

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of October 2, 2014

Union Station, Fourth Floor Conference Room
New Haven, Connecticut

Attendance: Member: Bill Kelaher, Richard Sunderhauf, Chris Adams, Mort Katz, Yvonne Loteczka, Alan Sylvestre, Ed McAnaney. **Ex-officio members:** David LeVasseur (OPM), Fred Riese (DEEP). **Guests:** Kim Dunham and Al Naudus (Greater New Haven Transit District).

In the absence of Chairman Kevin Maloney and Vice Chairman Rick Schreiner, Fred Riese called the meeting to order at 1:41 pm. The minutes of the meeting of September 4 were accepted as written.

Featured Speakers

Al Naudus, Operations Manager for the Greater New Haven Transit District, explained the various types of services provided by the District. The largest program run by the District is the ADA complementary service provided to any disabled rider whose trip origin is within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a CT Transit fixed route. The District provided 111,527 trips in FY 2013/2014.

A second program run by the District is the Regional Rides Program. When the State began the State Matching Grant program in 2006, 12 New Haven area municipalities chose to pool their resources and operate a single regional system through the Greater New Haven Transit District. The 12 towns involved in the program are Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, New Haven, North Branford, Orange, Wallingford, West Haven and Woodbridge. A 25% cut to the State Matching Grant program in 2008 resulted in the elimination of Sunday service and of some special purpose trips. During FY 2013/2014, 16,615 trips were provided through the Regional Rides Program.

Dial-a-Ride transportation is provided in a 10-town region (all of the above towns except Guilford and Wallingford). The District provided 1,917 Dial-a-Ride trips in FY 2013/2014.

The District and Metro Taxi have partnered to operate the Metro Access Program, a subsidized taxi voucher program, using New Freedom funds. Under this program, an eligible rider can purchase a \$100.00 taxi service voucher for \$50.00 with the New Freedom funds used to make up the balance. Any ADA-eligible rider may use this service. Metro Taxi was chosen as the service provider because it has the IT infrastructure to track all rides taken and handle the pre-paid fare card system. There were 1,233 Metro Taxi New Freedom trips in FY

2013/2014, including 405 wheelchair trips. A similar program is run in the Hartford area.

Another service operated by the District is the senior center elderly transportation for New Haven, West Haven, and Hamden. The District provided approximately 10,000 rides in each of those three towns in FY 2013/2014. Lastly, the District operates two shopping service shuttles using New Freedom funds. The extended Dial-a-Ride program serves several senior housing developments from which it provides trips to Walmart, Stop and Shop, ShopRite, and other stores. The Hamden Shopping Shuttle provides the same type of service but serves only Hamden housing sites and shopping locations and is currently operating only on Thursdays. These services provided 3,266 and 614 trips in FY 2013/2014, respectively.

Kim Dunham, Deputy Director of the Greater New Haven Transit District, said the District provided 187,000 total trips last year using its fleet of 59 vehicles and its staff of 120. The District currently serves as grantee for an alternatives analysis study that will review existing bus service in the New Haven area. Project partners include the Federal Transit Administration, ConnDOT, City of New Haven and CT Transit.

The District staff and vehicle fleet are housed at two facilities, one of which it owns and the other it leases. Both facilities are at capacity now, and the District is looking at the possibility of leasing additional indoor space to store some vehicles. At the same time, it is looking to build a new, consolidated, state-of-the-art facility for its daily operations. Many sites in the area have been evaluated and two adjoining parcels in North Haven have now been selected as the preferred site. A facility of 108,000 square feet, which could accommodate up to 90 vehicles, is proposed, including 96,000 square feet of vehicle storage/indoor fueling and bus washing space and 12,000 square feet of administrative space. The District's architectural and engineering consultant made a presentation to ConnDOT on this proposal several weeks ago. Both FTA and ConnDOT have indicated their support of this project.

The District recently procured new dispatching software to better coordinate rides as well as vehicles and efforts are underway to maximize the effectiveness of that software tool. Al Naudus mentioned that one goal is to consolidate trips leaving from the same origin with similar destinations. The District would also like to get an exemption to allow its vehicles to have access to the Wilbur Cross Parkway (Route 15) which would save the District a lot of gasoline and mileage which would ultimately save the State money.

