



## MEMORANDUM

To:

VHB, CTDOT

Project: CT Statewide Bus Study

From: FHI

Date: 09.19.16

Subject: Summary Update of Website Submitted Comments

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To date, (41) written comments have been submitted via the project website. Many of the comments submitted have been simple statements expressing gratitude for the opportunity to provide input. Other commenters asked to be informed of future opportunities to participate. The website's comment submission form includes an automatic email response that indicates that the message has been received, the commenter has been added to the mailing list, and that they will receive information regarding future input opportunities.

The following section summarizes recurring themes of comments submitted and where relevant includes direct passages from substantive comments.

### General and background information

Several comments have provided general information about aspects of bus travel that they like. Specifically, the Shoreline Shuttle, DATTCO, and Shoreline East lines were called out for providing good service.

One commenter noted a South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) commissioned jobs and transportation access study that involved interviews with CT Transit bus riders and GIS analysis of bus line and job locations. The commenter suggested that the report be added to the list of Background Studies listed on the

“About” section of the website. The report is available:

<http://ctdatahaven.org/reports/how-transportation-problems-keep-people-out-workforce-greater-new-haven>

One commenter noted that the highest priority need for the state is not bus-related but more travel lanes on I-95 from New York to Rhode Island.

#### Desire to stay involved

Several commenters have expressed interest in continued participation in the Study. Several commenters offered to represent specific areas of expertise such as the disabled community, the senior community, or in a few cases, expertise in bus travel either through extensive bus riding in specific regions or through research and observation. Notably, a representative from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission asked to be included on project updates as they would like to work with CTDOT to consider transit connections between Connecticut and Massachusetts.

A rider of the HART Danbury-Brewster Shuttle bus requested a focus group interview with riders of that service and explained that the service is not helpful for people that live east of exit 2 on I-84.

#### The Bus riding experience

Several commenters have delivered praise or complaints regarding specific aspects of the bus riding experience. Three commenters noted that their bus drivers are responsible, helpful, courteous, friendly, and in the case of CTFastrak drivers, very safe. One noted that the SEAT bus fleet is old and frequently suffers from breakdowns. Another commenter noted that when standing on the bus, there is nothing to hold on to. This commenter suggested a return to fixed metal handles for safe standing.

One commenter noted that there is a lack of bus shelters in Bridgeport and continued to note that wealthier communities and demographically whiter communities do have bus shelters.

## ADA Issues

Several commenters raised both general and specific issues related to access for disabled and senior community members.

One commenter provided a preview abstracted from a 1200-word op-ed that he is in the process of writing: *“Regarding CSA Transit (cross service area transit), which CONNDOT launched in early July 2016 without, among other things, transparency, public input, providing riders guides/instructions to ADA certified passengers, establishing standards common for all providers, and one central number for riders to call. CONNDOT, which is acting as if it is in charge, should have acted as oversight and established uniform standards with the mandate that all Connecticut ADA service providers implement them and include them in their riders’ guides. And I would expect CONNDOT uses standards to comply with FMVSS regarding wheelchair and passenger securement. If there were uniform standards, all 10 ADA transit providers would have riders’ guides with the same policies.”* -Joseph Luciano, Disability Rights Action Group

Another commenter who identified himself as a disabled male noted a lack of seating at bus stops in Waterbury.

One commenter explained why increased service on weekends and evenings are so important to the senior community. Reasons cited included the high cost of taxis; the inability of many seniors to drive at night; strong desire to travel for religious services, theater, workshops and fairs, and volunteer jobs that may occur outside the hours of dial-a-ride; and the desired security of a door-to-door trip in the face of crime threats.

## Employment Issues

Several commenters have noted the impact of bus service on their employment opportunities. One commenter noted that, “As a MAT transit rider, and looking for employment on shoreline, I had to refuse job offer because 9 Town Transit/Estuary Transit did not have night time hours to help me return home to Middletown from Old Saybrook for a 3-11pm shift.”

Another commenter explained that the lack of service after 10 PM presents a burden for those that work at night.

### Issues with the Workshop

Several commenters wrote during the duration of the Virtual Public Workshop to report technical difficulties with the workshop or to provide feedback on the workshop content. Two commenters explained that the workshop was not working for them. Two other commenters suggested that the video was too long. One suggested that there were not enough questions regarding ridership needs and that it would have been helpful to have an opportunity to submit general comments or additional information during the workshop. One commenter wondered why the workshop was not being advertised in Fairfield County.

### Interstate Issues

One commenter has written in to highlight the need for better interstate bus transportation. He suggested that bus service should be provided for commuting to New York City, particularly during hours when there is little or no rail service. Because there is not return option by rail, the commenter noted that he has to drive to New York City during the day. The commenter also suggested that private bus providers should be encouraged to offer more stops along the routes from New Haven to Boston, Burlington, and New York City. In addition to employment opportunities, these stops would be helpful to parents and students.

