LETTER FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Legislative Breakfast

On Wednesday, February 21, Women’s Transportation Seminar joined with the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) for a Legislative Breakfast. The event was held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford and offered an opportunity to learn about hot topics in public transportation.

Several legislators and both chairs of the Legislature’s Transportation Committee were present for discussions on paratransit services for the elderly and disabled, job access for low-income workers and the recently released results of a Statewide Bus Study. These informative presentations let our legislators know what public transportation offers to their constituents and how they can help to ensure services continue.

Doug Holcomb of the Greater Hartford Transit District explained Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transportation and Dial-a-ride transportation in Connecticut. Under ADA civil rights legislation, transit providers are required to provide equal access to public transportation for those with disabilities. Specifically, accessible transportation services must be provided to persons with disabilities in the same geographic area and during the same hours of operation as fixed-route buses for persons without disabilities. Dial-a-ride services are used by the elderly and disabled and provide important mobility for seniors. These services are often the difference between being able to live at home and being institutionalized by providing essential access to community services. Mr. Holcomb also described the combination of funding sources used to maintain these important transportation services. These include local funding from municipalities, state funding for ADA services (over $7 million annually) and state funding for dial-a-ride services ($2.5 million annually). In the next year Norwalk and Stamford will become a combined statistical metropolitan area and lose federal operating assistance totaling $664,000.

Mr. Holcomb pointed out that the need for these services is much greater than the budget allows. Even though over 1.1 million rides were provided statewide in fiscal year 2000, over 13,000 trip requests were denied and it is estimated that there will be 22,000 trips denied this year. The true need for these services is unknown, as service providers do not advertise due to the inability to meet current needs. In total, a funding increase of 36% for fiscal year 2002 and an additional 4% for fiscal 2003 was proposed to meet the transportation needs of the state’s elderly and disabled.

Jeff Beadle of the Windham Regional Community Council discussed the statewide job access transportation program for low-income workers and people transitioning off public assistance. Job access transportation services are designed to fill in the gaps in public transportation services to allow low-income workers better access to employment and employment related activities, such as job training or childcare. Services provided through this program range from extensions of service hours or service areas on the existing bus routes around the state, to customized services to worksites outside the normal service area or at hours beyond the service day. There are special brokerage services for trip planning, taxi rides for times when public vehicles are not cost-effective, transportation to interviews, training and childcare, etc. and a guaranteed ride home program.

The Job Access Transportation Program is serving over 10,000 individuals a month, many of whom would not be working were it not for these additional services. The program is funded through a combination of state and federal sources, including the Connecticut Department of Social Services and competitive grants from the Federal Transit Administration. Growing competition for the Federal Transit Administration competitive grant funding has led to serious concerns that funding may not be available after the current grant runs out. An appropriation of $3.5 million is needed to continue the state share of this program in fiscal year 2002 and $6.6 million in fiscal year 2003.

Louis Shulman from Norwalk Transit District and President of CACT, reviewed the results of the recent comprehensive study of fixed-route transportation service operated by the state’s 20 urban, rural and express bus transit systems.

The study found that Connecticut’s bus systems ranked very high when compared with similar-sized systems.
throughout the U.S. in terms of ridership, productivity and revenue recovery. The study also noted significant opportunities to enhance service and to improve connections among the various state-funded systems. Without new funding, new service can only be offered by cutting service elsewhere. The types of services recommended by the study include:

- Service to new employment centers
- Improved inter-regional connections
- Improved suburb-to-suburb and city-to-suburb service, including the development of suburban transit "hubs"

Bus systems in the state have also been severely impacted by unprecedented increases in the cost of diesel fuel. CDOT is working to obtain $3.5 million in fiscal year 2001 to reimburse local transit operators for fuel price increases that in many cases exceeded 100% from the previous year.

The fiscal year 2002 budget proposed by the Governor includes a modest 3% increase in state operating assistance and a fuel cost increase for 2002. There is no funding proposed to implement any of the service improvements and enhancements recommended by the Statewide Bus Study. CACT stated that $8.6 million could implement the recommended bus transit improvements and the reimbursement of extraordinary fuel price increases in fiscal year 2001.

By Lisa Rivers
Connecticut Department of Transportation

SEEKING EXECUTIVE BOARD 2002 - 2003

The Connecticut Valley Chapter is seeking candidates to fill the following executive board positions for 2002 - 2003: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. As the 1999 – 2000 Executive Board brings the 10th year of the Connecticut Valley Chapter to an extremely successful end, they are actively seeking members to fill these prestigious positions. If you are interested please contact Lori Long via e-mail at Lori.Long@dmjmharris.com or phone at 203-335-7425.

SHAKE THAT WINTER DOOM AND GLOOM

The cold, dark, dismal days of winter will soon be a thing of the past, although it seems like an eternity for those of us who are suffering from sadness and irritability brought on by lack of fresh air and outdoor activities. How can we break out of this dark, dismal frame of mind and rejuvenate our spirits? The following strategies are a few ways I have overcome these feelings of doom and gloom in past years. Perhaps they can help you hang in there until the warm, bright days of spring arrive.

