

Coastal Corridor Transportation Investment Area
Draft Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 3, 2008
Bridgeport City Hall Annex – Conference Room C
999 Broad Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. The roll of membership was then taken. The following persons were in attendance:

CCTIA Members:

Karen Burnaska, GBRPA RPO Public Representative, CCTIA Co-Chairman
Judy Gott, SCRCOG RPO Public Representative
Floyd Lapp, SWRPA RPO Public Representative
Tom Lombardo, SWRPA Public Representative
Richard Dunne, VCOG RPO Public Representative Alternate
Ed Houghton, VCOG Public Representative
Peter Dorpalen, COGCNV Public Representative
Dick Carpenter, At-Large Member
Jim Cameron, At-Large Member
Paul Pimentel, At-Large Member

Others:

Joseph Marie, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation
Tom Drew, State Representative, 132nd District
Jill Kelly, TSB Member
Mark Nielsen, GBRPA Executive Director
Ron Kilcoyne, Chief Executive Officer

A quorum was declared and TIA proceeded with the Agenda.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the CCTIA meeting of July 16, 2008 were approved on a motion made by Mr. Lapp and seconded by Mr. Lombardo. Unanimously approved.

III. Correspondence and Communications

Co-Chairman Burnaska circulated a file folder with various articles and other correspondences that related to transportation projects, issues and news. She then recognized and welcomed Commissioner Marie and Representative Drew.

IV. Transportation Goals and Priorities - Commissioner Joseph Marie

Commissioner Marie of the Connecticut Department of Transportation addressed the TIA and expressed his delight with being provided an opportunity to talk to the TIA and discuss ongoing and future transportation issues facing the state. He stated that he has been traveling around the state and meeting with various groups to learn what is needed to make the Department a 21st century organization. The Commissioner expressed his belief that the employees are fundamentally motivated to perform their jobs well, but that there are both internal and external communication problems that inhibit its ability to handle big projects, address problems effectively and inform the public adequately. His primary focus area is on improving communications so that all that the Department does is transparent and that everyone is informed or can be informed regarding any project. Reorganization was also mentioned as a critical activity. Current staff is being reassigned to do the jobs that they do best. The Commissioner then focused his remarks on his vision for the Department. The principal goals will be on the preservation and protection of the state's critical transportation infrastructure and guaranteeing quality assurances, he said. In the mid-term, Commissioner Marie indicated that he wants to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment management system of all of the state's assets. The system would be used to track the condition of the assets and determine when maintenance and improvements would be needed. The Commissioner also briefly discussed the state's financial prospects, efforts in the US Congress to enact an economic stimulus package, and a need to link economic development with transportation.

Co-Chairman Burnaska thanked Commissioner Marie for coming and speaking before the CCTIA Board and then opened to meeting to questions and comments from the members.

V. 2009 Legislative Session

Co-Chairman Burnaska welcomed and introduced Representative Tom Drew, a member of the Transportation Committee. He was invited to the CCTIA meeting to discuss the upcoming legislative session and offer his thoughts regarding the impact the state's fiscal issues will have on transportation programs. His comments focused on four topics:

- The General Fund versus the Special Transportation Fund: Representative Drew explained that the STF is a stand-alone fund that receives funds from several dedicated sources, such as the gas tax and DMV-related sales tax receipts. Because of this, it is not in as dire condition as the General Fund and continues to have a surplus. However, the STF is subject to receiving less revenue because of the economy in the form of lower gas tax revenues as motorists drive less and less sales tax receipts as car sales decline. Representative Drew also addressed the \$5 million cut in funding of bus service initiatives. He indicated that most of these cuts would affect non-service items, such as marketing and advertising. However, it was

pointed out by several members that the cut would prevent some recently approved new bus service initiatives from being implemented as planned.

- **New Haven Maintenance Facility:** Representative Drew explained that this project is at risk of being cancelled or drastically scaled-back because of its cost inflation. He said the state is looking at the project to decide the most important elements of the project and that a cap of \$700 million may be a likely scenario. He further explained that the existing facility is functional and the termination of the facility project would not impact the delivery or schedule for the new rail vehicles. Several members expressed that the project is vital and would urge the legislature to fund the project, at least to provide for basic repair and maintenance needs.
- **Federal Stimulus:** There was a brief discussion on the proposed economic stimulus package being considered by the US Congress. Representative Drew explained that all the states are looking for a large infusion of funds to implement a wide range of infrastructure projects. He said that everyone is hoping that it provides 100% in federal funds, because most states are not able to provide any match funds.
- **Tolls:** Representative Drew briefly addressed efforts to study and consider implementing tolls on Connecticut highways and bridge. He feels that the discussion on tolls is all about raising funds for transportation improvement projects and not as a way of reducing congestion. He indicated that he feels that if tolls are considered then the focus should be on transportation policy, not just revenues.

VI. Update of the Congestion Pricing/Electronic Toll Study

Mr. Lapp and Mr. Nielsen updated the TIA on the on-going Electronic Tolls and Congestion Pricing Study. Mr. Lapp circulated an article on the subject that appeared in the Stamford Advocate. He said he was concerned that the Governor was quoted in the article as opposing the re-introduction of tolls in Connecticut. Mr. Lapp also expressed his concerns that the current study is not sufficiently transparent and that there is not any public outreach. He mentioned that a stakeholders committee was formed but would not meet again until after the final draft report is presented to the TSB. This would not provide the committee an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions. Mr. Lapp requested that TIA members who are also TSB members support his efforts to schedule an earlier stakeholders meeting.

VII. Public Participation

Co-Chairman Burnaska asked if there was anyone from the public who wanted to address the TIA. Hearing no one, the TIA moved to the next item.

VIII. Old Business

There was no Old Business to discuss.

IX. New Business

The meeting calendar for next year was presented by Co- Chairman Burnaska. The proposed meeting dates are:

- Wednesday, March 18, 2009
- Wednesday, June 17, 2009
- Wednesday, September 16, 2009

The proposed meeting schedule was approved on a motion made by Mr. Dorpalen and seconded by Ms. Gott. Unanimously approved.

Mr. Carpenter addressed the TIA regarding the New Jersey Transit's Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project. This project would construct two new tunnels under the Hudson River to connect New Jersey and Manhattan. Although these news tunnels are needed, Mr. Carpenter explained that the current plan is to have the tunnels dead-end at a new, New Jersey Transit terminal only about 200 feet from Penn Station but about 14 stories below it. Initial plans envisioned the tunnels to link with Penn Station. He expressed the opinion that the plan is short-sighted, would not adequately address commuter rail needs, prevent access to the new tunnels by Amtrak and other rail providers, and would not justify the large cost of the project. Mr. Carpenter urged the TIA to draft a letter to oppose the current plan and advocate a link to Penn Station. The letter would also ask that the Governor and the Commissioner of DOT become more active and involved in New York City and New Jersey rail issues. It was the consensus of the TIA to support this request and Co-Chairman Burnaska asked Mr. Carpenter to draft a letter.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Mark C. Nielsen, Executive Director
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency