

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of December 1, 2011

ConnDOT Headquarters, Conference Room B
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Mort Katz, Russ St. John, Richard Sunderhauf, Ed McAnaney, Yvonne Loteczka, Alan Sylvestre, Robert Rodman, Chris Adams, Richard Caprenter. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEP). **ConnDOT staff:** James Redeker, Michael Sanders, Dennis King, Sherry Osterling. **Guests:** Terry Hall, Steven Troster, Kim Dunham, Donna Hamzy..

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:33 pm. The minutes of the meeting of November 3 were approved as written.

Featured Speaker

ConnDOT Commissioner James Redeker presented a detailed PowerPoint description of the 'new DOT'. He highlighted the following eight characteristics as hallmarks of the 'new DOT':

- Communication
- Customer service
- Transparency
- Partnerships
- Project delivery
- Performance and budget management
- Efficiency
- Innovation

ConnDOT consists of six bureaus: Finance and Administration, Highway Operations, Engineering and Construction, Aviation, Public Transportation, and Policy and Planning. In addition to being Commissioner of ConnDOT, Redeker is also bureau chief for the Bureau of Public Transportation and also heads the ports half of the former Bureau of Ports and Aviation.

Among the larger tasks on the department's planning horizon are the development of a new bridge maintenance program, looking at tolling options for Interstates 84 and 95, refilling the 'bin' of projects which are ready to go to construction, developing public/private partnerships, maintaining the existing system in a state-of-good-repair, and expanding the capacity of our transportation system. Mentioning several large projects specifically, Redeker noted that the Quinnipiac River Bridge project is currently on schedule and under budget, that the new Fairfield Metro railroad station opens tomorrow, and that two major projects down the road will be the replacement of the Interstate 84 Hartford Viaduct and the I-84/Route 8 interchange in Waterbury. The new Fairfield Metro rail station will provide an added 1,400 parking spaces. An RFP is now out for the new Stamford Station parking structure. Additional parking will also be constructed at West Haven with the new station there and at New Haven with the addition of a new garage at Union Station.

Other important initiatives cited by Redeker are the introduction of a new statewide branding scheme for all public transportation, which will be introduced when the New Britain Busway groundbreaking takes place, the continued addition of new M-8 card to the New Haven Line fleet, the development of a real time transit information system, and the increasing emphasis on transit-oriented development. A new port strategy is also being developed and a \$25,000,000 port improvement initiative is forthcoming. ConnDOT is also developing strategies for new freight rail investment. Redeker cited the good relationships and partnerships the department has developed with both the Class I railroads and the shortlines.

Redeker next covered several aviation related issues. The new Connecticut Airport Authority has now met twice. The Authority has no staff. It reports to Redeker. Renovation of Bradley Airport has been completed. Next up is the construction of a new Terminal B for which conceptual plans have now been developed. A new automated parking management and payment system had been implemented at Bradley and new food and drink concessions have been added to the terminals.

There is an on-going investigation into the October 29 tarmac incidents at Bradley where 29 flights were diverted by the FAA during the nor'easter snowstorm. Passengers on these planes experienced delays of up to seven hours before being able to de-plane. Redeker said he has worked on this issue every day since October 29. He cited the staff at Bradley as unsung heroes that day. The airport had no place to put additional planes and had so notified FAA but FAA never passed that notice on to controllers. The airport had almost no staff on duty at that time. The Connecticut National Guard set up cots at the airport to 1,800 people that night. Six Bradley staff had to unload and manually check all luggage from these planes since there was no power at the airport.

Moving on to the plowing of snow from our State highway system, Redeker said ConnDOT is currently short 50 drivers in its plowing crew. The department had been 100 drivers short but was just able to hire 50 drivers. With a full crew of drivers, each driver is responsible for keeping six miles of highway plowed, which is the normal standard for highway clearing. At present, we cannot meet that standard. Redeker noted that Connecticut is paying one-third of the plowing cost that Massachusetts is paying on a per mile basis. It is less expensive for ConnDOT to plow with its own forces than with contractors. The rate for contract plowing is a \$750 minimum plus \$220/hour. ConnDOT could get only 100 contract trucks during the last snowstorm at these rates, even though they compare favorably with the \$160/hour and no minimum guarantee that is paid by Rhode Island. During major storm events, ConnDOT plow drivers work 17 hours on, 3 hours off, 17 hours on, 3 hours off, etc. The contract drivers are expected to do the same.

Another area of resource shortages cited by Redeker is the area of bridge maintenance. We are not able to keep up on bridge maintenance needs. The number of state bridges needing some degree of repairs has increased from 531 in 2000 to 2,009 in 2011. A major initiative is needed in this area.

