

Connecticut DOT

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

ACTION PLAN

Putting Customers First



Produced by the Connecticut Department of
Transportation's Customer Experience Unit

June 2023



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A Message from the Bureau Chief of Public Transportation

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is proud to deliver the Department's first ever CX Action Plan for transit customers across the state. As a new Bureau Chief in this organization, I am incredibly privileged to celebrate this accomplishment and support the next steps and path forward which will be led by the Agency's dedicated Customer Experience (CX) Unit. Connecticut is fortunate to have an extensive network of bus, rail, and paratransit services that connect residents within the state, as well as regional intercity services to Boston, Springfield, New York City, and more. Connecticut is a leader in delivering major new transit investments, including CTfastrak and CTrail Hartford Line. Safety and sustainability are always at the forefront of our minds. All this, combined with our renewed mission to ensure that transportation is available for all residents who need it, makes me hopeful for the future of transportation in this state.

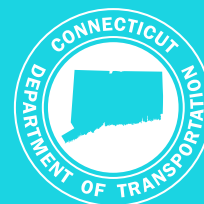
We have one of the best foundations on which to build, here in Connecticut. Now it is time to be a leader in delivering exceptional transit customer experiences across the state, through our CX Action Plan. This CX plan was based on extensive outreach, with an eye toward diversity in all its forms. We used input from customers across Connecticut and from the state's transit providers, stakeholders, and transportation leaders. The plan includes information about the feedback we received from every corner of the state, along with upcoming and on-going programs and projects that represent priorities for improvements.

CTDOT has a remarkable team of transit professionals dedicated to delivering this plan. Our success will be the result of our strong partnership with statewide bus, rail, and paratransit service providers and our commitment to continue to listen to you, our customers, and to respond to your feedback and suggestions.



Benjamin Limmer

Bureau Chief of
Public Transportation
CTDOT



A New Vision for **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE** in Connecticut

Connecticut will be known for **exceptional transit service** that is **informed by customer input** and supported by a broad coalition of service providers, employees, and advocacy groups. We will work to **deliver safe, equitable, affordable, frequent, and reliable service** that is easy to understand, easy to use, and the travel mode of choice.



CX
TransitCX.com

NOTICE
AVOID

13

HOS
CT A

What Does CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

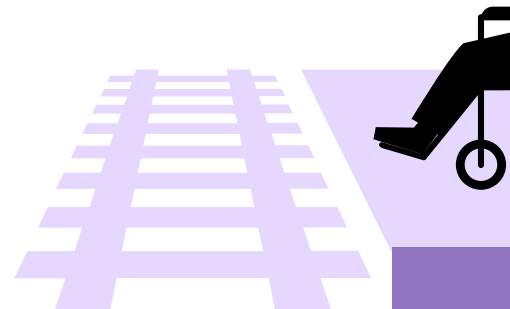
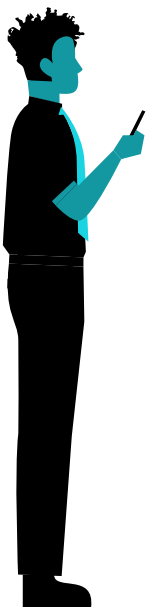
Planning a trip,
purchasing
fares online,
or scheduling
a paratransit
ride

Customer Experience is a customer's overall perception of the transit system based on their interactions at each step of their journey – from planning a trip, to taking a ride, to arriving at a destination.

Getting to the
station or stop

Buying a
ticket

Waiting for the
transit vehicle



EXPERIENCE Mean?

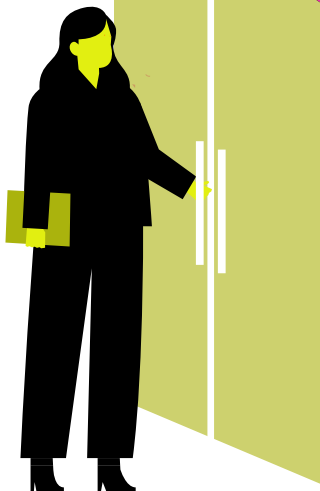
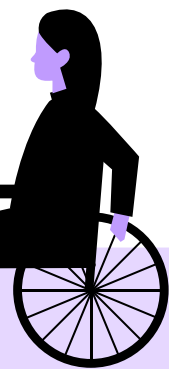


**Boarding the
transit vehicle**

**On-board
experience**

**Exiting the
transit vehicle**

**Getting
from the
station/stop
to the final
destination**



What is the CX Action Plan?

