

Darienite

News for Darien

<https://darienite.com>

ConnDOT's New Commish Should've Been Talking to More Commuters by Now: Cameron on Transportation

Author : David Gurliacci

Categories : [Opinion](#), [Transportation](#)

Tagged as : [Cameron on State Transportation Policy 2019](#), [Cameron on Trains 2019](#), [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2019](#), [ConnDOT 2019](#), [Connecticut Department of Transportation 2019](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column 2019](#), [Joseph Giulietti](#), [Metro-North 2019](#)

Date : May 16, 2019

A good boss cares about his customers. He wants to keep them happy and actively seeks out their feedback. Such is not the case at the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

The CDOT's new Commissioner, Joseph Giulietti, has missed several important opportunities to interface with riders in his first 100 days in office. Not that he hasn't been working. He just hasn't been meeting with

customers.

Remember that Giulietti came to his new job after a stint as President of Metro-North and in that role he held a number of “meet-the-commuter” events, handling himself quite well in answering questions and defusing angry riders.

A year ago, after leaving the railroad, he became a consultant to T Y Lin’s study of how to improve running times on the railroad to achieve the “[30-30-30](#)” dream espoused by the Fairfield Business Council’s Joe McGee. That \$400,000 study, using Giulietti’s input, said it could be done.

But if it was going to be so easy to cut running time from Stamford to Grand Central (now 51 minutes at best) to just a half-hour, you’d think he’d have done so as president of the railroad. But he didn’t.

Instead, as of the new timetable, running times were [increased by as much as 16 minutes](#), angering and confusing commuters. But the Commissioner has been silent.

He did accept an invitation to attend the April 17th meeting of the official Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, only to cancel on short notice. Council Chairman Jim Gildea says a staffer promised to reschedule but has never called back.

Days later the new timetable came out, including [a nasty surprise for Waterbury branch riders](#). Their usual 4:42 train from GCT arriving in Bridgeport at 5:58 used to connect to their Waterbury train. But under the new timetable the Waterbury shuttle leaves four minutes *before* the New York train arrives. The next train wouldn’t be for three more hours.

Alternatively, would-be Waterbury riders could make the 6:03 p.m. Bridgeport connection if they left GCT at 4:11 p.m. Try explaining that to your boss.

How could such a mistake in scheduling be made? Where was Giulietti?

When the Commuter Council asked for answers, they got excuses. Not until US Senator Chris Murphy wrote a letter to MNRR was [the mistake corrected](#).

Then, on Thursday, April 26 Commissioner Giulietti and Metro-North President Catherine Rinaldi took a train ride. Last December Hearst reporter Jacqueline Smith had [challenged them to ride the Danbury line](#) to see the current conditions.

Accepting the “invitation,” the Giulietti and Rinaldi [boarded the post rush-hour 9:05 a.m. train](#) from Danbury, but only after a meet-and-great with that city’s mayor Mark Boughton, who must have known they were coming. At Bethel, First Selectman Matt Knickerbocker came aboard to lobby for transit-oriented-development.

Darienite

News for Darien

<https://darienite.com>

Smith interviewed the pair all the way to South Norwalk and [wrote of the trip](#). But when I asked Smith what had happened when the railroaders talked with commuters, she said they didn't. They were too busy being interviewed and lobbied, I guess.

That's sad.

When they finally had a chance to ride the rails and talk to their customers, Giulietti and Rinaldi turn fact-finding into a PR photo op.

Giulietti's predecessor as commissioner, Jim Redeker, was a constant presence in public (and to his employees). He attended numerous Commuter Council, business group and community meetings.

But where's Joe?

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.