

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of January 5, 2012

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Union Station, New Haven

Attendance: Members: Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Carpenter, Richard Sunderhauf, Robert Rodman, Chris Adams, Russ St. John. **Ex-officio members:** David LaVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEP). **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Kim Dunham, Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. The minutes of the meeting of December 1 were approved as written after noting that they contained two typos on page 4: ‘far’ instead of ‘fare’ and DMW instead of DMV.

Featured Speaker

Mary Tomoloni, executive director of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation, was unable to attend today’s meeting due to a family medical emergency. She conveyed her regrets about the cancellation on short notice.

Comments from the Public

Terry Hall reported that the Housatonic Railroad was unsuccessful in its application for a TIGER grant. He also mentioned that work on the replacement of two Amtrak bridges in Stonington is nearing completion and that construction barges have now been pulled away from the two new bridges. The new bridges offer marginal increases in marine clearance from the previous structures. Lastly, Terry mentioned that the catenary on the Northeast Corridor had been pulled down between Trenton and Philadelphia yesterday.

Reports from Operating Entities

Russ St. John reported great progress on the construction of a new freight siding in Portland for a new Providence & Worcester rail customer. The 1,000’ long siding will use concrete ties, indicating a serious investment in the site by this new shipper. Russ noted that P&W has committed much investment over the last decade to the Portland swing bridge, both in its mechanics and its physical structure. Russ also noted on-going efforts by the railroad and others to market the former Smurfit Stone facility in Portland which includes a 5-car interior unloading bay.

Richard Sunderhauf said the Connecticut Transit fare increases went into effect Sunday. Many riders don’t have the extra nickel, but compliance is improving day by day. Rich also mentioned that he had completed training on the new 66’ articulated bus. He feels it makes tighter turns than the 40’ bus. The articulated buses are already in use in the Stamford and New Haven Divisions of Connecticut Transit and will soon be in use in Hartford.

Dick Carpenter took Metro-North to today's meeting and reported that the new Fairfield Metro rail station is now open and that he noticed early construction activity for the new West Haven station.

Richard Schreiner said HART is getting new electronic fareboxes installed later this month. Among other features, the fareboxes will reject foreign coins, slugs and tokens. They can handle electronic fare payments. The fareboxes can also be set to reject larger bills, such as \$20 bills and above. HART is also getting four Orion 30-foot buses from Westchester County in a couple of weeks.

Kim Dunham said the Greater Hartford Transit District is moving into the 21st century with its fare collection. She noted that other transit districts across the country have instituted systems that can handle prepaid fares and electronic fare payment. GHTD hopes to move in that direction.

Terry Hall mentioned that Amtrak is moving toward electronic ticketing in the next six months and is currently testing this system on the Downeaster service. Rick said the Westport Transit District is now operating as a "no cash" system. Kim Dunham said that GHTD would always offer a cash payment option.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kevin Maloney mentioned an article about a massive model railroad display at the train museum in Essex for those who have an interest in such things. Chris Adams said that there has been a lot of publicity for this exhibit.

Maloney next reported that the California legislature had convened a special commission to evaluate the San Francisco to Los Angeles high speed rail corridor project. The final report of the commission was highly unfavorable to the project finding that the costs were likely underestimated and the ridership was likely overestimated. Further, the rail fares would exceed the air fare between those cities. Prospects for the California high speed rail project moving forward are now dim. Maloney noted that California and Florida were the two most prominent high speed rail projects nationally under the administration's high speed rail initiative and neither looks likely to move forward. Some discussion took place as to how this might apply to the Springfield Line high speed rail project but it was noted by several members that there are very few similarities between these efforts.

Lastly, Maloney read a letter received by Commission member Mort Katz from French president Nicholas Sarkozy appointing Mort as a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of the French Republic in recognition of his assistance in liberating France during World War II. The induction ceremony will be May 3 in New York City.

Old Business

Fred Riese reported that he had received the first set of seven reimbursement requests from Commission members for the expenses of the second half of 2011 and encouraged other members to submit their forms as soon as possible. Fred also mentioned that, in addition to the Housatonic Railroad's unsuccessful TIGER grant application, applications for improvements to

State Pier in New London and for a new Long Island Ferry terminal on the eastern side of Bridgeport Harbor were also unsuccessful. The only successful TIGER grant application in Connecticut was for access enhancements at the Stamford Transportation Center.

Lastly, Fred advised Russ St. John that he sees a pessimistic outlook for any progress on the access agreement for P&W use of the Old Saybrook Wye due to longstanding difficulties in the legal review of the revised lease agreement between DEEP and the Valley Railroad which is a necessary prerequisite to accommodate the access agreement between DEEP and P&W.

New Business

Fred mentioned that he had been in touch with Suffield First Selectman Ed McAnaney, a Commission member, concerning an abandonment petition submitted by the Connecticut Southern Railroad for 2.4 miles of the Suffield Subdivision rail line from the Bradley Field spur junction to the line's end. The Suffield town planner indicated the town may have an interest in acquiring the corridor for trail use.

Fred also said he and Russ would develop a list of recommended sites for the spring public hearings for consideration at the February meeting.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 2:42 PM.