

Connecticut Public Transportation Commission
Minutes of May 3, 2012

GBT Bridgeport Intermodal Center
710 Water Street, Bridgeport

Attendance: Members: Richard Carpenter, Morton Katz, Yvonne Loteczka, Kevin Maloney, Connie Mendolia, Robert Rodman, Russ St. John, Richard Schreiner and Richard Sunderhauf. **ConnDOT staff:** Dennis King. **Guests:** Douglas Holcomb and Steven DeMichele, GBT.

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 1:40pm. The minutes of the meeting of April 5 were approved as written. Morton Katz noted that page 5 of the Waterbury hearing minutes referred to “complimentary” paratransit instead of “complementary” paratransit.

Featured Speaker

Douglas Holcomb and Steven DeMichele provided an overview of recent accomplishments at GBT. Mr. Holcomb began the presentation by noting he was a CPTC commissioner in 2000-2001, and has presented to the commission on 3 occasions. This time the focus is what has been accomplished as opposed to plans for the future.

GBT operates a fixed route system with 19 routes with 47 buses in the peak. Demand response service is managed by the agency, but contracted out to Veolia Transportation. In addition to the intermodal facility, GBT has an 80,000 square foot garage, 200 employees and a \$21 million annual operating budget. Farebox recovery on fixed route is 39-40%. The system has 5.4 million boardings annually; about 19,000 trips per weekday. Ridership is up 6%.

Until 2007, only tokens or cash were accepted as fares on buses. In 2007 the ziptrip pass program was created. This electronic pass program allows for unlimited rides for 90 minutes, all day, all week, or all month. These passes can be used on any bus traveling in any direction. There are no transfer tickets. GBT charges half fare to seniors and persons with disabilities throughout the day. They have the highest base fare in the state at \$1.75.

The 10,000 square foot intermodal center opened in 2007. Pedestrian bridges allow for easy connections to MTA service and to Harbor yard. Peter Pan and Greyhound also serve the facility. Regular staff includes security, operations supervisors, cleaners and customer service. The construction of the facility, administered by the city of Bridgeport, was a 26 million project financed by state and federal sources. GBT has a 30 year lease with the city.

When the new center opened, service was restructured to improve coverage and reduce duplication. At the time, data was collected by staff observations using Palm Pilots. The system now uses automatic passenger counters and an AVL system which allows for continuous monitoring of schedule adherence and ridership.

Over the years, the name of the agency has changed from Greater Bridgeport Transit District to Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, to Greater Bridgeport Transit. At the same time

the service changes and new passes were introduced in 2007, they went through a rebranding process with a new logo and signage. GBT developed a guide that includes all route maps and schedules in a single document. They are developing mobile apps to go along with the AVL system for customer information. Bus stop signs were also redesigned and installed.

The system received the first grant in the state for an AVL/advanced communication system. The grant included on-board, maintenance and support equipment. The system uses Transit Master AVL software. The AVL is used as a tool for dispatch, maintenance and finance that allows for monitoring schedule adherence, provides real-time locations of buses, next bus information at stops and historical logs of bus movement. The information is available to customers online and at the transit terminal; a mobile app is in development. Buses all have internal scrolling signs and automated announcements that identify major time points.

GBT still produces paper schedules and has an active and diverse advisory committee.

The AVL has been a big help with budget issues. Surgical reductions in service have been made with minimal impact to riders and improvements to productivity.

The website includes a trip planning feature fed by the AVL system. It is a beta version with some issues, but it is accessed 1500-1600 times per month by riders. Having the AVL complicates the process if changes to routes or stops are made as the system has to be modified.

As a way of improving outreach and transparency, GBT moved into social media in 2009 and has active Facebook (almost 600 followers), Twitter and Flickr accounts. They have found them an effective way to attract media. Although there is no cost to creating the accounts, messages have to be timely and care in crafting them is necessary.

After the intermodal facility was opened, there was some criticism of the weather protection afforded by the stylized canopies next to the bus bays. In response, heated shelters were installed at strategic locations at the terminal. The system is in the process of replacing 80 (non-heated) shelters throughout the service area.

15 new Gillig buses are expected in June. Mr. Holcomb noted that although they were not hybrids, pollution reduction technology is such that the 15 buses produce as much emissions as one of the buses they are replacing. GBT has 2 diesel-electric hybrids that were purchased through an order for CT TRANSIT. The paratransit fleet is also being replaced. 24 buses will be purchased, all branded the same. The paratransit bus fleet has never been uniformly marked before.

A second major hub in the system is at the Trumbull Mall. The plaza there will be rebuilt to allow for improved bus turning radii, which will substantially reduce the time required to serve the facility. About \$9,000 in fuel will be saved annually through these improvements.

The GBT operations facility will be expanded to accommodate 90 buses. At present, 63 vehicles are stored there. The expansion will include a green roof and the installation of photovoltaic cells.

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from Operating Entities

Rich Sunderhauf noted that new route and schedule changes went into effect a week ago Monday. Operators have started their new runs.

Russ St. John reported that P&W is working with ConnDOT on a tie replacement program for all of the freight railroads in CT. Ties on the New Haven Line are being replaced and about 60% are suitable for reuse on the freight railroads.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Maloney noted that involvement of legislators to introduce an amendment would be required in order to save the commission at this stage. Bill 5027 is on the House calendar.

Old Business

None

Report on the Waterbury Hearing

The Waterbury Hearing was well attended and a good article appeared in the *Republican-American* the following day. A major issue that came out was the lack of public restrooms on the Green for riders. Local businesses are inundated with people looking for facilities when buses arrive.

New Business

There was discussion regarding the next, probably final, meeting of the CPTC. It was suggested that the next meeting take place at a restaurant, TBD.

Chairman Maloney adjourned the meeting at 2:52pm. Messrs.' Holcomb and DeMichele provided a tour of the intermodal facility following the meeting.