CTDOT is putting customers first by developing a Customer Experience Action Plan. The CX Action Plan defines a vision for the future of public transportation in Connecticut that is based on customer priorities and identifies actions to make transit more pleasant, reliable, and efficient for everyone.

Goals of the Action Plan:

Connect with transit riders to listen and learn about their experience using public transportation.

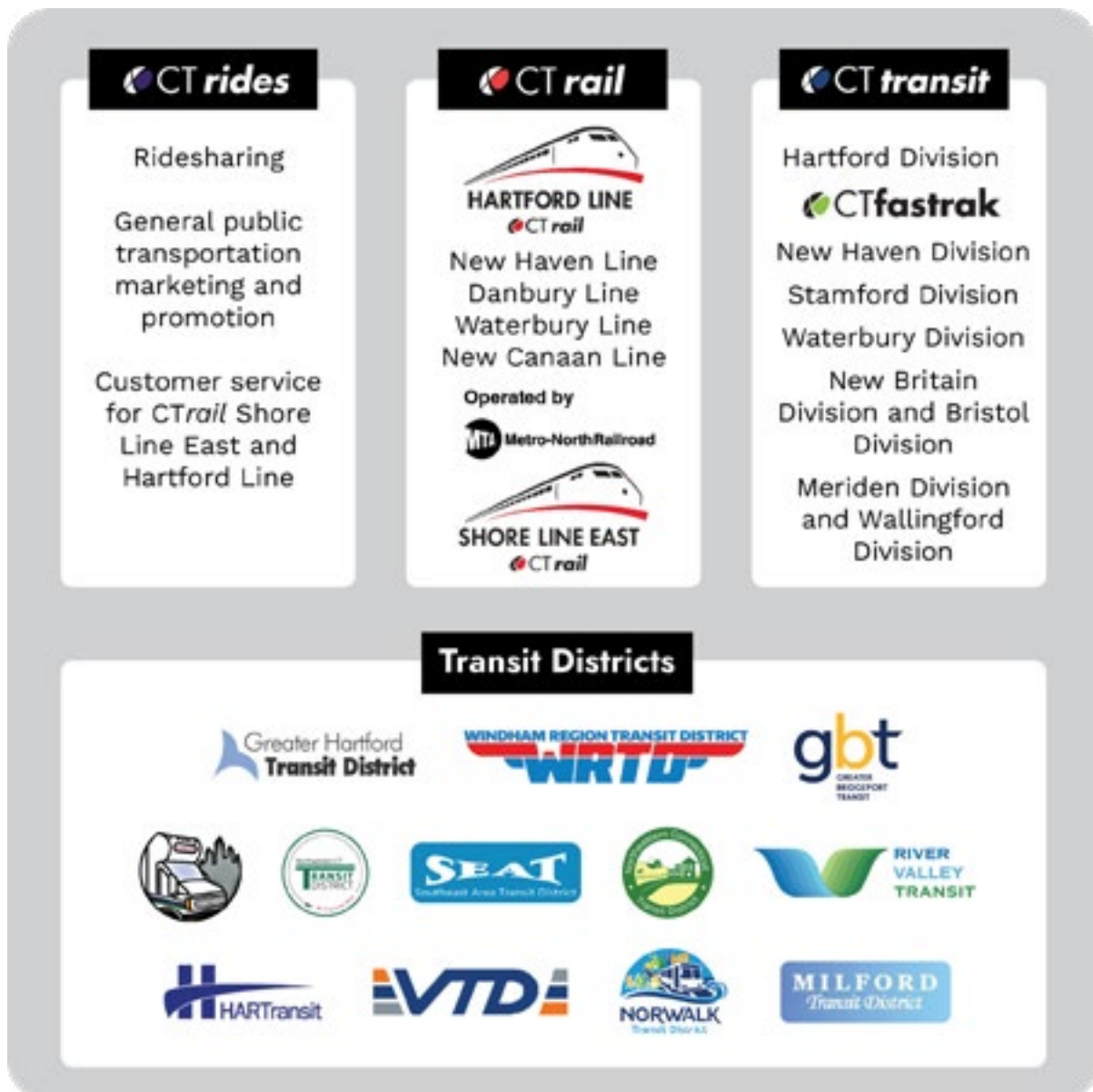
Better understand changing customer needs, expectations, and desires for the state's transit system.

