

**Motor Carrier Advisory Council**  
**Microsoft Teams Meeting**  
**May 30, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:** Chief Chris Smith, Sandra Bianco, Commissioner Tony Guerrero, Deputy Commissioner Ben Arsenault, Deputy Commissioner Milli Torres-Ferguson, Jeannine Holmes, Felipe Briseno, Gene Catania, Michelle Givens, Stacy Manware, Michele Moroni, Joan Nichols, Deb Notarino, Tiffany Hardwick, Eyvonne Parker-Bair, Cindy Zuerblis, Kelly O’Connell, Christopher Herb, John Blair, Jean Cronin, James Polites, Lt. Evelyn Stender, Adam Grippo, Donald Braman, Paul Farrell, Eric Johnson, David Hiscox, Paul Kritzler, Sgt. John Acampora, Peter Babich, Nicole Foertsch, John Getsie, David Chu, Audrey Hall, Njoku Ambrose, Nicole Rivers, Jose Romero, Walter Morton, CT-N

- I. **Call to Order** – Motor Carrier Advisory Council (MCAC) Chairman Christopher Smith called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and informed participants the meeting was being recorded also that cameras must be turned on for this meeting. Chairman Smith also welcomed Commissioner Guerra and asked him to say a few words. The Commissioner thanked everyone for joining the meeting. Chairman Smith opened the meeting by approving the minutes of the February 29, 2024, meeting.
- II. **Approval of the February 29, 2024, Minutes** – Chairman Smith asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes from the last meeting. There weren’t any requests for changes. Chairman Smith asked for a motion to accept the minutes from February’s Motor Carrier Meeting Paul Farrell motioned to approve the minutes, and David Hiscox seconded the motion.
- III. **Review of the Legislative Session of the General Assembly** – Jim Polites highlighted Senate Bill 183 which now is Public Act 24-20 which includes the DMV agency bill that the Governor signed on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The DMV made recommendations regarding business licenses and background checks. Some of the other recommendations were for binding requirements for recyclers and some expectations regarding driving schools. The other was concerning the idling of school buses during pre-trip inspections which we will continue to work on with Jean Cronin. The final provision that was adopted was reviving an incentive program for municipalities to purchase school buses that are equipped with safety belts.

**Dept. of Economic and Community Development – No Attendee**

## **Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Transportation – No Attendee**

### **Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection- Paul Farrell**

- Paul Farrell stated there was nothing to note on DEEP's side from the legislative session and noted a late breaking development in terms of federal grant programs and the speed with which federal agencies are issuing awards, The EPA announced just yesterday (May 29<sup>th</sup>) a \$21.5 million award to six Connecticut school districts for 91 electric school buses. The communities receiving awards include Ridgefield Fairfield, Branford, Bridgeport, West Hartford, and East Hartford. EPA. DEEP's role is going to be limited to implementing a gap filling grant program. Also Deep is working on a clean fuel infrastructure grant with FHWA, which awarded funding for over 90 light duty fast chargers and several level 2 chargers within seven Connecticut communities.

## **Dept. of Revenue Services – No Attendee**

### **Department of Transportation – David Hiscox**

- Dave stated regarding vehicle weights there is a bill proposed by industry to increase or allow recyclable materials to be transported at higher load capacities, the DOT opposed that, and it did not pass.

## **Judicial – Stacey Manware**

- I think one of the challenges that we have is implementing, the provision of the automated work zone, automated enforcement with the DOT for the suspension of the registration. But I think it's a technical change and there was opportunity to talk and to iron out some details during the session so that was extremely helpful in being able to come up with something that can be implemented. We got clarification on some legislation about passing school buses, which now seems to be more firmly of municipal process, so we're able to work with, the folks at the DMV and the DOT to iron those things out.
- On a related note, we are moving forward with our CDL remote court. We are creating this remote court for CDL holders to make it more accessible for them. The target date for that to be done is the end of this year. Stacy thanked everyone for all their help. Commissioner Guerrero asked how this process will work. Stacy explained that there is an online disposition process where they take in all infractions from every law enforcement agency and have a public facing portal where you can come in and plead not guilty and then process their cases. There is a problem with CDL drivers in identifying them as a CDL driver if they are not identified as a CDL driver the disposition could be inappropriate. We worked with the DMV to do an interface that identifies our CONNETICUT licensed drivers who have commercial driver's licenses, and those

individuals get put on a different docket and we're creating a pilot for them to be able to, have their hearings or resolve their cases from beginning to end remotely. The Commissioner asked when this would be complete, and Stacy added that the first part will be done by the end of the year.

