

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT MEETING  
ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, April 29, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m.  
Chester Meeting House, 4 Liberty Street, Chester, CT

Pre-ceding the Retreat a continental breakfast was served starting at 9:00 a.m.

In attendance: Leslie Strauss, David Cox, DG Fitton, Joan Gay, Timothy Griswold, John Hall, Beverly Lawrence, Christine Marques, Charles Norz, Michael Pelton, and Kathryn Russell

Staff: Joe Comerford, Christina Denison, Halyna Famiglietti, Brendan Geraghty, Nick Kulakowski, and Jared Whitcomb

Guests: David Lee

Absent: Michelle Benivegna, Jim Irish, David Lahm and Brendan Rae

#### Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Strauss opened the Retreat at 10:03 a.m. by welcoming everyone to the Chester Meeting House and giving a brief history of the venue. She introduced David Lee, Facilitator.

#### MISSION STATEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Participants discussed the district's mission and values, developing a list of points to be included:

- Access – RVT provides economical, affordable mobility to essential services
- Safe and reliable
- Empowering people
- Seamless, multimodal connections
- Historical role (maybe introductory point?)
- Delete sustainability and energy conservation?

#### STAKEHOLDERS and CHANGING CONDITIONS

The impact of future economic and societal conditions on transportation was discussed, including:

- Economics – towns losing transit-dependent population
- Lack of attractive housing options for young families
- Modest growth at best
- Getting to work, and for transit-dependents, getting everywhere else
- Small employers
- "People can't afford to live where they work."
- Potential for microtransit
- What are the economic drivers in the region?

- Hospitals
- Logistics
- Local government
- Small manufacturers
- A few larger manufacturers
- Service workers
- Hospitality
- Potential AI applications for multi-modal trip planning, paratransit scheduling, etc.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

Participants discussed opportunities to expand into other towns and developed a list of facility issues considered to be strengths and weaknesses and threats:

- EXTERNAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES
  - Connectivity with other bus and rail services
  - Improving customer experience
  - Statewide unified fare structure and fare media (a long-time “holy grail”)
  - Schedule coordination with other bus and rail operators
  - Completing implementation of the bus study for RVT
  - Potential for express-type service to New Haven, airports (potential to link more directly with the Hartford Line as feeder to BDL, once CTDOT arranges for traveler-friendly shuttle between Windsor Locks station and BDL)
  - Creative solutions to terminal limitations in downtown Middletown
  - Planning for new shoreline facility
  - Possible expansion to other non-member towns
  - Could CTDOT see RVT as a more efficient operator of the Meriden division?
- STRENGTHS
  - Senior staff – knowledgeable, leadership, a great team
  - Employee morale; courteous to the public
  - Board members – effectively work together, engaged, connected (with local elected officials, state legislators, local employers)
  - Good services
  - Strong financial position; effective financial management
  - Excellent working relationship with CTDOT; confidence of CTDOT in RVT to “get things done that other CT operators and DOT staff cannot”
  - Modern (website, cutting-edge fare collection, microtransit)
  - Relationship with Wesleyan University; microtransit
  - RVT attorney is a great resource
- WEAKNESSES (Opportunities for Improvement)
  - Facilities
    - Maintenance capacity of Middletown garage
    - Condition and capacity at the downtown terminal
    - Need for a shoreline facility
  - Maintenance facilities and equipment needed to service the RVT fleet more effectively than relying on outside providers

- Union vs. Non-union workforce creates administration challenges
- Challenge to attract and retain good employees, especially skilled technicians
- Frequency and span of service
- EXTERNAL THREATS
  - Uncertainty about financing for transit at both the state and federal levels; chaos regarding federal requirements
  - Possible changes at CTDOT that could undermine currently excellent working relationships
  - Unrealistic demands by CTDOT, legislature (e.g., electric bus mandate)
  - Unfunded mandates (e.g., fares)
  - Competition in the labor market for skilled employees
  - Public perceptions – “People don’t want to pay for services.”
  - Transit budget must compete with other State-funded services
  - Shift in work trips

## LUNCH

## STRATEGIES and ACTION PLANS

Future goals and action plans were discussed:

- STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS
  - Services
    - Connections with other bus and rail providers; coordinating schedules
    - New microtransit initiatives
    - Explore potential for express services to New Haven and airports
    - Work with CTDOT to implement a unified fare structure for all transit
  - Facilities
    - New shoreline facility
    - Middletown maintenance facility
    - Middletown terminal
  - Dues formula for members (both current and new)
  - Communications strategy; public relations

## CLOSING REMARKS

David Lee thanked everyone for their participation and contributions and summarized key action items and the next steps. Strauss thanked Lee for facilitating the event. Strauss will draft a Mission Statement for review at the next regular Board meeting on Friday, June 13 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christina Denison, Clerk