Define a vision for the future of public transportation in Connecticut based on customer priorities.

Identify actions that can be taken to make transit a reliable and efficient experience for everyone.

Partners and Service Providers

CTDOT is invested in providing excellent transit service and delivering on this plan's commitment to you. We will work closely with bus, rail, and paratransit providers and meet regularly to discuss progress on actions and further define future opportunities.



Who Are Our Customers?

Public transportation is for **everyone**. Customers in Connecticut are diverse and are of all ages, abilities, genders, and racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. They live and work in large cities, small towns, and rural and suburban areas.

Public transportation is used for **everything**. Customers in Connecticut use it to get to jobs, school, see family and friends, go shopping, get to medical appointments, and get to parks and recreation.

More than 50 million trips were taken in 2022 in the state of Connecticut by varied combinations of local and express bus service, bus rapid transit, intrastate, intercity and regional train service, ADA paratransit, dial-a-ride, and microtransit. Public transportation is a vital part of our communities and provides access, equity, and economic vitality.

In this plan we outline what we heard from customers and identify actions to make improvements to the **entire** customer experience.

To find out more, keep turning the page!



Connecting With Customers

We engaged with transit customers, public transportation service providers, stakeholders, and community partners to collect feedback and input on the state's many public transportation services. This feedback and input is at the core of the CX Action Plan and was used to develop priority areas and actions to improve public transportation in Connecticut.