Construction projects and other capital initiatives were next discussed. Redeker pointed out that 30,000 jobs are created for every \$1 billion spent on major projects. Among the major projects underway or planned, Redeker listed the replacement of the Moses Wheeler and Quinnipiac River bridges, the new rail maintenance facility at New Haven Yard, the new M-8 rail cars, the replacement of the statewide bus fleet, the New Britain Busway, the Springfield Line passenger rail service (for which the draft environmental impact statement was sent to FRA today to free up \$120,000,000 in FRA funds), and highway service plaza redevelopment (two already completed, two more underway). Significant upcoming projects include the I-84 Aetna Viaduct replacement, the replacement of the I-84/Route 8 interchange in Waterbury, replacement of several moveable railroad bridges, and the rail signal and catenary system replacement.

Moving on to personnel issues, Redeker highlighted a need for successional planning for ConnDOT since the top organizational layers are very thin. Contrary to what is sometimes reported about State agencies being top heavy in structure, ConnDOT averages 25 employees per manager. Overall, at 2,791 current employees, the department is five hundred employees short of the full staffing level of 3,292. ConnDOT lost 189 employees through retirement this year. Of the current employees, 440 are eligible to retire in three years and 650 are retirement-eligible in five years. Of these, 159 are eligible to retire as of today.

On the State agency level, ConnDOT has key partnerships with DEEP, DECD and DMV. ConnDOT also enjoys strong partnerships with Connecticut Transit, Metro-North and Amtrak. At the federal level, ConnDOT interacts with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Redeker cited these federal agencies as functionally independent entities which are not well coordinated under USDOT. Redeker also has been meeting regularly with other New England commissioners of transportation to do regional transportation vision planning.

Additional new initiatives for ConnDOT include the development of performance measures, the execution of contracts within sixty days, the development of a new 5-year capital program, the automation of overweight permits issuance, the use of recycled roofing material in paving mixes, the implementation of LEED standards for construction, and the development of key partnerships with Connecticut's universities to establish training and internship programs. Redeker noted that ConnDOT hasn't hired any interns in years. He also mentioned that the first two construction bids for the New Britain Busway were under the estimates.

In response to questions from the Commission, Redeker made the following final comments:

- The State Rail Plan is ready to go. The only remaining steps are to schedule and hold the required legislative public hearings on the draft plan.
- The three critical areas where the department has acute staffing needs are 1) operations and maintenance, 2) engineering, and 3) public transportation.
- New Jersey Transit, Metro-North and the Long Island Railroad pay 1.8x the Connecticut rate for public transportation planners. New Jersey Transit has 100 transit planners. ConnDOT has 2.

- ConnDOT is working to get authorization to do design/build contracts. When it comes to getting new projects ready for construction, ConnDOT is hamstrung because it does not have sufficient engineering staff to design all its projects. Redeker said he is constrained because he can't contract this work out, he can't hire new staff, and he isn't currently allowed to enter into design/build contracts.

Comments from the Public

Terry Hall reported that the two Amtrak bridges being replaced in Stonington had the new spans put into place over last weekend. Work is continuing on some of the support structures around the new spans. Also, good progress is being made at the Niantic River Bridge. The new operator's tower at the bridge is pretty nearly completed. Terry also expressed his opinion that Westerly, RI would make a more logical eastern terminus for Shore Line East service that would New London. Westerly has better parking and would work better operationally.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John reported that the Providence & Worcester is working on a siding for a new customer in Portland.

Rich Sunderhauf distributed information on the new bus far schedule which goes into effect on January 1, 2012 and on route changes that went into effect on CT Transit on December 4. Sunderhauf also noted an article in the November CT Transit Connections newsletter which outlined defensive driving strategies for bus drivers to avoid pedestrian accidents.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney said he was surprised by the magnitude of the turnout for the Plainville public hearing and the level of opposition expressed to the New Britain Busway. He complimented Mike Sanders for his cool performance in a hostile environment.

Maloney said he was very impressed with the three commissioners (ConnDOT, DMW and Public Safety) who spoke at the Connecticut Motor Transport Association meeting of October 27. All gave excellent presentations.

Maloney also attended a presentation of the Connecticut Association of Railroads at the Legislative Office Building on November 16. The eight freight railroads presently operating in Connecticut were in attendance. A presentation was given detailing the rail system as it existed in Connecticut back in the 1950s as compared to what is presently operated. A number of questions were posed about the efficiency of the relatively small and fragmented rail network that exists today.

Lastly Kevin mentioned that former Commission Chairman Tom Cheeseman had fallen and broken his hip in late July. Tom is at home and convalescing but his progress has been slow.

Discussion of Annual Report Recommendations

An extensive discussion of the draft recommendations for the 2011 Annual Report followed. Eight recommendations were approved for inclusion in the Annual Report.

New Business

Kim Dunham of the Greater Hartford Transit District has applied to Governor Malloy's office to become a gubernatorial appointee to the Commission. She attended today's meeting to become acquainted with the work of the Commission.

Chairman Maloney closed the meeting at 4:07 pm.