

MEETING MINUTES

SUBJECT: Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Needs and Feasibility Study
(Project 170-2562)

MEETING DATE: February 27, 2009

TIME: 1:00 – 3:00 PM

LOCATION: Media Room, Lower Level, Derby City Hall, Derby, CT

PURPOSE: Regional and Local Officials Outreach Meeting–Valley Council of Governments (VCOG), Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCNV), and Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA)

ATTENDEES:

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Karen A. Wilson	Town of Beacon Falls	203-729-4340	ksomwil@aol.com
Tony SanAngelo	Town of Beacon Falls	203-735-1823	tsanangelo@aps-insurance.com
Kevin Taylor	Waterbury Development Corporation	203-346-2607	taylor@wdconline.org
Mark Lauretti	Mayor, City of Shelton	203-924-1555x11	shelton01@cityofshelton.org
Anthony Staffieri	Mayor, City of Derby	203-736-1450	t.staffieri@derbyct.gov
Mike Bronko	Mayor, Town of Naugatuck	203-720-7008	mbronko@naugatuck-ct.gov
Keith Rosenfeld	Town of Naugatuck	203-720-3396	krosenfeld@naugatuck-ct.gov
Rick Dunne	VCOG	203-735-8688	rdunne@valleycog.org
David Elder	VCOG	203-735-3685	delder@valleycog.org
Sam Gold	COGCNV	203-757-0535	sgold@cogcnv.org
Mark Nielsen	GBRPA	203-366-5405	mnielsen@gbropa.org
Andrew Davis	CTDOT-Planning	860-594-2157	Andrew.h.davis@po.state.ct.us
Carmine Trotta	CTDOT-Planning	860-594-2134	Carmine.trotta@po.state.ct.us
J. Mark Foran	CTDOT Rail Ops	203-927-8619	j.mark.foran@po.state.ct.us
Peter Smoluchowski	Parsons Transportation Group	212-266-8522	Peter.smoluchowski@parsons.com
Elizabeth Federico	Parsons Transportation Group	212-266-8393	Elizabeth.federico@parsons.com
Bhoomi Vala	Parsons Transportation Group	212-266-8556	Bhoomi.vala@parsons.com
Mike Morehouse	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.	860-247-7200	mmorehouse@fhiplan.com
Leslie Black	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.	860-247-7200	lblack@fhiplan.com

MEETING SUMMARY

Andrew Davis of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) welcomed participants to the meeting for the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Needs and Feasibility Study (WNCS) and made introductions around the room.

Peter Smoluchowski, Consultant Project Manager, identified the meeting objectives:

MEETING MINUTES

- Provide First Officials with an overview and update, and
- Present Long List alternative concepts developed/revised as a result of the January 21, 2009 planning charrette and garner feedback on these evolving concepts.

Mr. Smoluchowski then briefly reviewed the study background including, study area, current service on the Waterbury branch line, and goals and objectives of the study. He then walked through the Long List concepts and issues discussed at the Advisory Committee planning charrette on January 21, 2009:

- **Commuter Rail – new/improved multi-modal station to be considered at:**
 - Devon
 - Waterbury Branch trains would shuttle between Waterbury and Devon; passengers would transfer to New Haven Line trains at Devon
 - Vehicle access to parking area from Naugatuck Avenue
 - Issue: Complex and costly utility relocation
 - Wilbur Cross
 - Potential connection to Oronoque Road, south of Merritt/Wilbur Cross Parkway
 - Issues: Steep slopes and associated high cost (grading, structures); bus service not feasible – cannot function as a multi-modal transfer station
 - Derby-Shelton – four concepts:
 - Reorganize existing lot, with bus bays next to station building
 - Reorganize existing lot, with bus bays under Route 8
 - Reorganize existing lot with bus bays next to station building + replace Valley Transit facility with additional parking
 - Reorganize existing lot with bus bays under Route 8 + replace Valley Transit facility with additional parking
 - Overall goals for improving Derby-Shelton Station:
 - Improve bus transfer facilities
 - Expand parking
 - Provide high-platforms for level boarding
 - Relocate bike/pedestrian trail to allow double track under Route 34 and to improve trail users' experience
 - Issues - Fuel tank behind Valley Transit facility and adjacent industrial use
 - Opportunity - Potential for TOD on City-owned land between station and river