Clean it up and clear it out: There really is something to that saying “Spring Cleaning.” Removing all those unused and broken objects from that junk drawer, garage, or basement provides you with a sense of accomplishment as well as a fresh appearance. Remove that clutter!

Education: When life is feeling monotonous we can regain our zest by taking on new challenges and activities, thus giving a renewed sense of self worth. Your new learning experience can be as formal or informal as you desire. Attend a credited 15-week computer class to pick up tips and tricks on the latest software or attend a one-day program featuring cooking, handmade crafts or your favorite interest. There are many low cost and free courses/programs available through community colleges, town adult education programs and area libraries. Engage in activities!

Remember past accomplishments: When people are feeling bored or blue they tend to forget about all the wonderful things they have done in the past. Updating your resume is a great way to remind yourself of past accomplishments. Another great way to boost your ego is to make a glory file and review it when you feel down and out. (A glory file is a list of activities or events that you were a part of that created or improved some procedure or organization.) Pat yourself on the back!

Add a splash of color: Our winter wardrobes are often comprised of dark, heavy sweaters, turtlenecks and woolen pants. It’s time to go through those closets and drawers in search of that long lost article of clothing that brightens your day and makes you feel like a million bucks, because when you look good you feel good too. Wear that power suit!

By Elizabeth Hayden
CT Transit
Welcome one and all to the 11th annual Connecticut Statewide Transit Roadeo! CTTRANSIT will, again, host this year's event, slated for Sunday, June 10th at the Buckland Commuter Park & Ride lot in Manchester, CT. Competition begins at 8:00 a.m. sharp.

As in past Roadeos, the three categories of competition will be bus, van and body-on-chasis. However, this year brings change - a new category for forty-foot buses has been incorporated, in addition to the thirty-five-foot buses.

And of course there will be prizes! The first place winners in each category will be sent, all expenses paid, to the National Roadeo. Second, third and fourth place winners will receive $250, $150 and $100 respectively. Shirts and hats will be given to all contestants.

While the Roadeo is a day of camaraderie for the drivers and an opportunity for them to demonstrate their abilities, it is also a fun event for families. Last year, a magician thrilled children and adults alike with his mystifying act. Unique and antique buses will be on display for adult enjoyment, and balloons and face painting are planned for the children.

Please contact Phil Fry of CTTRANSIT, for more information at 860-522-8101.

Submitted by Barbara Weidt, CTTRANSIT

UPCOMING AGENDA

Mark your calendars with the upcoming program dates. Hope to see you all soon. If you need more details regarding these programs, please don’t hesitate to call any Member of the Board or the program organizer listed under the description.

April 17, 2001 (Tuesday), 10th Annual Luncheon, 12 noon. New Britain/Hartford Busway as presented by Michael Sanders of the Connecticut Department of Transportation. Crooked Street Station (Inside Ramada Inn), 400 New Britain Avenue, Plainville, CT. Members are $25/non-members $30. If you have questions regarding this program please contact Leslie Haines of Parsons Transportation Group by e-mail at Leslie.A.Haines@parsons.com or by phone at 860-633-0223.

WTS National Conference

May 16 through 18, 2001. The WTS National Conference will be held in Long Beach California this year. You can download the registration form and get other conference information from the WTS National Website at www.wtsnational.org.

June 14, 2001. This Professional Development Program will focus on Assertiveness Training and Women’s Health Issues. Training professional Ruth W. Boyea, a retired professor from Central CT State University, will discuss assertiveness training for women and men in both their professional and personal lives. In addition a representative from the CT Department of Public Health will discuss the top concerns that women have in the 21st-century. A light dinner will precede the speakers. Information on women’s issues will be available to all who attend. Location: CDOT Main Office, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington. Any questions regarding this program should be directed to Lori Long by e-mail at Lori.Long@dmjmharris.com or phone at 203-335-7425.

August 3, 2001, Annual River Boat Cruise (7:30 – 9 PM). The Annual River Boat Cruise leaves from Hartford CT, State Street Pier at Riverfront Landing. The cruise takes you for approximately an 1½ hour boat ride along the lovely Connecticut River. The views are spectacular and it gives you an ideal opportunity to meet and socialize with others in the membership as well as invited guests. More information will be mailed to you in June 2001.

October 2001, WTS CT Valley are in the planning stages of this program. More details to follow.

December 2001, Annual Holiday Social, donations made to a local charity. More details to follow.
1999 – 2000
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Lori L. Long
Frederic R. Harris, Inc.
Lori.Long@dmjmharris.com

Vice President
Lisa Rivers
CT Department of Transportation
Lisa.Rivers@po.state.ct.us

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Parsons Transportation Group
Leslie.A.Haines@Parsons.com

Treasurer
Colleen Kissane
CT Department of Transportation
Colleen.Kissane@po.state.ct.us

Past President
Kathleen Boyle
Parsons Brinckerhoff
Construction SVC
Boyle@pbworld.com

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUBMITTED ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Please send comments or articles to Lori Long at Lori.Long@dmjmharris.com. All comments and articles are welcome!