered to moderate those hearings.

Old Business

The only item of Old Business was a reminder to submit reimbursement request forms for the first half of the year to Fred Riese.

New Business

Russ St. John attended a meeting of the Arrigoni Bridge Study Committee this morning at the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. At this stage, the study is looking at a long list of ideas which will be shortened to a manageable number of alternatives over the next few months. Tom Cheeseman mentioned that the high volume

of traffic on the bridge and the resulting congestion affect the operations of his transit system and his schedules, especially when accidents occur.

Chris Adams, attending his first meeting since being appointed to the Commission, related that he has used multiple modes of transit and previously worked for the Valley Railroad for three years. He has a current and historical interest in transit, particularly trains.

Kevin Maloney attended a meeting yesterday with McLaughlin, DeVecchio and Casey, the firm contracted by DEP to do outreach work to the trucking community about the 3 minute idling limit for trucks. He mentioned that the first issue raised by the truckers at the meeting was the lack of adequate capacity at rest areas and service plazas to accommodate the trucks needing overnight parking.

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned seeing a TV story featuring Michael Sanders, ConnDOT's Transit and Ridesharing Administrator, and discussing the solar panels he installed at his home.

Rick Schreiner said Westchester County Airport is instituting a 30-space cell phone parking lot for use by those coming to pick up passengers arriving at the airport. The lot will be free of charge. This follows a growing trend, with JFK Airport having instituted such a lot in May. These lots follow a Commission recommendation contained in the last Annual Report for such a facility to be placed at Bradley Field.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 pm.