



Minutes

Wednesday September 19, 2012 - 7:00 PM
SWRPA Offices, Stamford, CT

Council Members in Attendance: Chairman Jim Cameron, Terri Cronin, Sue Prosi, Tim Beeble, Rodney Chabot, David Hendricks, John Hartwell, Roger Cirella, Bob Jelly, John Davis, Jeff Maron, Laura Cordes.

Guests: Eugene Colonese - DOT, Sue Doering - MNR, John Austin Sr. – Consumer Advocate.

Vice Chair Terri Cronin opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Minutes: Approval of the minutes of the July 16, 2012 meeting: Motion by John Hartwell, seconded by John Davis. Motion approved. Note: no August meeting of the Council was scheduled.

1. Update on Cab Car Windows:

Sue Doering reported that polarized glass has been installed in the interior doors of cab cars to eliminate reflections on the windshield from interior lighting. On the M-2 cab cars, hazed Lexan is being installed to eliminate reflective glare.

2. M-8s:

Gene Colonese reported that field modification is underway to address the coupler banging noise. HVAC interior temperature is set at 78 degrees in Summer. The M-8s have electric regeneration from dynamic braking that feeds back into the catenary. Substations are being upgraded, and DOT is researching the use of fuel cells.

DOT continues to receive 10 new cars per month. 132 cars are conditionally accepted. CT is almost through half of its order of new cars. 94 M-8 cars are in daily service. 40% of the weekday trains and 60% of the weekend trains are M-8s. MN started with 6 and 8 car sets, is now trying 10 car sets and will soon test 12 car sets. One issue is that longer trains are needed since the M-8s have fewer seats as compared to the older cars.

Two prototype bike racks are being tested. After receiving rider feedback, the bike racks have been modified and are being tested. Folding bikes are considered luggage and must be stowed overhead.

The new schedule for October eliminates the skip stop trains and will provide ½ hour service so that lesser volume stations will not be skipped. Ms. Cronin asked that the Yankee trains make all stops on the return trip. She also asked MN to look into the New Canaan AM train consistently being 6 minutes late.

Mr. Colonese reported that bar car retrofitting will be undertaken at the end of the M-8 delivery. DOT is looking into outsourcing the retrofit.

Item 3 is held until the arrival of Chairman Cameron.

4. Shore Line East:

Mr. Jelly asked that the schedule provide a minimum 2 hour service on all branch lines and eliminate the 5 hour gap weekdays on Shore Line East. Mr. Colonese reported that M-8s are being tested at night on the 24,000 volt service and that problems can be overcome including clearances. MN did an electric study to assure that there will be compatibility with AmTrak which does not use multiple panographs.

Chairman Jim Cameron arrived at 7:25 PM and Laura Cordes arrived at 7:35 PM.

5. Main Line:

Mr. Colonese reported that train service will resume on the Waterbury branch on September 24th. Forty to fifty M-2s have been scrapped in 10 car sets. This is 40-50 year old equipment. Constant Tension Catenary work and replacement of 6 bridges is underway between Bridgeport and Green Farms. All 4 tracks will be addressed, but just 2 tracks at a time. Similar work between Green Farms and South Norwalk will be undertaken in 3 years. It will take 4-5 years to replace the bridges in this section. The Saugatuck Bridge will be replaced in 2017. Swing bridges require the elimination of all 4 tracks at once. The 5 Stamford bridges are being studied for widening to facilitate more car traffic. This is a priority for the Commissioner, and MN/DOT are expediting the design.

Chairman Cameron praised MN for its announcements regarding the 9/18 weather related problems.

Mr. Chabot reported a problem with the M-8 cars not being washed.

Ms. Prosi encouraged MN to urge municipalities to maintain their parking facilities.

Fairfield Metro has sold 1,350 permits and its daily usage is at 50%.

DOT has issued an RFP for parking management at the West Haven Station.

6. Branch Lines:

There have been good announcements at Bridgeport for bussing on the Waterbury branch. A Derby siding is planned.

Danbury signalization improvements are proceeding. CTC cut-ins are underway this week from Wilton south. Testing is underway to the north. This requires police protection at the crossings since the signalization is tied into the road crossing signals/gates. Signalization will be complete by the 3rd quarter of 2013.

New Canaan branch has tie replacement work underway with buses making connections in Stamford. Work is on schedule.

3. Stamford Garage:

The RFP calls for demolishing the 700 car parking garage and replacing it with a 2,100 car garage plus offices and housing.

The Transportation Committee of the Stamford Board of Representatives met last week with Chairman Cameron and Representative Gerald Fox regarding the garage.

The DOT Environmental Review states that repairing the garage in-place is not possible so it is not an alternative. This comes from the legislative mandate that 700 parking spaces be available at all times though-out construction.

Chairman Cameron urged the DOT Commissioner to open the September 20th hearing with a presentation of the RFQ/RFP process and issues of the parking and any constraints.

Mr. Colonese distributed a DOT –FAQ on the RFP. The Council discussed the walking distance objectives and the lack of temporary parking for 700 cars.

Chairman Cameron commented that the RFQ will deliver a great parking garage but it won't necessarily be next to the station. The Commuter Council must lobby to assure weather protected walkways and other pedestrian improvements.

Ms. Prosi suggested that we must have confidence in the DOT staff and let the process proceed.

Mr. Hendricks supports Transit Oriented Development and mixed uses to enliven streets. The Commuter Council should not hobble the design.

Mr. Chabot believes that there is existing temporary parking that will accommodate 700 cars to that a new garage may be constructed in place.

Mr. Hartwell stated that DOT is wrong to keep the Council out of commenting on the RFP responses prior to DOT announcing its decision.

7. Other:

2013 marks the 100th anniversary of Grand Central Terminal. What can the Commuter Council do to help celebrate?

8. Motion to Adjourn by John Hartwell and Seconded by Rodney Chabot. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

Tim Beeble
Secretary

NEXT MEETING: Wed. November 14 @ 7 PM at SWRPA