MEETING MINUTES

- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**
 - Exclusive bus right-of-way; vehicles are typically designed to be more comfortable for longer, faster trips with few stops
- **Express Bus/“Bus Bridge” Shuttle**
 - Full Express Bus Alternative or Evening “Bus Bridge” Alternative
 - For all bus alternatives, vehicles routed directly from Derby-Shelton to Bridgeport in mixed on Route 8 and other surface roads
 - BRT and Express Bus would **replace** existing commuter rail service; “Bus Bridge” shuttle bus would **complement** it
 - Charrette suggestion: supplement evening peak period service to provide commuters with additional options for the return trip → “Bus Bridge” alternative developed
 - Bus Bridge Alternative:
 - Although suggestion was for the evening peak, could provide similar service in the a.m. without the need for additional vehicles or staff beyond that required for the evening service.
 - “Pulse transfers” in Bridgeport—evening buses would wait for outbound NY trains before departing, and morning buses would arrive shortly before arriving inbound trains, minimizing the total time passengers spend transferring between services. Limited stop service (Bridgeport/Derby-Shelton/ Waterbury only) to reduce travel time, maximize number of roundtrips, and minimize fleet requirements.
 - With 6 vehicles (5 operating+1 spare), could serve 13 of the 20 trains arriving at Bridgeport in the evening peak hour, with a combined headway (rail+bus) of 19 minutes.
 - Could be implemented in the near-term.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

General:

- Could the WNCS Short List of Alternatives include a combination of new stations or would there have to be a choice between, for example, Derby-Shelton or Devon stations?

Any alternative that can be carried forward on its own merit will be a part of the Short List of recommendations for further study.

- Sam Gold (COGCNV) asked about the parking focus in the study?

Waterbury and Derby-Shelton stations, as well as new station concepts, are the subject of specific parking focus in the study and general improvements to parking will be made at other existing stations.

MEETING MINUTES

- Rick Dunne (VCOG) suggested that when future (Year 2030) capacity constraints on the main line (Metro-North) are considered, it makes sense to turn the Waterbury branch line into a shuttle service, using existing diesel equipment; use Devon station as a transfer point; provide parking improvements to Derby-Shelton and Naugatuck; do not go forward with the Wilbur Cross Station concept. Then branch line trains would never have to enter the mainline, just meet main line train schedules efficiently.

Peter Smoluchowski (Parsons) commented that current service from Waterbury to Stamford could remain as-is, and shuttle service could be added to meet future ridership demand; Devon station concept looks difficult but it may not be so.

Andy Davis (CTDOT) added that the Devon station concept will be very complex and expensive with the issue of relocation of the transfer station; an additional issue will be the eventual widening/rebuilding of the I-95 bridge over the Housatonic River.

BRT, LRT, and Express Bus:

- Can you explain what BRT is?

BRT = Bus Rapid Transit - exclusive bus right-of-way; vehicles are typically designed to be more comfortable for longer, faster trips with few stops.

The Long List BRT alternative would replace commuter rail with a dedicated bus-way with two bus lanes, adjacent to the existing Waterbury Branch. The existing rail line would be maintained for freight only.

- Can the FRA-mandated separation of freight and passenger rail be temporal, or does it have to be physically separated as well?

It can be temporal or physical.

- Would LRT use the same or different gauge as commuter rail?

Peter Smoluchowski answered that LRT and heavy rail operate on the same gauge. An issue with LRT is that a whole new entity would be required to operate the LRT system. Infrastructure at Waterbury would be required for an LRT maintenance yard. LRT vehicles would need to be purchased, incurring a major capital cost. The LRT system would be more difficult to operate because of freight restrictions, and LRT vehicles cannot get to Bridgeport.

- The corridor is already served by bus (operated by the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA).
- Sam Gold suggested that the “bus bridge” alternative include some local service as well as the proposed Bridgeport-Derby-Waterbury express service so to provide an additional return-trip option for passengers who parked at one of the other stations in the morning such as Beacon Falls and Naugatuck.
- Rick Dunne asked about governance for additional bus service alternatives and their required service and maintenance – would a new governance entity be required?

Andy Davis responded that governance would be allocated to CT Transit.

MEETING MINUTES

Devon Station:

- Would this station be just a stop or a terminus of service?

Either.

- Is the issue with the transformers at the Devon station site the ability to relocate the transformers, or finding a place to relocate them?

Wilbur Cross Station:

- Would there be access to the station from northbound Route 15?

Yes. The issue is that commuter traffic on Route 8 would not have easy access.

Derby-Shelton Station:

- The Long List should include an alternative that provides parking east of the track on the proposed TOD site. The cost of relocating the Valley Transit facility would be better spent elsewhere.
- The preliminary design for the Route 16 interchange would provide access to the TOD site directly from the interchange.
- The group seemed to support an intermodal facility at Derby-Shelton, regardless of whether Devon and/or Wilbur Cross are built.

NEXT STEPS

- Advisory Committee Meeting in May 2009
- Add PowerPoint presentations marked "Draft Concepts" to study website