

AGENDA

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

September 4, 2008 - 1:30 PM

Legislative Office Building
Conference Room 1A
Hartford, Ct.

1. Approval of the August 7, 2008 meeting minutes.
2. Featured Speaker: Norman Garrett of the UCONN Transportation Institute
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 August 7, 2008

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven, Connecticut

Attendance: Members: Richard Carpenter, Tom Cheeseman, Terry Hall, Morton Katz, Bill Kelaher, Yvonne Loteczka, Kevin Maloney, Russell St. John, Richard Schreiner, Richard Sunderhauf, Alan Sylvestre, John Zelinsky. **Ex-officio members:** Connie Mendolia (DEP), Fred Riese (DEP), Susan Simmat (OPM). **ConnDOT staff:** Jon Foster, Dennis King. **Guests:** Donna Carter, Brooke Hoberman.

Chairman Cheeseman opened the meeting at 1:30 PM.

The minutes of the meeting of July 10 were approved with the following corrections: (1) Morton Katz indicated that his remarks under old business were not specific to jobs access services but all transportation to Bradley Field. (2) Richard Schreiner clarified that the number of studies done on the Danbury Branch Line since 1987 mentioned at the last meeting was actually the number of studies of the route 7 corridor. There are several studies of the Branch Line included in that number.

Featured Speaker

Donna Carter, Executive Director of the Greater New Haven Transit District (GNHTD) discussed the districts efforts in operation of alternative fuel vehicles.

In August 2002, GNHTD began operation of transit service using four battery powered trolleys. The 22 passenger trolleys were purchased with 80% Federal funds for \$250 thousand each; with the City of New Haven providing the 20% match. Operating cost for the vehicles was \$55/hour initially and is now \$63/hour. The trolleys are supposed to last for 12 years, but Ms. Carter was skeptical on that point.

The trolleys are powered by NiCad batteries, which have a life of four years and a replacement cost of \$70,000 per vehicle. The vehicles have a 90% reliability rate, but the care of the batteries requires an intensive maintenance regimen; GNHTD is fortunate to have a mechanic that is very dedicated in this regard. Another maintenance issue is the vehicle exterior, which is constructed of a composite material that does not take paint well. GNHTD estimates that the fleet has saved 27 thousand gallons of diesel fuel so far. The trolleys can operate a full 8 hour service day on a single charge.

Peak ridership was during the 2003-2004 year when 78,000 passenger trips were carried. Current ridership is about 60,000 per year. Summer months have lower ridership.

The trolleys run two distinct services. Primarily, they are used to provide a circulator route in downtown New Haven with 15 minute headways. A peak-period-only parking shuttle route is also provided. There are no fares charged on either service. Operations are funded

through the City of New Haven, United Illuminating and New Alliance Bank. This year they have gap funding from ConnDOT until October 2008.

GNHTD has been engaged in a hydrogen fuel cell bus project for the past two years. Current plans are to develop hydrogen powered and hydrogen/hydraulic hybrids in a small bus configuration before moving to fuel cells. The district is primarily responsible for the operation of ADA paratransit and dial-a-ride services in the New Haven region and is therefore most familiar with small body-on-chassis buses.

Comments from the public

Brooke Hoberman of Rideworks distributed new Shore Line East schedules that include new weekend service.

Comments from Operating Entities

Jon Foster of ConnDOT reported that ridership on the New Haven Line increased by 5.4% for the month of June 2008, and that ridership was up 5% year to date. Shore Line East ridership was up 18.5% for June 2008 and up 9.9% year to date. A new station was opened in Madison on July 14.

Bill Kelaher reported that the last Amtrak bargaining unit has ratified an agreement. For the first time in 10 years, all rail services in CT have current contracts.

Rick Schreiner is finishing up an operational analysis of HART's dial-a-ride service.

Fred Riese briefed the commission on the New London Intermodal Transit Facility study. The study, conducted by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, is funded by the DECD and FTA through ConnDOT. The study is examining all transportation services in New London, including ferry, cruise line and casino shuttles with an eye to a central facility to coordinate and connect all modes. There are two potential sites, one in the downtown area and a second in Ft. Trumbull. Public support is behind the downtown location. There are five steering committee meetings scheduled, the next being held in October.

Commissioner Riese also reported that DEP provided comments on the scope of the Phase II Danbury Branch Line study.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Cheeseman noted that Jeff O'Keefe, former CEO of GBTA, will be returning to Connecticut as the town manager of East Hampton.

Based on the quarterly transit district meeting last month, there is no clear indication on how ConnDOT will proceed with the issue of increased fuel costs to the transit districts.

Old Business

Rich Sunderhauf distributed copies of the July 31 issue of the *Hartford Advocate*. The paper features a cover story on the plight of the taxi industry.

Dick Carpenter distributed e-mail correspondence with regard to the Patriot Corridor. Chairman Cheeseman will get back to him on ConnDOT's position.

New Business

Terry Hall provided a clipping from the *New London Day* about a group advocating for more Shore Line East service. The movable bridge schedule is a roadblock here. Commissioner Riese indicated that the goal of the bridge schedule was to have a fixed dependable schedule of bridge openings, and that boaters would wait no more than 20 minutes for an opening.

Kevin Maloney exhibited a *Wall Street Journal* story from July 28 about the drop in highway funding engendered by lower gasoline use. According to the article, motorists drove 3.7% fewer miles in May 2008 as compared with the prior year.

Connie Mendolia reported that DEP and DOT were among 10 top award winners in the tri-state 5 million mile rideshare challenge. Connecticut commuters reduced their driving by 3.4 million miles, reducing 1500 tons of emissions and saving 153 thousand gallons of fuel between April 2007 and April 2008.

Tom Cheeseman indicated that ConnDOT received a grant to retrofit buses that don't have particulate traps. Middletown transit's buses are scheduled for retrofit under this program.

Morton Katz inquired as to the cost effectiveness of hydrogen fueled buses. Chairman Cheeseman responded that while operating costs for hydrogen fueled vehicles is much higher than standard Diesel, there is an environmental benefit. Russ St. John cited the example of the initial cost of pocket calculators in their early days of that technology as compared with current costs.

Chairman Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