#### **UCONN – Eric Jackson – No Attendee**

#### **Connecticut Farm Bureau – Joan Nichols**

#### **Motor Carrier Industry**

#### **Connecticut Bus Association/CT School Transportation Association – Jean Cronin**

- Connecticut Bus Association, which are the charter bus operators in the state of Connecticut. As I reported at the last meeting, we are involved in a very complex and lengthy project between ourselves and DOT and eventually Department of Revenue Services on rewriting some of the motorbus statutes. And that is a result of a lawsuit and a change in the bus certificates of need and necessity which are being turned back in by these longtime motor bus companies to the DOT. The concern is twofold. Number one, those certificates are used by those companies to register their buses. So that's a bit of a problem and #2 those certificates are also tied to several tax exemptions that those companies have had for decades. So, this will need to be sorted out.
- We have brought a tax attorney on board; we have been working very closely with him. We have been having preliminary conversations with the DOT and their legislative liaison Felipe. We will be meeting at some point soon with the Bureau of Public Transportation, your folks there as well as you to work these pieces through and hopefully we'll have something put together for the next legislative session. I heard some good news from Phil that the motor bus regulations, which I think have been pending for, I about 11 or 12 years now are going to finally move forward and move through the process. Hopefully by the time we convene, you know, early next year we'll have something really concrete to talk about.
- As far as the Costa, the Connecticut School Transportation Association, I want to give a big shout out to DMV and Commissioner and all your folks there for the projects we have been working on, some initiated by ourselves and others initiated by your folks and one being the proficiency test pre trip changes for our drivers that went into effect March 1st and Deb Notarino and her team we have been getting really good feedback from the drivers that it's really helped reduce their anxiety. I know when we had a meeting earlier, your folks are going to be giving some of your own feedback from your inspectors on that. But thank you again for listening and working with us on that issue.
- The online registration pilot program that you initiated with our school bus company; the pilot is just about to start. We are really excited about that and looking forward to

good things there and eventually rolling it out to all the school bus companies, hopefully saving time for your staff, our staff and everybody in between. We are loving this DMV modernization.

- As far as the legislation, thank you to Jim Polites. You've worked so well with us on many projects this session. There were several items that got rolled into the big DMV bill, Senate Bill 183. One came from us and that was the school bus idling issue which I spoke about at our last meeting where our bus drivers are mandated every day to do pre trip inspections on their vehicles where they have the vehicles running while these tests and it exceeds the three-minute idling law, which has become an issue. We had gone to the legislature seeking an exemption for the pre trips from that law and rather than give us an exemption, instead the leaders of the Transportation Committee suggested through legislation that we work with DMV on ways that we can perform that test without idling that whole time. So as a result, there was a separate Bill, House Bill 5327. It got rolled into Senate Bill 18-183. It's now section 38 in that section requires the DMV Commissioner to provide guidance to school bus operators on the daily inspections, how they can be performed, how many of the components of that test can be performed with the engine off or in the accessory mode position they've given you.
- A very exciting deadline date of September 1st on that one, and Commissioner, as we've said before, we're happy to work with you and your staff on that. We look forward to the guidance. We're anxious to see how this can be done. it's quite a complex test. There's a lot of safety measures involved, so we will wait to see what comes of that.
- As Jim had mentioned, there's also the seat Belt fund. The Transportation Committee decided to revive that fund, which was created several years ago. It was a pilot program that has since expired, but the fund is still there, and the money still collects. There's quite a bit of money there and the committee decided to reinstate that fund. What it does is it allows a municipality to apply to the department to receive up to 50% of the sales tax reimbursed for the purchase of up to 50 school buses that would have seat belts. So, the department is going to be developing criteria notifying the towns, so the towns must apply, but the reimbursement comes to the bus companies. If the bus company is operating the schools' buses, there are a few towns in Connecticut that operate their own school buses and that would be different, they can apply directly, but our companies would need to go through their municipalities.
- When it was initially created, I don't believe any towns applied for that fund, so we'll see if that's different now. There's only one town now that mandates seat belts back when the fund was created. I think there were about five or six, so we will see what happens with the new fund.
- And then finally, there was another bill that impacts everyone. It is the bill that Jim talked about, the school bus cameras, Senate bill 24-20 came from the Public Safety Committee. It was put forward by the Bridgeport delegation.
- They have a company that's working with them, doing a pilot program of cameras on the buses they filmed about 10,000 vehicles passing school buses over a six-month period. What we had found in surveying our members at the request of the leadership

of the Transportation Committee is not many entities are using these cameras anymore at all, and it could have been complications with how the statute was created and the money goes back to the towns and how it's enforced. But I guess the hope is that this revision to the Statute will clean that up a little bit.