### Needs

Numerous commenters provided recommendations for specific locations and include increased service, new routes, and other improvements, as well as a suggested service cuts. These recommendations are edited for clarity but provided in their entirety:

- In Torrington, there is a serious lack of reliable bus transit between the city and places like Hartford, Farmington and Waterbury. The options available to residents are extremely limited, not easily accessible and unacceptable. Local efforts for community transit are likewise limited, especially for the elderly and

the physically challenged. This transportation issue needs to be improved as soon as is possible.

- For the last 20 years I have lived on North Street in Watertown, I have seen a large, noisy, empty bus travel by my home 7 days a week 12 hours a day. Bus service may be needed on Main Street, but it is not needed in our neighborhood.
- I currently live in Middletown, CT and regularly commute via transit to New Haven. There is no direct route (unless the expensive express bus on weekdays) to get to New Haven by a regular bus. It is incredibly inconvenient to have to take two buses on the weekend to get to and from New Haven. And when the express commuter is available on weekdays it is not accessible by local Middletown transit. This is quite ridiculous. Basically there is no easy way to get to New Haven and it is very frustrating. There needs to be some sort of bus that is regular/consistent 7 days a week- with more buses during work week times and access to and from New Haven from downtown Middletown. I take the 55 bus to Hartford and it is relatively easy to catch in downtown Middletown and runs often enough (though it would be great if it ran at night too).
- Start a shuttle service from Monroe via White Plains Road to Trumbull starting early in the morning and in the afternoon. Riders will use the service if they are aware this service is available. I have been suggesting this for a long time ago but no one listens. Hopefully, something will happen this time.
- The Meriden-Hartford Express ridership has significantly decreased. I have been a commuter on this bus route for nine years. I know the ridership has decreased previously due to the lack of heated/air-conditioned and properly functioning buses. Currently (in the last year) ridership has decreased due to the timing of the routes. All we want as commuters is a reliable bus, reasonably functioning, and a ride that gets us to work ON TIME and home safely. Due to the number of regular commuters, we could use a much smaller bus to be more efficient. Also the use of texts or an alert system would be appreciated if the bus is not functioning, or notification if the bus will be late. Thank you for listening.
- It would be great to have two Waterbury/New Haven bus routes. One on Route 10 and one on Route 63.
- I am incensed that the Busway is losing millions of dollars a year. It should never have been put in, a project of a deranged governor. I was visiting my

parents in New Britain yesterday on Stanley Street and saw three buses go by with in 6 minutes, and they all had only 2 or 3 people aboard.

- As a frequent rider of both CTFastrak and CT transit, point to point buses would be an asset for riders traveling from downtown Hartford to West Farms Mall, between Hartford and outlying towns such as Manchester, Bristol, Waterbury and towns of the Farmington Valley. Bus sizes could be smaller, depending upon the number of riders expected for any given route. Current riders often complain about the time spent en route due to constant stopping and starting to pick-up or discharge passengers. I would like to take the time to express thanks to the many drivers who assist elderly, offer help on schedules and routes. I give CT transit an A- for its bus system, pricing and scheduling. Offering daily express service point to point can only increase ridership an offer additional service.
- We need more connections starting at Manchester going outside of Hartford county poor service on Sunday.
- I did notice that you never asked about people who have to take Yale shuttle buses and walk to a CT Transit bus stop - does that count as a transfer or does it only count as a transfer if it is a CT company bus? Also, the "O" bus route in New Haven needs to be rethought - it does not need to cut up Division street to Prospect and then return to Winchester. It can just continue on Winchester because there is a new population of bus riders that would benefit from that. Also, there needs to be more buses running during 8-9AM and 5-6 PM. I take one bus route in the AM and in the PM take a Yale Shuttle and walk to a CT transit bus stop to wait 20-25 mins for a bus home.
- We are very interested in getting commuter bus service through East Windsor.
- Public bus transportation here in southeastern Connecticut in my estimation is not very good. If I wanted to go, say, to Hartford, I would have to take a SEAT Bus from Norwich to New London; then take a Greyhound to New Haven. From New Haven, transfer to Hartford. It was not always this bad in past years. Thank you.
- Connect 909 to use Fastrack via Cedar Street - Much quicker, especially on the return from Hartford.
- The 22 Wolcott Bus is continuously full and on several occasions has driven past bus stops without picking people up. Could this service run an 1/2 hourly service? For the most part the service is excellent.

- Articulated buses are needed here on Route 8 and CL to alleviate overcrowding conditions.

### Next steps

This document will continue to be updated or revised as new comments are submitted. The project stakeholder list will also be revised with additions from the website.