

**COMMUTER ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MEETING APRIL 9, 2008**

**CHAired BY** Gregory W. Townsend, Legislator

**IN ATTENDANCE:** In excess of 50 commuters  
Edward Diana, County Executive  
Annie Rabbit, Member of Assembly, 9<sup>th</sup> District  
Rich Mayfield, OC Executive's Office  
Jim McGee, Senator Larkin's Office  
John Czamanske, Deputy Commissioner, OC Planning Dept.  
Rob Parrington, OC Planning Department  
Robert Onofry, City Judge, Port Jervis  
David Markowitz, Travel Demand Manager, DOT  
Christine Falzone, Dir. Sales & Marketing, Shortline  
Donna Young, Northern District Safety Dir., Shortline  
The Photos News  
J. Riff, Time Herald Record

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 9, 2008  
Monroe Senior Center, 101 Mine Road, Monroe

**TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Townsend introduced our special guests and explained the purpose of this council is to work together for a better traveling experience to and from work. The floor was then opened for discussion.

**David Markowitz reported as follows:**

All of the Park & Ride lots with the exception of Route 17M Harriman and Washingtonville are owned by the State and maintained by the County. Shortline maintains the aforementioned lots. All public held lots are opened for all residents or Orange County, bus riders as well as car poolers. There will be major improvements at all parking facilities.

- Lighting will be improved.
- Trash receptacles will be provided.
- Snow and ice removal will be handled earlier.
- Chester Park & Ride – Shortline buses will be moving to a new lot and this will open up approximately 50 more spaces at this facility. This is a short-term plan. The long-term plan is to expand all Park & Ride facilities. Mr. Markowitz will keep up updated as to when he received required approvals and as the work progresses.

**Ms. Falzone and Ms. Young reported as follows:**

In general, the discussions once again revolved around safety, Shortline employee's attitudes, timeliness and cleanliness. Similar issues from our last meeting were once again raised since Shortline did not address them since the last meeting.

- Shortline will be investigating the implementation of a system to improve communication with the passengers, i.e., text message alerts.
- A new cleaning program has been instituted. A number of commuters commented on the cleanliness of the buses.
- The Eastside riders continue to have an issue with broken seats on Bus NO. 4 and Ms. Falzone will, once again, bring this to the attention of the proper party.
- The Eastside riders requested additional buses added to the schedule – one at 7:30 a.m. and then a later bus in the evening to accommodate different work schedules. Shortline will address this.
- Are-evaluation of the tickets will be considered.
  - a. Removing male or female from the tickets (apparently NJ tickets do not have M or F but this question was never answered)
  - b. 10 trips – use them or lose them (no refund)
  - c. 40 trips – will stay as is
  - d. 50 trips – Shortline feels this is the better bargain
- A ticket agent will be assigned in Chester for convenience.
- Regarding any possible strike or slow down of service by drivers – By law, Shortline can do nothing but inform the commuters as soon as possible if there will be any disruption of service in order for the commuters to make alternate arrangements. They cannot provide substitute service.
- Congestion at the Port Authority gates once again is a main issue. Ms. Falzone will look into Gate 308 – having consecutive buses at 5:30 p.m., 5:35 p.m., and 5:40 p.m. to different destinations, which causes mass confusion at this particular gate as well as massive delays.
- Communication at the Shortline dispatcher's area is questionable. The proper parties to improve notification to commuters in the event of delays, etc will address this. Neither Ms. Falzone nor Ms. Young are aware of the disrespectful treatment commuters receive from the dispatcher's area. This will be addressed.
- Regarding Monroe Local buses stopping along Route 17 in New Jersey – these buses do not enter the Port Authority full so they must pick up passengers. Ms. Falzone said if we do not want to stop n New Jersey she can remove one bus to combine passengers. Then the bus will then be full so stopping will not be necessary.

## **COUNTY OFFICIALS:**

All county officials, especially Mr. Diana and Ms. Rabbitt reiterated their commitment to Orange County. The congestion issue and attention to mass transit within Orange County is priority. The Orange County Department of Planning is in the process of completing a travel brochure on how to get around Orange County. They are all working for the commuter.

Mr. Diana referred to the new facility that Shortline will be building in Chester, which will house all of their vehicles and executive offices. This will keep the buses garaged so we will have clean, warm buses and if it so happens a bus breaks down, the mechanic is on site and an extra bus will be dispatched immediately. This will assist in cutting down on the lateness of some buses. No time line for the completion of this facility was discussed.

Mr. Diana also advised he has a very good working relationship with the Port Authority and our issues will be addressed.

## **Mr. Townsend reported as follows:**

- The Commuter Advisory Council has grown immensely. The participation at this meeting is very positive especially with the representation of the government agencies. We thank all participants and look forward to the expansion of the council.
- Suggested free of charge commuter stickers for cars at Park & Ride to ensure no ticketing by police.
- Suggested electronic signs at bus stops to give commuters up to the minute information on bus schedule.
- Shortline dispatch number to report late bus, etc. – 201-529-3555 x1555.
- Once again, all information will be posted on Monroe's website: [www.moroeny.org](http://www.moroeny.org), which includes the Service Issue Report form. In order for this Council to be productive, all Service Issues, good or bad, must be in writing.
- The time and place of our next meeting is to be determined. This meeting was held to discuss outstanding issues and receive updates of accomplishments from the panel as well as any new issues.