

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT MEETING
RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Friday, February 14, 2025
91 N. Main Street, Middletown CT and via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strauss called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. In attendance included: Leslie Strauss, Charlie Norz (ZOOM), Tim Griswold (ZOOM), DG Fitton (ZOOM), Beverly Lawrence (ZOOM), Joan Gay, Kathryn Russell, John Hall (ZOOM), Christine Marques, Mike Pelton (ZOOM), Jim Irish (ZOOM), David Lahm (ZOOM), David Cox (ZOOM) and Irene Haines (ZOOM).

Staff: Halyna Famiglietti, Chris Denison (ZOOM), Brendan Geraghty, Joe Comerford

VISITOR'S COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/13/24 Expansion Committee Meeting as presented. David Cox seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/13/24 Board Meeting as presented. David Cox seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes of the 1/21/25 Finance Committee Meeting as presented. Kathryn Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes of the 1/28/25 Special Board Meeting as presented. Jim Irish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes of the 2/11/25 Transit Advisory Committee Meeting as presented. Beverly Lawrence seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

John Hall made a motion to accept the minutes of the 2/11/25 Facilities Committee Meeting as presented. Jim Irish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes of the 2/12/25 Finance Committee Meeting as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Town of Portland has appointed Michael Pelton as Portland's representative on the Estuary Transit District (letter from Portland included in Board packet).

TREASURER'S REPORT – No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities

The minutes of the Facilities Committee, dated 2/11/25, were included in the Board packet. Joan Gay, Chairman, updated the Board on initiatives including facilities update, both Middletown and Shoreline (3 sites have been identified), bus shelters and electrification. Note that the drivers have been trained on the electric buses; however the buses are “shorting out” and the radios have not yet been installed. The contractor working to install the radios has no experience with electric buses.

Jim Irish made a motion to accept the Facilities Committee Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance Committee, dated 2/12/25, were included in the Board packet. The Committee has reviewed all financial documents and no issues were reported.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Finance Committee Report as presented. Mike Pelton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

Joe Comerford reported that marketing efforts have focused on the Tap and Ride program that also accepts Visa/Mastercard. The DOT will be on site today filming the Tap and Ride process.

The District hosted a recent event for the State that highlighted the Tap and Ride program.

David Lahm made a motion to accept the Marketing Committee Report as presented. Jim Irish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Joan Gay reported that the Legislative Breakfast held in January was a great success. Thirteen individuals participated in person. Legislators have proposed bills regarding transit and are supportive of the District.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee Report as presented. David Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Transit Advisory Meeting, dated 2/11/25, were included in the Board packet. Tim Griswold provided an update on the initiatives of the Committee including:

- Tap and Ride program – the program has seen consistent growth since its October launch.
 - Senior and disabled registration is now available.

- The program is being actively marketed on the website, ad racks, posters, etc.
- Bus Stop Project – the transition from a flag stop system to a designated bus stop system was discussed. An RFP seeking a vendor to replace old signs and install new signs, 4 new bus shelters and other amenities in the region is being finalized.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Transit Advisory Committee Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXPANSION COMMITTEE

The minutes of the 1/13/25 Expansion Committee meeting were included in the Board's packet. Items discussed include:

- Potential membership of East Haddam and Haddam
 - The Committee made a motion inviting E. Haddam and Haddam to join the District.
 - The Committee recommends that dues (\$28,400 for E. Haddam and \$23,500 for Haddam) begin July 1, 2025.

Charlie Norz made a motion to add Resolution No. 25-008 (inviting E. Haddam and Haddam to join the District) to the agenda under "New Business". Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Irene Haines expressed concern that the District is offering an invitation to the towns. She requested additional conversations between the towns and the District.

Tim Griswold responded that adding the towns to the District may take months and issuing an invitation does not oblige the towns to join ETD. He will reach out to Ms. Haines to discuss it further.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Expansion Committee Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – No report.

COG UPDATE – Brendan reported on COG initiatives as follows:

- The COG is working on testimony for upcoming Transit bills.
- Work is on-going on the THRIVE grant.

David Lahm made a motion to accept the COG Update as presented. Jim Irish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joe reported:

- He has been monitoring the Legislative Session since the Governor's proposed budget was released. DOT reports that the proposal does not include sufficient funding for current services.
 - Of concern is that the Governor has included a fare increase in his proposal.
 - Per protocol, any changes to fares will require Public Hearings.
- Joe is developing testimony for upcoming bills including those associated with fares, and a transit expansion fund.
- He will continue to monitor the Federal Budget.
- Fare Box Study – The State has asked the District to facilitate state-wide fare boxes. A consultant is developing the needs for the entire State, including Tap and Ride technology. Hopefully the State will facilitate procurement.
 - The State is interested in moving forward with a statewide fare and will provide funds for our fare program as there will be some financial impact.
- He has been working with Madison relative to their Senior Transportation and the possibility of using Xtra Mile to facilitate same.

