

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AGENDA

Thursday, October 6, 2005 - 1:30 PM

Union Station, Conference Room A
New Haven

1. Approval of the September 1, 2005 meeting minutes
2. Featured speaker: TBD
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, September 1, 2005

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1C
Hartford

VOTING MEMBERS

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

GUESTS

Stephen Troster

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Frederick Riese

ConnDOT STAFF

Michael Sanders
Peter Richther
Carmine Trotta
Cindy Gollareny

CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Minutes of September 1, 2005

Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1C
Hartford

Chairman Cheeseman called the meeting to order at 1:33 pm. The minutes of the meeting of August 4, 2005 were approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

REPORTS FROM OPERATING ENTITIES

Peter Richter reported that specifications are under development for the purchase of 342 new M-8 railcars. The committee is currently preparing to review the request for qualifications that are due by September 6th for interested construction firms. Additionally, the M-2 railcars are continuing to go through the critical system replacement program. Currently 41 pairs, or 82 cars, of the 242 have gone through the program and are operating at a very high rate of reliability.

Mr. Richter also reported that the shop facility has broken ground and is moving forward nicely. The running repair facility will handle 12 railcars at a time, which will enhance the repair effort substantially.

Lastly, Mr. Richter mentioned that the Department has asked Amtrak for an extension of the contract to operate Shore Line East to June 30, 2006. The current agreement terminates at the end of this year.

Carmine Trotta reported that ConnDOT is seeking funds for the refinement of the preliminary engineering and environmental studies for the Springfield Line. Additionally, the Rail Station Governance Study has been completed and distributed. On the Danbury Branch Study, Carmine stated that Phase I is in the process of being completed and the recommendation report is being sent out which will include options to be further evaluated in Phase II. Lastly, Mr. Trotta reported that the New Haven Line Branch Study, focusing on the Waterbury and New Canaan Branches, is currently in the consultant selection process.

Michael Sanders clarified that the new federal transportation bill will fund the Jobs Access Program for the full six years of the reauthorization. However, a formula program has been created resulting in CT receiving a lower level of funding. Additionally, three new programs of the bill will benefit CT: The New Freedom Program, Small Transit Intensive Cities Formula, and High Density Urbanized Area Program.

Mr. Sanders also reported that a draft of the program manual for the Municipal Grant Program (Dial-A-Ride bill) should be complete by the end of September and the request for proposals issued in October.

The new downtown circulator service in Hartford, called the “Star Shuttle,” will begin on September 13th. The two month demonstration project, funded by the ConnDOT operating budget, will run every 10 – 12 minutes on a loop of downtown Hartford. The target markets include visitors to Hartford, downtown employees, and convention attendees. The service will provide connections between the downtown hotels, restaurants, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Civic Center, the Convention Center and ultimately Adriaen’s Landing. This free service will run Monday – Friday, 7:00a.m. – 11:00p.m. and Saturday, 3:00 p.m. – 11:00p.m.

Sanders reported that ConnDOT will be getting just under \$1million of Homeland Security funding for Connecticut’s portion of Metro-North. New York got the lion’s share of the funding for the service, in large part because of Grand Central Terminal.

He also noted that ConnDOT had locked into fuel prices for the third quarter at \$1.63 per gallon. The operating budget was drawn up based on a price of \$1.95 per gallon. If fuel prices stay up, cost savings will need to be found elsewhere. If the snow removal budget has extra funds left in it after the winter, that could be tapped for some funding. Fortunately, diesel fuel costs have not tracked upward as much as gasoline. Tom Cheeseman mentioned that most transit districts had locked into fuel contracts last May for the year.

Lastly, Sanders said ConnDOT is looking to expand the size of its reserve bus fleet. As new buses replace older ones, retired buses that are in decent condition will be retained. Normally, 15 buses are kept in the reserve fleet statewide. ConnDOT has set no target for the size of the expanded reserve bus fleet, which will depend in part on how many older buses are in good condition. Ridership has been trending upward recently, even before the Hurricane Katrina-caused fuel price increases, so having more buses available may be useful for handling increased ridership or for other purposes or emergencies.

Fred Riese inquired if any commission members would be interested in receiving the newsletter pertaining to the progress of the service plaza and rest area study.

Richard Schreiner reported that August was a record breaking month for ridership on the Danbury-Brewster shuttle, 5,000 trips, up 12% over the same period last year and the Ridgefield-Katonah shuttle, 2,573 trips, up 23% over the same period last year. Ridership was also up on the Route 7 LINK buses operated by HART, and he suspects that is true for Norwalk Transit’s Route 7 LINK buses also.

OD BUSINESS

Fred Riese encouraged those members who have not submitted their reimbursement request forms for the period of January 1 – June 30 to do so as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

The fall public hearing schedule was distributed. The five hearings will be held: September 12 in New Haven, September 19 in New Britain, September 27 in Norwich, October 18 in Winsted, and October 26 in Norwalk. All hearings will begin at 7:30 P.M. Linda Blair, Morton Katz, Fred Riese, Tom Cheeseman and Dick Carpenter, respectively, volunteered to moderate these hearings.

Chairman Cheeseman adjourned the meeting at 2:23 p.m.