

**Westport Citizens Transit Committee Meeting Notes**  
**July 24, 2012**

**Attendees:**

Jim Ross  
Zoe Cohen  
Melissa Salottolo  
Eugene Cederbaum  
Terry Giegengack  
Carl Lindhal  
Pete Gold  
Jonathan Steinberg  
Cathy Talmadge

**Public Attendees:** Jennifer Johnson, Don Bergman (RTM), Jon Pincavage (RTM), Cathy Talmadge, reporter

**Meeting Notes:**

Next scheduled guests

- Board of Finance – July 31
- Bud Titsworth and Jim Hood – Aug. 9
- SWERPA – Aug. 21
  
- Need to extend to Board of Ed
  - o Need volunteer to outreach and schedule this

**Norwalk Transit District, Nancy Carroll (COO), and Louis Shulman**

- 20 – 25% of fares were returned, never broke even in the history of the service, this pre-dated Door to Door service, which was expensive then and are expensive now. MaxyTaxi was close to a Door to Door service.
- Nature of Public Transportation across the country –most productive Urban system in CT is Bridgeport – high density, and small geographical area, they return a high fare box which is 40%.
- In the 70s, lots of commuter service, more than when Norwalk started in 1992.
- 1984 – combined 58,000 hours of service; today about 14,000 hours of service – if you compare same number of passengers per vehicle hour. Service covered 90% of the community, Saturday service.
- SWERPA – study outline put together but because being funded by the state, approvals process is long. Expect to see results within 6 months of study start.
  - o Carl to secure copy of RFP from Sue at SWERPA
- 1992 – NTD charged annual management fee to manage Westport Transit District
  - o Nancy to share study in follow-up
  - o Never had a budget for marketing; never had enough funds and some were done out of their fee
  - o Recommendation included have a marketing spend
- The more you cut, the more you lose ridership.

- The limitation for the hours of service for use is what prevents people from riding. This we believe is the reason why the ridership has declined.
- NTD is recipient for all federal transit grants for Westport
- Westport is the only community that takes commuters from multiple pickups to one destination
- Late 90s – did direct mailings, working with the realtors, tried new routes, tried to extend hours but were unable to get the funding to do so
- Coastal Link – Westport does not have to pay for funding for this, ridership is strong on this route and Westport benefits from it
- BOF has historically not been interested in Coastal Link numbers because Westport is not paying for it
  - We are interested in these numbers if we can get a sense of that ridership
- One of the issues we've always had, is if people were out sick in Westport, there was not enough coverage so by integrating it all into Norwalk those issues went away.
  - The down side, dead-heading of buses to start service is a little longer. But advantages outweigh the downsides
  - All vehicles in Westport are Norwalk buses, including the school buses
  - Introduced the smaller vehicles in Westport, have this flexibility to do so.
  - Westport services are Peak AM and PM. Those vehicles are being used throughout the county for other services during the day. And gives the opportunity to provide a full time job.
  - Allocations are vehicle hours and vehicle miles
- Door to Door Service – limited requirements in 1973, when ADA came into effect the doors opened. Most communities in CT were at the forefront of providing service to disabled and elderly. Norwalk, Stamford, Westport Door to Door services are similar with ridership
- Westport meets ADA requirements but beyond that also provides DTD for those over 65
- Westport average is 5-6 riders per average, which included Door To Door. If didn't include DTD, would be about 7-8 per hour. Vehicle hour is the industry standard for measurement.
- WTD today – 9 vehicles in morning, 10 in afternoon; no daytime service, just afterschool shuttles that hits all the schools to take the children to afterschool activities. Commuter routes – 4 to Saugatuck and Imperial lot and 2 to Greensfarms. And DTD service.
- Over 65 – is a Westport decision. Would have been a legislative decision. In other communities 60 is the number that is used.
- Look at Fairfield or Stratfield elderly service – can look at their fare structure
- When looking at comparables in NJ, Westchester – nothing similar since those bus systems are County run

#### **Norwalk Transit District Recommendations:**

- Need help with **marketing** – can bring skills from this committee, others in the community to have the skills for existing services. Will be a lot of pressure from BOF for recommendations; want to make sure we are doing what we can to improve ridership
  - Low level of awareness in the community
  - Don't have funds to develop the message in a professional way; can place local ads
  - CTC needs to come up with ideas, with local media
- Need **Directors** on board to facilitate with Westport; can't make decisions without Westport Directors in place.
- Input that you feel is appropriate in the study – need to come together on the recommendations in parallel with **SWERP** and with NTD in collaboration

Routes are determined by demand.

Don't limit solutions – envision what we want for Westport

- Conduct an annual mailing to the parking lot waiting list
- Budget is \$1million, Westport share is \$241,000.
  
- In September, would like to tie into state run program – **The Guaranteed Ride Home Program**. If someone needs to come home during the day, you get a credit/chit for the taxi service, limited number of times per year (3).
  
- In next 12 – 16 months will have GPS system on all equipment – is one technology that can increase ridership
  - o Funding in place already for this (\$2 m) but have not bided out the project
  
- BOF has lost trust in NTD and the former directors.

Studies of economic benefits of a town transit

Every dollar invested returns \$3 to the community – American Public Transit Association

Interpretations made on information that were not correct and this caused problems

It's not really about the fare, it is about increase in ridership in the system. Uniticket is set by state, Department of Transportation and by MetroNorth.