Joe was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Executive Director's Report as presented. Michael Pelton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSIT PLANNER REPORT

Brendan provided the following information:

- Expansion Ridership Review
 - Last two months, about 100 extra riders every Saturday thanks to the 6-11pm expansion and an average of about 150 riders every Sunday. And about 25 riders every weeknight.
 - Total expansion only ridership
 - December 1626
 - January 1541
- Bus Stop Project
 - RFP re-submitted to get bids
 - Draft stops Created (900+)
 - Draft stops will be reviewed and finalized into a proposed list
 - List will be reviewed by the public input and board for approval before installation
 - Permitting process will be an big determining factor in how fast these signs get approved.
- Tap & Ride Updates
 - Senior/Disabled Eligibility now possible online or via mail

- Tap & Ride Road Show with other transit districts. Showed off the technology, data, and shared a statewide vision for Tap & Ride.
- Stickers on the sides of buses, Rack cards, flyers, online marketing for awareness.
- Working on 2025 Service Changes
 - Route 640, 642, 643, 644 and 645 deviated route to fixed route with accompanying ADA service
 - Issues with staying on time when deviations occur
 - Route 644 Saturday Service expansion
 - Route changes and Tweaks to improve on-time performance and efficiency

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Transit Planner's Report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Copies of the financial reports were included in the Board's packet. No issues reported.

Halyna reported that work on funding applications and grants is on-going, and applications will be submitted in a timely manner. Work will begin on the 25/26 budget. She is working with appropriate staff on RFPs.

Halyna was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Finance Director's Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ridership figures were included in the Board's packet. Brendan reported that incorrect data collected from the fare boxes has been addressed and overall totals are increasing.

The Customer Service Report was reviewed and shows that the District had a 33% increase in calls over the prior year.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Operations Director's Report as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Maintenance Director's report was included in the Board's packet and screenshared.

Joe Comerford reported that an additional staff member has been hired and will begin on 2/24. The District would like to hire one more full-time mechanic. There was a brief discussion on the challenges in finding and hiring qualified mechanics.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Maintenance Director's Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

PTASP Plan Goals

A copy of the PTASP Plan Goals, the required public transit safety plan, was included in the Board's packet and screenshared. The Plan is updated yearly. The data indicates that we have experienced a 30% increase in services over the prior year. Because of this increase in service, there has also been an increase in incidents.

Joe was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members related to the report.

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the PTASP Plan Goals as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-008

Tim Griswold made the following motion:

WHEREAS, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b, the municipalities of Chester, Clinton, Deep River, Essex, Killingworth, Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, and Westbrook established the ETD in 1981;

WHEREAS, the municipalities of Durham, Middlefield and Middletown joined ETD in 2022 as Middletown Transit District combined with ETD;

WHEREAS, the municipalities of East Hampton and Portland joined ETD in 2024;

WHEREAS, the Towns of East Haddam and Haddam have contracted ETD for public transit service;

AND WHEREAS, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b(e) provides that "[t]he legislative body of any municipality may vote to establish a transit district or to join with any one or more municipalities to form such a district. Any municipality may at any time be included in the district if the legislative body thereof so votes and if accepted by a majority vote of the directors of the transit district."

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board hereby invites the Towns of East Haddam and Haddam to join the ETD in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-273b;

RESOLVED, that Leslie B. Strauss, Chairperson of the Board, may execute any further documents necessary or as may be required to effectuate such invitation.

RESOLVED, that all actions heretofore with respect to the foregoing matters be and each of them hereby is approved and ratified in all respects; and

RESOLVED, that this resolution and consent be placed in the minute book of the ETD and become a part of the records of the ETD.

DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Board Retreat

The Board Retreat is scheduled on 4/29/25 at the Chester Meeting House from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. David Lee has agreed to be the facilitator of the Retreat. The agenda and materials for the Retreat will be forwarded to Board members.

CHAIR COMMENTS - Leslie thanked Chris Dennison for coordinating this morning's meeting and providing food and beverages. She encouraged board members to attend the meetings in person.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

NEXT MEETING -4/11/25

Leslie Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 a.m. Kathryn Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk