

**Connecticut Public Transportation Commission**  
Minutes of March 1, 2012

Fourth Floor Conference Room  
Union Station, New Haven

**Attendance: Members:** Kevin Maloney, Richard Schreiner, Yvonne Loteczka, Richard Carpenter, Richard Sunderhauf, Robert Rodman, Russ St. John, Bill Kelaher, Alan Sylvestre. **Ex-officio members:** Fred Riese (DEEP). **ConnDOT staff:** None. **Guests:** Mary Tomolonius, Kim Dunham, Terry Hall, Jan Lindberg.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:42 pm. The minutes of the meeting of February 1 were approved as written.

**Featured Speaker**

Mary Tomolonius, executive director of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT), said that, as a native of Stamford, she became familiar with public transportation at a very young age. She moved to Canton 35 years ago, a town which has no public transportation other than two commuter buses. Canton is one of seventy Connecticut municipalities with little or no public transportation. Tomolonius says she loves to use public transportation and leave the driving to someone else. With the recent increases in gas prices, public transportation makes even more sense than previously. But other than the development of alternative fuels for transit vehicles, she does not feel that public transportation has expanded significantly since the previous gas crisis. She did note that bus ridership in Connecticut was up 5% in 2011.

Tomolonius next addressed the trend of transit-oriented development (TOD). She just attended a forum on TOD yesterday at the Legislative Office Building. She said 4,000 TOD projects have been built or are currently under development nationwide. She specifically cited the 360 State Street development in New Haven as a good example of TOD. Thirty to forty percent of the residents of 360 State Street do not own cars and therefore are fully dependent on proximal public transportation services.

Four other recent initiatives were mentioned by Tomolonius as good developments. She lauded the designation of 'quiet cars' on Metro-North trains and appreciates the peace and quiet these cars offer. Other notable developments include the addition of articulated buses to the Connecticut Transit fleet, the implementation of Google Transit trip planning by Connecticut Transit, and the \$5.7 million grant for a fuel cell at the Connecticut Transit New Haven Division garage in Hamden.

Tomolonius also noted the award of the Federal Transit Administration Full Funding Agreement to ConnDOT for the New Britain Busway last November. CACT fully supports the development of the busway and she noted that CEOs from Hartford businesses as well as the president of Central Connecticut State University support this project. She said ConnDOT has done a good job with its website on the busway which provides much useful information.

Next mentioned by Tomolonius was the effect of recent cuts in the Section 13b-38bb State Matching Grant program for municipal paratransit services. Funding for this program has gone from \$5 million per year to \$3 million annually in this budget. She mentioned several examples of cuts in service caused by this reduced funding. North East Transportation had to cut 32 hours per week of service and no longer offers service on Monday or Saturday. The Norwalk Transit District had to cut funding to three social service agencies forcing those agencies to reduce the amount of service they offer. The Transportation Association of Greenwich had extended service to clients in Stamford but that service had to be cut. The Estuary Transit District eliminated Saturday Dial-a-Ride service and Saturday dispatching, and cut the hours of Monday Dial-a-Ride service. Lastly, Manchester reduced its level of service by one hour per day.

Tomolonius noted that, whereas rail commuters seem to have a fairly effective political voice, bus commuters have virtually no political voice.

Tomolonius also expressed her concern about the prospects for substantial cuts in federal spending for transit support. The outlook for transit's prospects in the next surface transportation bill is not encouraging.

Patience is a virtue that Tomolonius sees as absolutely necessary for anyone working in the public transportation field. Public transportation proponents typically need to wait a long time to see the projects they advocate come to fruition.

A last point made by Tomolonius was that she sees much value in the Transit 101 travel training course offered by The Kennedy Center to instruct travelers, especially those with disabilities, on the use of public transit services.

### **Comments from the Public**

Terry Hall reported that good progress is being made on the new Niantic River Bridge and that all work on Amtrak's two bridges in Stonington has been completed and all construction equipment has been removed.

Jan Lindberg mentioned that today would be the last day of a Foxwoods-run bus service from Norwich to the casino which supplied transportation for 40 casino employees. By and large, these people will now be unemployed. Kevin suggested this was likely tied to the big drop-off in business at the casino, with a resulting need for fewer employees. Alan Sylvestre mentioned that the State-supported bus service from Hartford to Foxwoods that had been run using Jobs Access funding terminated last year.

### **Reports from Operating Entities**

Richard Sunderhauf discussed a new bus stop to be constructed at the Buckland Hills Mall in Manchester. Following some complaints about disruptive or unruly crowds waiting for the bus near the Macy's store, the mall owners proposed to construct a new bus stop approximately 400' from the mall on the perimeter road. Two shelters will be added at this stop, Rich said. He also noted that this move eliminated a potential rest room stop for bus drivers on

this route. Alan Sylvestre felt that there was not a lot of thought or planning that went into this proposal.

Richard Schreiner distributed copies of a new map and schedule for the HART Jobs Access service. He also noted that HART had just received four 2003 Orion V buses from Westchester County, who had a spare bus ratio that was considered unacceptable by FTA. So four of its buses were transferred to HART and 15 to New Hampshire. Also HART has just installed new electronic fare collection equipment on its vehicles.

Rich Sunderhauf mentioned that he had heard that the New Britain Busway was again before DEEP for permits. Fred Riese explained that oral arguments on the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Permit were being heard today. This step represents a final opportunity for busway opponents to make their case that this permit for the busway should not be issued.

Russ St. John said the new rail siding in Portland has almost been completed. This will allow Providence and Worcester to provide service to a new customer there.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Maloney reported on the CACT legislative breakfast held February 23 in the Old Judiciary Room of the State Capitol. Commissioner Redeker was the featured speaker. He had mentioned, among other topics, that there are currently 2,000 bridges in Connecticut needing repairs. Kevin also reported that Redeker anticipated that ConnDOT will be relying on Federal funds for up to 81% of its future capital budget. Kevin thought this was concerning due to the potential for federal budget cuts. Related to this, Bill Kelaher mentioned talk of the possible removal of public transit support from the federal transportation bill, with such funding to be placed elsewhere in the budget but not necessarily tied to any on-going funding source. Use of funds accrued in the pension fund for federal employees has been one source of funding that has been discussed.

Kevin mentioned a figure of \$10 billion as given by Commissioner Redeker to fund our current transportation infrastructure needs.

Lastly, Kevin mentioned that the New Haven Line set a new ridership record in 2011 when it carried 38.2 million riders, which was up 2.6% from 2010 levels. The previous record had been set in 2008, when 37.9 million riders were carried.

### **Old Business**

Fred Riese reported that all reimbursement requests for the second half of 2011 had now been reviewed and processed.

### **New Business**

Dick Carpenter noted that he sees much progress on the new West Haven Metro-North railroad station.

Fred Riese mentioned that Commissioner Redeker, at the CACT breakfast, listed the Hartford Viaduct project on Interstate 84 right after mentioning the Quinnipiac River Bridge

replacement being on schedule and under budget. Fred also mentioned that in a subsequent discussion he had with ConnDOT staff, he was told that two RFPs for the design and environmental work on the Hartford Viaduct have been prepared.

Fred also listed the schedule for the Commission's three spring public hearings in Waterbury (April 17), Storrs (April 24) and Bridgeport (May 16). Fred, Yvonne and Rick, respectively, volunteered to moderate these three hearings.

The public portion of the meeting was closed at 3:04 pm and the Commission convened in executive session to discuss the Governor's proposal to include it on a list of 25 boards and commissions which he proposes to eliminate.