

MEETING MINUTES

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

MEETING DATE: May 11, 2009

TIME: 1:30 – 4:00 PM

LOCATION: Bridgeport City Hall Annex Conference Rooms A and B, Bridgeport, CT

PURPOSE: Study Advisory Committee Meeting #3

ATTENDEES:

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Kip Bergstrom	Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission	203-327-9180	kbergstrom@ci.stamford.ct.us
Rodney Chabot	CT Commuter Council	203-972-0864	
Claudine Chi	Metro-North Railroad	212- 340-2342	chi@mnr.org
Peter Dorpalen	Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COG-CNV)	203-757-0535	pdorpalen@cogcnv.org
Rick Dunne	Valley Council of Governments (VCOG)	203-735-8688	rdunne@valleycog.org
Evangelio Franco	Metropool	203-696-0455	efranco@metropool.com
Sam Gold	Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COG-CNV)	203-757-0535	sgold@cogcnv.org
Judy Gott	South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)	203-234-7555	jgott@scrcog.org
Jim Grunberger	East Side Partnership (Stamford)		jamesgrunberger@hotmail.com
Doug Holcomb	Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT)	203-366-7070x124	dholcomb@gogbt.com
Scott Howland	Amtrak	203-773-6109	howlans@amtrak.com
Steve Kleppin	Town of New Canaan	203-594-3044	Steven.Kleppin@ci.new-canaan.ct.us
Floyd Lapp	South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)	203-316-5190	lapp@swrpa.org
Josh LeCar	City of Stamford	203-977-5398	jlecar@ci.stamford.ct.us
L. Miller	CT Legislature		
Mark Nielsen	Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA)	203-366-5405	mnielsen@gbrpa.org
Sue Prosi	SWRPA	203-316-5190	prosi@swrpa.org
Mary Reid	Rideworks of Greater New Haven	203-777-7433	mreid@rideworks.com
Carl Stephani	Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA)	860-589-7820	carl@ccrpa.org
Andrew Davis	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) – Planning	860-594-2157	Andrew.h.davis@ct.gov

MEETING MINUTES

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Carmine Trotta	CTDOT – Planning	860-594-2134	Carmine.trotta@ct.gov
David Head	CTDOT-Planning	860-594-21	David.head@ct.gov
Mark Foran	CTDOT-Rail Ops	203-927-8619	j.mark.foran@ct.gov
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
Leslie Black	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.	860-247-7200	lblack@fhiplan.com

MEETING SUMMARY

Andrew Davis of the Connecticut Department of Transportation introduced the study team and Study Advisory Committee (SAC) members in attendance.

Elizabeth Federico of Parsons Transportation Group outlined the agenda for the meeting and then presented the meeting objectives: to update the SAC on study progress to date, present draft screening criteria, and gather SAC input on the Draft Long List Report and screening criteria/process.

Regarding the draft screening criteria, a matrix of every possible combination of improvements would be vast. Instead, concepts have been organized into logical packages of improvements for evaluation. In some cases (e.g., track and signal alternatives), one alternative builds successively upon the next. All alternatives assume that current freight allowances on both branches will remain in place and are designed to maintain freight service in the future.

Ms. Federico identified and discussed the long list groups of alternatives for the Waterbury Branch including:

- Signal and Track Modifications
- Electrification
- Double Track
- Passing Sidings
- Stations:
 - New
 - Existing
- Other Modes

The long list groups of alternatives for the New Canaan Branch include:

- Signal and Track Modifications
- Stations:
 - New
 - Existing

MEETING MINUTES

For detailed outlines and maps of each alternative, please view the corresponding PowerPoint presentation (attached).

To screen the long list of alternatives, criteria are tied to project goals and objectives:

- Goal 1: Encourage Integrated Transportation Improvements That Foster Safety, Efficiency, and Mobility in the Study Corridors
- Goal 2: Enhance Transit Opportunities Along the Waterbury Branch
- Goal 3: Improve Service On The New Canaan Branch
- Goal 4: Improve Environmental Quality and Land Use Planning in Connecticut

At this stage of the screening process, every alternative gets a pass/fail/uncertain score for each criterion:

- Travel **time** savings, as measured from end-to-end and/or between selected station pairs;
- Service **frequency**, both peak hour and midday;
- Ease of **transfers**, as measured in terms of the number of transfers and the complexity of passenger movements between transit services;
- Service **reliability**;
- **Capital and operating costs** (order of magnitude);
- **Right-of-way requirements**;
- **Staffing/administrative** requirements (e.g., operation of new modes in the corridor would require additional staff for operations, maintenance, and administration of service);
- Engineering and operational **complexity** (e.g., modifications to the Northeast Corridor, intermodal transfers, interfaces with roadways, and other major changes to conditions along the line);
- **Ridership** potential (based on travel demand forecasts, station area land use); and
- **Environmental** constraints.