- There is a very good process going right now with your agency, which is the system you have online that allows our drivers to report one of vehicle passes a school bus if they can get the plate number and we send that information into DMV the inspectors issue tickets to those drivers and those are expensive tickets.
- Paul, thank you from DEEP, Paul Farrell for talking about those electric bus grants. We're excited to see those as I mentioned before, I am afraid that the towns are very far behind on this mandate. It's most of our urban settings and they are not even close to meeting that deadline. So, any information that you can provide to municipalities, you know, we keep talking about it to them, but again, it must be initiated by the municipalities, they're the ones who must apply for the grants. It's quite a process. The buses are expensive. Then you have the infrastructure. You're dealing with utility companies and it's a big chore, but we're only seven, no 6 short years away now, and a lot of these towns have not even begun to purchase their first electric bus. So, any effort to you can provide there to help us educate municipalities would be greatly appreciated. Paul Farrell requested CBA help DEEP identify the school districts in the EJ areas prioritize outreach and noted the Connecticut Green Bank also had federal grant funds for school bus electrification. Farrell also noted that DEEP is in contact with CGB to try to leverage the DEEP program with the Green Bank program for the benefit of EJ communities.

**Connecticut Construction Industries Association – No Attendee**

**Connecticut Energy Marketers Association – David Chu – Nothing to add.**

**Connecticut Food Store Association – No Attendee**

**Motor Transport Association of Connecticut – John Blair**

- Nothing Significant to add, John thanked the DMV for supporting them in their Truck Driving Championship event. They will be hosting 80 drivers from across New England and it's a big safety event and they are glad that the DMV Inspectors help and participate.

**Shore Associates – No Attendees**

## **U.S DOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association (FMCSA) – No Attendee**

Chairman Smith added that the Greenwich Scale is back open and operational. He thanked the DOT for taking care of that for the DMV.

## **Innovative Technology Deployment/Commercial Vehicle Operations (ITD/CVO and PRISM) – Kelly O’Connell**

- We are working with FMCSA on the new SAFER programs and transmitting data. There will be a whiteboard meeting in Louisville KY in August.

## **Performance Registration Information System Management (PRISM) – Kelly O’Connell**

- Added into ITD above.

## **Connecticut Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) – Lt. Stender**

- MCSAP front that we're working through our yearly Grant, we're trying to finalize some of the last amount of our high priority funding DMV CVSD applied for a new high priority grant hopefully we'll get awarded that money for more traffic enforcement coming at late this summer to early fall, but we still have some grants leftover to do more enforcement over the summertime to keep the roads a little safer.
- Here are some statistics for this year, so far, we have stopped just over 8093 stops, 3533 were out of service violations. We also issued 823 CVSA decals, so we are addressing good and bad driver behavior out there on the roads.
- As of this morning there were 218 flat tire violations since January 1 which indicates that the tire technology we have set up in Union and Greenwich is working.
- In the last meeting of with MTAC we discussed more speed enforcement on the roadways to keep it safer out there and we have stopped 1253 speeding trucks since January 1 and those numbers include DMV and CSP combined.
- We have conducted 7695 school bus inspections since the start of the school year, and we are right on the cusp of finishing that up for the school year. Drivewyze is still functioning great in the state saving about \$100,000 a month to the industry and about 1000 hours of driving not having to enter the weigh stations.
- Chairman Smith asked Lt. Stender to comment on recent training that has been conducted. Lt Stender replied that there are several conferences going on this year that are beneficial to CVSD. Several have already taken place; the spring CVSA Conference is coming up in Louisville KY and there was a FMCSA / MCSAP planning Conference in Chicago that was attended by several of the CVSD Staff. There is also a FMCSA software change from SAFTY NET to a new system, there are classes and conferences being held for staff regarding those changes also. Commissioner Guerrero asked Lt Stender to elaborate on the Safety Net issues and she explained that FMCSA is upgrading the old SAFTY NET software and updating it to a new system called SAFESPEC, It's their inspection data software, so currently they're working on integrating inspections only by

next year, maybe the year after that, they'll integrate all of the crash data, which is going to be a huge undertaking for ourselves, DOT and FMCSA to make all of that happen seamlessly without losing valuable carrier data in the state.

#### **CDL Testing – DEU – Cindy Zuerblis**

- Cindy stated that there were no issues in her area as far as scheduling everything looks good. All the staff is now trained to do CDL testing except for two agents. Amy Emonds an Agent supervisor will be traveling to the AAMVA to learn about there new modernization testing system which eventually we will be switching over to that new system. There are a few slowdowns, but we will notify industry when that gets closer.

#### **V. Closing Statements**

- Commissioner Guerrero informed the group that this will be Chairman Smith's last meeting as he will be retiring from state service on June 1. Commissioner Guerrero congratulated Chairman Smith on his retirement and wished him a happy retirement. Chairman Smith Thanked everyone on the panel for a job well done and stated that it these meetings have made a difference with the motor carrier industry. Chairman Smith thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve here with this group and continued to adjourn the meeting.

**Chairman Chris Smith -Motion to adjourn – Jean Cronin, so move motion, Kelly O'Connell Second.**

- The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 pm.