



Minutes

Wednesday January 16, 2013 - 7:00 PM
SWRPA Offices, Stamford, CT

Council Members in Attendance: Rodney Chabot, Sue Prosi, Tim Beeble, Roger Cirella, Bob Jelly, Mitch Fuchs, John Hartwell, and Jim Gildea

Guests: Eugene Colonese - DOT, Sue Doering – Metro North

Rodney Chabot opened the meeting at 7:00 PM and called for introductions.

Minutes:

Motion by Mitch Fuchs, seconded by Roger Cirella, to approve the minutes of December 19, 2012. Unanimously approved.

2. Stamford Garage RFP Update:

Eugene Colonese reported that the RFP award would be made in Mid-February.

3. Main Line:

3.a. Projects: Eugene Colonese reported on the status of Rail Projects: Work is underway on the M8 Acceptance Facility which is a four-track facility. The Component Change Shop for M8s should be completed by the end of 2013. The Independent Wheel True Facility will be completed at the end of 2013. New Haven's Union Station has renovations underway to stairs & tunnel and the visual message boards which will be completed in 2013. C1B catenary renovations from Bridgeport to Green Farms plus 5 bridges will be completed in 2013. Replacement of the catenary from Green Farms to Norwalk and from Stratford to Bridgeport will be undertaken over a 36 month period in 2014-2016. In Stamford, using TIGR funding, improvements will include a pedestrian bridge over Washington Blvd, a satellite waiting room, an east pedestrian overpass to Track 5, expanded canopy, more shelters and more electronic signage. DOT is still working on the choke point at the sliding glass door to the tunnel in Stamford Station;

HVAC needs to be contained as part of the solution. The upgrade of the east end power station in New Haven will be complete in 2013.

M8s: 186 received, 144 in service, 166 accepted. M8s comprise 50% of weekday trains and 65% of weekend trains. All M2s, M4s and M6s are being retired at a rate of 10 per month through 2014.

3.b. Holiday Over-crowding: Mitch Fuchs stated that Metro North planning for holiday trains was based upon ridership data from the Fall. Sue Doering reported that the particular train, 7:50 PM out of GCT, was over-crowded and that the 2012 ridership prior to Christmas has been historically very high. She explained that it is a balancing process in allocating cars to the peak and off-peak service. The new M8s have less seating capacity than the older cars. Metro North needs 4 M8s to replace the seating on 3 older cars. While Metro North has never asked passengers to switch trains due to over-crowding, they could have a second train carry the overflow, but this has never been done before. With regard to other holidays, Metro North looks at historical data and talks to corporations and employers in determining the holiday schedule.

Ops Report was reviewed; ridership for November 2012 versus 2011 was down 9.7%. This reflects the system-wide train shut down during Hurricane Sandy for up to 8 days on the branch lines. Here was no bus substitution on the Waterbury Branch and only 6 bus substitutions on the Danbury branch.

4. Branch Lines:

Waterbury Branch: Regarding the Derby siding, Gene Colonese will check to see if there are drawings for the project and whether the existing freight siding could be used for passing passenger trains. This will also involve confirming whether the siding is connected at both ends and has a manual switch. DOT is working with the City of Waterbury to demolish the AT&T Building to provide more surface parking at the Waterbury Station in 2013. DOT is using federal funds to upgrade the station. DOT still has long term lease rights to the old Waterbury Station.

Danbury Branch: There was a fatality at the Redding Station grade crossing involving a car and a work train. There is no crossing gate. It appears that the driver of the car did not stop for the flashing signals. The loud car radio may have muffled the sound of the train whistle. Gene Colonese reported that there is a project in design to upgrade the intersection at the Redding Station grade crossing to provide a 90 degree approach to the tracks. This work will be undertaken in 2014. The signalization work is behind schedule, but it will be completed in 2013.

New Canaan Branch: Rodney Chabot again reported that the burned-out light bulb at the Talmadge Hill Station on the New Canaan Branch has not been replaced. Last month, Gene Colonese determined that the Town of New Canaan is responsible for changing light bulbs at the station. This month the First Selectmen's Office told Rodney Chabot that it is CL&P's responsibility to replace the bulb.

5. Shore Line East:

Bob Jelly reported that there is a hour gap in service on weekdays between 9:35 AM and 2:35 PM. SLE needs an 11 AM train from Old Saybrook to New Haven. The 9:35 AM train is crowded due to limited options in the schedule. SLE weekend service is better than weekday service. The Westbrook 2-sided station is nearly complete. Branford/Guilford has 2-sided station improvements, but needs an elevator and pedestrian overpass. Clinton and Madison are still one-sided stations.

Gene Colonese reported that DOT has an agreement with AmTrak to test M8s on SLE.

5. Other:

Bob Jelly indicated that there are many legislative bills being considered by the Legislature for Danbury Electrification, extending the Danbury Branch to New Milford, ticket refunds when service is cancelled for more than 48 hours, WiFi on trains, and station parking.

Friday February 1, 2013 is the celebration of the 100th anniversary of GCT.

Motion to adjourn by Jim Cirella, seconded by Rodney Chabot. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Tim Beeble
Secretary