Questions and Comments:

New Canaan Branch Line:

- A comment was made that the New Canaan Branch improvements in capacity could be realized by restoring the passing siding in Springdale. The expense of adding a proposed second platform in New Canaan station would not be required as trains could pass efficiently using the restored siding. The proposed second platform would hurt service on the branch line as it would remove the third track currently used to store trains for the high-demand early morning commute.
- A priority for the New Canaan branch should be the addition of a new station at the East Main Street location in Stamford, CT. The station could potentially serve 40,000

MEETING MINUTES

people living and working in the area adjacent to the proposed station. 250 housing units exist in the proposed station area and 250 additional units are proposed, creating an urban village near the proposed location. There is a strong need for public transportation and the addition of a station at that sight reflects responsible growth and Transit-Oriented Development. **All options will be looked at. A priority of the study is to improve service before improving ridership.**

- A question was asked if there will be a platform extension at each station as that is a priority for New Canaan. **Yes, platform extensions that are practicable are included in station improvement alternatives.**
- If Glenbrook station were to be closed, where do commuters go? **Springdale station is the closest alternative, however, it is not politically feasible to advance this proposed alternative.**
- What station improvements are being considered for Talmadge Hill? **Parking improvements to Talmadge Hill and increasing length of platform are under consideration. General amenities improvements would also be made such as canopies.**

Waterbury Branch Line:

- A request was made to look at more stops for the proposed Shuttle Bus alternative on the Waterbury Branch Line, as more cars are parked at Naugatuck than Waterbury due to perceived security issues at Waterbury Station. The Shuttle Bus Alternative should include some local service to accommodate passengers at the northern end of the branch who prefer not to park at Waterbury. Parking lot counts could be used in analysis.
- The alternative for a new station where the Waterbury Branch crosses under the Wilbur Cross Parkway, roughly halfway between Devon and Derby-Shelton would not serve the commuters on the Waterbury Branch Line. as it would force people to drive 20-25 minutes through very congested highway corridor to reach the proposed station.
- A question was asked about how increasing the number of bus bays and increasing parking spaces at Derby-Shelton can occur simultaneously. The group agreed that both are required for service improvements. **The study team responded that there are various options available that would allow both bus and parking facilities to be improved/expanded at the station.**
- Increasing bus services would help improve access to the station in Derby. The Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) feels that a minimum of four bus bays are needed at the station.
- **The study team has heard from a CT Rail Commuter Council meeting about safety issues. Regarding operational safety issues, in the near term, Positive Train Control (PTC) will be implemented as it is a federal requirement by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to identify where trains are located on the**

MEETING MINUTES

tracks at any point in time. Other safety considerations will be incorporated into study recommendations.

- For the Waterbury Branch Line, frequency of trains is a key issue and parking is the other main issue.
- For the Waterbury station, visibility and security need to be addressed as part of improvements. **CTDOT is studying potential safety and security improvements at stations separately, and that these improvements are likely to come online sooner than any projects coming out of the WNC Study.**
- **Equipment storage will also be looked at for the Waterbury station. Two trains are currently stacked there for the morning inbound commute. CTDOT would like to make provision for a mini-yard there for storage of morning trains.**
- A request was made to keep the Waterbury to Bridgeport commute a one-seat ride without transfers.
- A comment was made that the costs associated with right-of-way acquisitions for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail Transit (LRT) could be very high, making those alternatives not feasible.
- What is the thinking behind freight preservation? **The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will not permit removal of existing freight service. Freight service is increasing on many rail lines currently.**
- What about using right-of way land reserved for passing sidings for BRT or LRT? **The width of right-of-way required for the existing track plus two LRT tracks or a two-lane BRT guideway is wider than that required for adding a second FRA-compliant heavy rail track. This is due partly to the fact that the former involves adding two tracks or lanes while the latter would add only one track, and partly to the fact that FRA requires either a 25-foot separation or a crash barrier between FRA (heavy rail) and non-FRA (e.g., LRT, BRT) vehicles to protect passengers in the lighter vehicles.**
- The limitation of four tracks to Grand Central Terminal is a major constraint. **because the scope of the Waterbury and New Canaan study is limited to the two branch lines the study team is concentrating on improvements to the branches and not the New Haven Line at this point.**
- In the draft report, Section 2-2, the growth on the Waterbury Branch Line of 248% seems unrealistically large based on ridership growth over the previous 30 years. **The study team clarified that it is ridership demand (i.e., the number of people who wish to take the train) that would increase, not the actual number of riders.**
- A suggestion was made to promote through-service to New Haven on the Waterbury Line to improve ridership.
- A comment was made that the transit-oriented development aspect of a station at Devon is promising, given the proximity to residential areas in Milford.

MEETING MINUTES

- A proposal for adding bus bays at Waterbury station as part of the WNCS would be beneficial, as it would provide capacity for regional buses at the station. Current designs for the Waterbury Intermodal Center only accommodate city buses.
- A discussion of electrification of the branch lines summarized that it was not advantageous to electrify the lines because of curves and distances between stations – there was no improvement to service and timing of trains.
- A comment was made that running shuttle service between Waterbury and a new station at Devon could improve frequency of service. The shuttle-only concepts (whereby all passengers would transfer at Devon to continue on to New Haven Line destinations) seem the most promising, although retaining the morning through-service to Stamford and then running shuttle service for the rest of the day is another possibility.
- It was pointed out that if the new Naugatuck Station platform were shifted north to avoid the curved track at the station, it would impact the Renaissance Place transit-oriented development currently being advanced by the Naugatuck Economic Development Corp. The study team should also consider the effects that alternatives would have on the Naugatuck River greenway projects place to improve bicycle-pedestrian connectivity in the region that are being pursued by COG-CNV and several municipalities along the corridor.

Next Steps: The study team will finalize Long List Report (SAC comments on Long List reports should be sent to Andy Davis by Tuesday, May 26, 2009). Public meetings are being scheduled for June 2009. A project newsletter will be distributed in advance of the public meetings. Public comments will be incorporated into the study process. Screening criteria will be refined, and used to evaluate Preliminary Long List Alternatives and determine the Short List of alternatives for further study in Phase 2. A SAC meeting #4 will be conducted in Fall 2009.