GNHTD is also planning to get its hydrogen-powered bus ("HyRide") back on the road shortly. The hydrogen-powered demonstration bus was first operated in

2011. This innovative FTA Research and Development project was intended to develop, test and potentially commercialize hydrogen powered transit vehicles. Temporary funding issues led to cessation of service but the District hopes to run it again shortly, as additional funds have recently been secured to continue the R&D project.

GNHTD Director Donna Carter established the GNHTD Foundation, a section 501(c) non-profit entity, several years ago to raise money to fund elderly and disabled transportation services outside of the District's normal service area and hours. A recent initiative was undertaken to cover the 40c increase in transit fares that went into effect in January 2014. The "It Makes Cents" campaign will raise money to be used as a direct offset to the mandated 40c per ride fare increase, resulting in a rolled back charge of \$2.60 for the riders.

Lastly, the District also serves as grantee for a regional bus shelter program that is available to municipalities in the New Haven area. The style of shelter erected will be at the option of the host community. Shelters will be constructed with an 80/20 federal/local match.

Reports from Operating Entities

Richard Sunderhauf mentioned some changes that went into effect on the CT Transit system in mid-September including a new numbering system for bus routes. Modifications are also continuing at the Hartford Division facility to accommodate a new dispatch center to be used for the *CTfastrak* service.

Chairman's Report

In the absence of Chairman Kevin Maloney, Fred Riese reported that Francis Pickering, Transportation Planner at the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, has expressed an interest in membership on the CPTC.

Fred also mentioned that he had attended the Connecticut Transportation Institute's t-HUB workshop September 24th at the UConn Business School in downtown Hartford along with Rick Schreiner, Alan Sylvestre, and Kim Dunham. The workshop focused on new technologies available to assist in public transportation operations and on gathering of data to support transit operations and administration. The t-HUB database of information on the Hartford and New Haven Division operations showing populations served by income level, percent poverty level, minority population, average transit vehicle age, and other parameters for each route in both systems was also demonstrated with a hands-on session for attendees to access the databases.

Fred also reported that the longstanding effort to craft a license agreement to formalize the Providence and Worcester Railroad's access to the lower end of the Valley Road Railroad property in Old Saybrook has finally come to a successful

conclusion with signing by the Attorney General's Office on September 18th. This agreement was a condition in the Federal Railroad Administration's Record of Decision on the Amtrak Electrification EIS. It only took seventeen years to get an agreement crafted and signed.

Lastly, Fred mentioned that, like Hartford and New Haven, a bus routing study will be undertaken in Waterbury. It will look not only at routes but at the whole structure of the local bus system, at alternate pulse point locations other than the Green, and rider amenities such as shelters and restrooms, both on the Green and elsewhere.

September Public Hearings

Fred gave a brief update on the Commission's three public hearings to date. At the September 9th hearing in Hartford, Mario Marrero of CRCOG spoke about the bus shelter program for the Hartford region, and CRCOG's Lia Yim spoke on the route study being conducted for the Hartford Division of CT Transit and on the bicycle and pedestrian count project. A bus rider provided useful testimony on the need for public information on bus schedules and on the value of various bicycle rack locations in downtown Hartford.

The Torrington hearing focused on the need for a new bus storage and maintenance facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District and on concerns by the Torrington Historic Preservation Trust that the selected facility site is a poor one because of the need to demolish the former Hendey Machine Company forge if the proposed site is used.

The Waterbury hearing drew a large crowd of both speakers and attendees. The value of the local evening bus service was a major topic, as was the importance of the UPass Program for Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) students. Several NVCC students testified that they would not be able to attend the college were it not for these programs. On a related note, the need was expressed by the academic dean as well as several students for a shuttle bus service connecting the Waterbury NVCC campus and the rapidly-growing Danbury NVCC campus, which currently has 1,100 students. The value of the Naugatuck River Greenway and its connection to downtown Waterbury were highlighted, but some security concerns about businesses along the Greenway were raised. The upcoming Waterbury bus route study was also discussed.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Fred mentioned that Jim Cameron's last newsletter *Talking Transportation* contains several political endorsements including former CPTC member Gail Lavielle and Senator Toni Boucher, and also Governor Malloy.

Lastly, Fred mentioned that Mario Marrero of CRCOG will be the speaker at the Commission's November 6th meeting.

Fred closed the meeting at 3:00 pm.