



Minutes

Wednesday, February 17, 2016 – 6:00 PM
Conference Room
Greater Hartford Transit District
1 Union Place, Hartford, CT

Attendees: John Hartwell, Jim Gildea, Terry Borjeson, Laura Cordes, Stephanie Gregerman, John Austin, Robert Lockwood, Sue Prosi (phone), Jeff Maron (phone)

Council Members Absent: Terri Cronin, Mitch Fuchs, Mark Randall, Roger Cirella, Mike Mahoney (1 vacant seat)

Also present: Carl Jackson, John Bernick, and Rich Andreski of DOT
Garrett Eucalitto, Undersecretary for Transportation, Office of Policy and Management, Governor's office
Paul Mounds, Jr., Senior Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Governor's office

Jim Gildea, Chair, opened the Council meeting at 7:00 PM.

Minutes of 01/20/2016. Terry Borjeson made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by John Austin. Motion approved.

Public Comments:

None

Council business: Laura nominated Stephanie Gregerman for Council secretary. No other nominations. Stephanie voted to secretary.

Governor's legislative rail/transportation priorities

Last year the governor embarked on transportation vision with a focus on rail, including how to expand the important of rail to the northern part of the state. Goal: robust rail line in all areas of CT.

The focus will be on work that has been on the shelf, like the Norwalk walk bridge and the five movable bridges.

The governor assembled a transportation finance group to understand how we can afford all the work, which started the lockbox conversation. Basically, the intention of the lockbox is to ensure that funds dedicated to transportation (in the transportation fund) are spent on transportation. Two-thirds of the Governor's proposed \$100 billion, 30 year transportation initiative fund will be used to repair and maintain existing structures; one third will be used for new work and equipment, with 1.7 billion devoted to rail. Generally, funds are divided up into paying debt, staff, transit service, and rail service.

The sources for the transportation fund are listed in statute 13b-61.

According to Mr. Eucallito, the "lockbox" didn't pass last year because there were a lot of legislators absent and some felt that a "political" lockbox wasn't strong enough. The governor is approaching it this year with a clean slate and working harder to reach thresholds.

What will the money be spent on?

Waterbury is a focus. Waterbury and Danbury are getting new cars.

More M8: funding includes additional equipment. How many purchased not yet available. It's a this-year issue.

How can the rail council help? Council has a network to get messages out and we provide insight into rail. A lot of members of the state transportation committee who have not been on rail. We can facilitate open communication.

Lockbox hearing for Transportation Committee is Feb. 29. Mr. Eucallito encouraged the Council to submit testimony.

How are projects funded? They are usually paid for by bond funds or federal funds. Part of Gov. plan, use money to pay for projects instead of bond projects, to help reduce long-term debt.

Can the DOT handle rail when there's so much highway work planned? DOT is right sized to cover both rail and highways. High-speed rail is largely a federal project. And they've already spun off ports and airports.

Mr. Mounds commented that they're seeing a preference for public transit; people moving in this direction.

Mr. Eucallito is leading processes in proactive getting agencies to prepare for climate change. Partnering with UConn on "climate change adaptation."

Hartford line updates

Mr. Bernick updated the Council on the Hartford line.

With the addition of 155M of state bonds and a not-to-exceed (no penalties involved, but they eat additional costs) from Amtrak, the project is fully funded. ConnDOT owns

stations, Amtrak is doing the track work. The work is going well. A lot of the road bed is prepared; want to lay track in the spring. Berlin pedestrian bridge is up. Planning 17 RT daily trains. 25 a day was original vision, envisioned a few overlapping services. Once infrastructure in place, the capacity will increase. The line will be integrated with other train lines. Jan. 2018 is the schedule guarantee. This is to Springfield as well.

CT*rail* is the logo for all rail lines, including Hartford.

Details on the line were provided in a handout and newsletter (attached)

The line uses the more economical concrete ties.

ConnDOT will have a confirmed provider in late 2016.

Stations are boarding platforms, with no bathrooms. They would rather see development happen around the stations. Platforms will be heated, like Guilford.

SLE M8 testing status

Negotiations continue with Amtrak. ConnDOT requires access rights to test trains. The request is still with Amtrak after about a month. There are two parts to the request: access to track and insurance. Once the request is approved by Amtrak, it will need signatures from DOT. So, bottom line: They are not yet at next level of testing. Also testing software for PTC.

What's the plan for pulling cars from MN? The plan is still being formalized. Looking at options with MN. Looking at both diesel and electric. Hartford needs four train sets. SLE has 14 sets. Might look at a service provider to lease equipment.

Stamford Garage

Project is ongoing and going well partly because of good weather. Original date was May, looks like they're ahead of schedule. Able to restore 270 spaces and could get an additional 40 spaces.

Other Stamford work

Sliding glass door in the tunnel under the road at the Stamford station has been replaced and widened, acting on input of Council member Sue Prosi. They're going to take a look at the overpass that Jeff Maron mentioned and will do a partial pass on potholes.

The TOD transportation center is in negotiation and DOT cannot reveal status.

John Hartwell suggested signage on MN cars to submit feedback, which would include the car number.

Update on year 1 of the 5 year rail ramp-up transportation plan

Bonding is the initial step in the pipeline. All the projects have been bonded. (see handout I). John Hartwell. asked if we could get a quarterly update.

NHL real-time audio and video not yet bonded. Looking at tiered approach depending on the station. Also use mobile devices. Council asked ConnDOT to put together a presentation on this for the future.

Noted: DOT is hearing us and making adjustments. We received from DOT the customer service report and it was distributed.

Walk bridge replacement (attachment)

New bridge will not be a swing bridge. The preferred bridge design would have two tracks on one span and two tracks on another. A lift span could be an option (like over the Harlem River).

There will be a very deliberate program to minimize impact to rail customers. There will be an impact to river usage.

Looking at \$700 or \$900 million project. The original project, budgeted for \$650 million, included only the bridge. The new "Walk Project" will be broader, with both interlocking tracks and a rail yard. Council suggested DOT may want to speak to the broader project publicly rather than appearing to have underestimated budget significantly.

They are trying to watch budget.

Transportation fund "Lockbox"

John Hartwell made the motion to support the STF Lockbox and authorize a Council member to provide testimony to the Transportation Committee. It was seconded by Terry Borjeson.

Laura Cordes and Terry Borjeson asked to look at the statue and let the Council know if there's anything we should comment on.

Jim and Terry will work to be at the Transportation Committee public hearing on Monday, February 29.

Motion to adjourn raised by John Austin and seconded by Terry Borjeson at 7:56pm.