Engagement By the Numbers

29

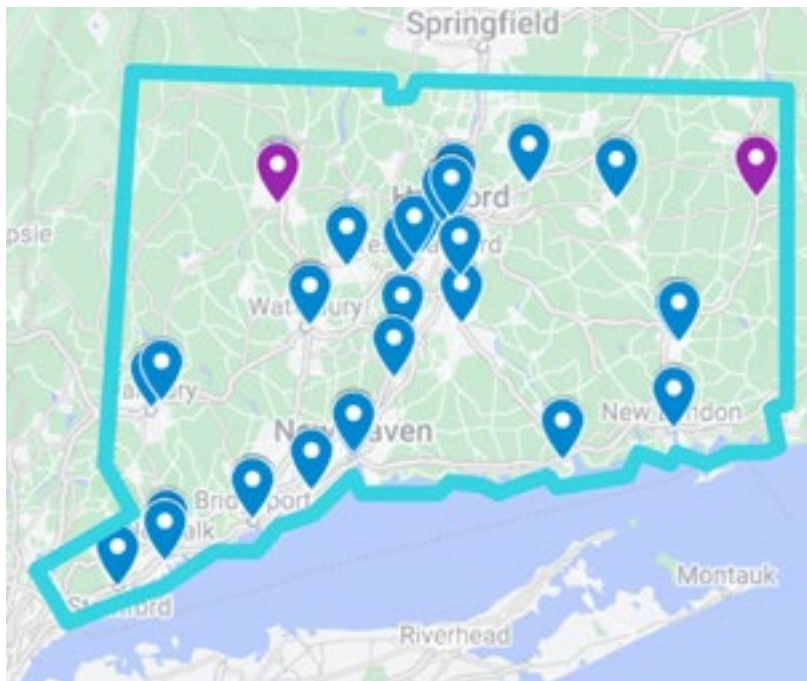
Stakeholder
Interviews

10

Focus
Groups

4k+

Survey
Responses



36

Pop-up
Events



143

Employee Survey
Responses

238

Customer
Action Ideas

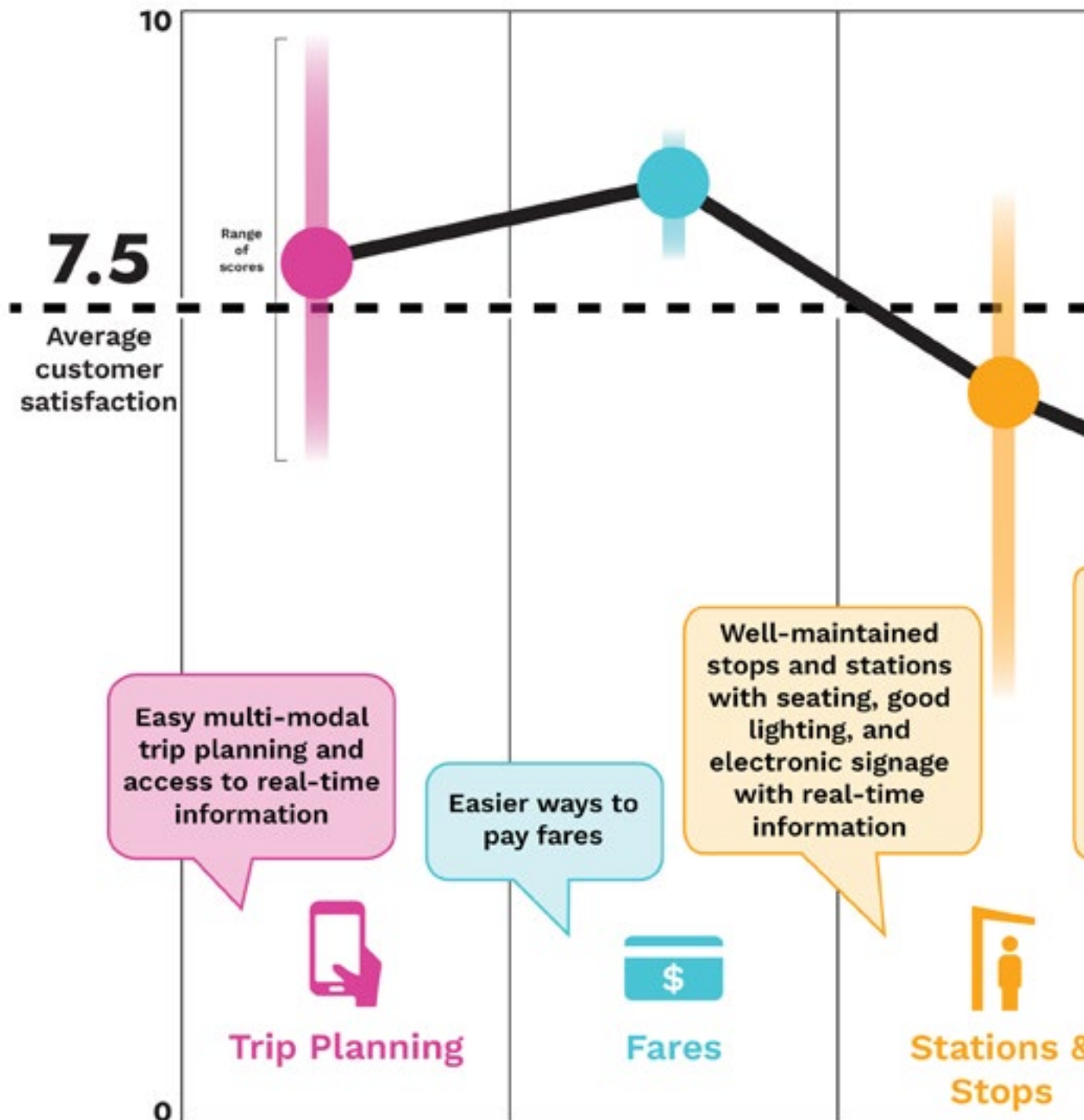
10k

Interactions

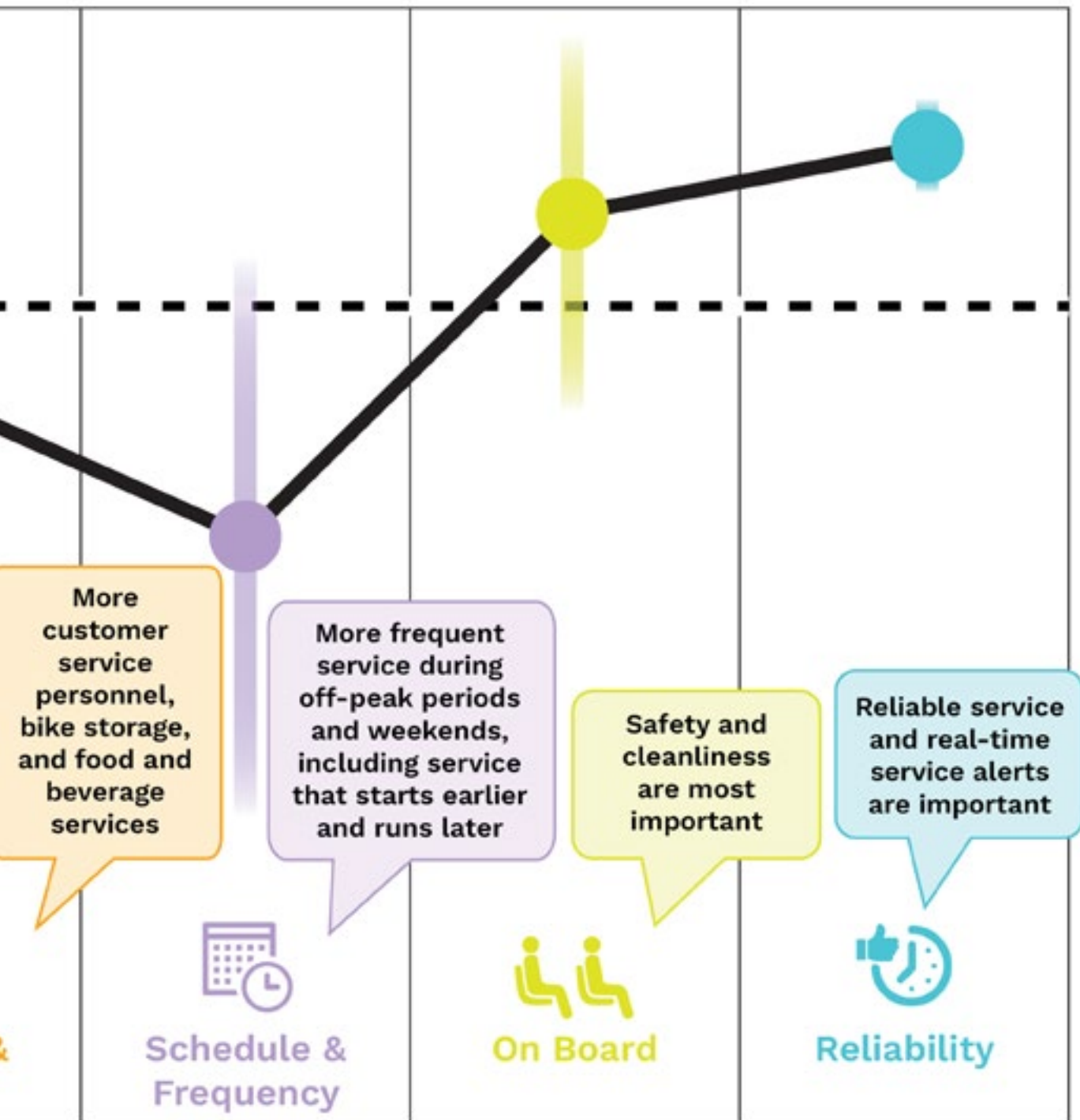
Check out our [engagement summary video](#)!

What We Learned

More than 4,000 people participated in our [online survey](#) in which they rated their satisfaction with different parts of their transit journey. Overall, the satisfaction with public transportation in Connecticut came in at 7.5 out of 10.



Stations & Stops and **Schedule & Frequency** fell below 7.5, highlighting two areas in need of improvement statewide. We also learned about key improvements customers would like to see in other parts of their transit journey.





Focusing on Customer Priorities

Our customers told us what is most important to them and what they need from the transit system. We listened, and identified three priority focus areas.

Improved Service

Provide service that is reliable and schedules that meet the needs of as many customers as possible.



Schedule &
Frequency



Reliability

Easier to Use

Make it easier to plan trips and pay fares. Provide real-time schedule and service information in a variety of ways and locations – online, in stations, at stops, and on board transit vehicles.



Trip Planning



Fares

Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

Ensure that stations and stops are accessible, have the services and security features customers need, are well-maintained, and provide clean and comfortable transit vehicles.



Stations & Stops












On Board

Taking Action to Make Your Priorities a Reality










This chart shows **ACTIONS** that CTDOT and our service provider partners have initiated or that are in progress to improve customer experiences. Projects that are completed are also shown to demonstrate that, even before the launch of this CX Action Plan, we have been working towards improvement of the statewide customer experience.



Easier to Use

- 9 Mobile Ticketing for Buses  COMPLETED!
- 10 Transit is a Trip Campaign  COMPLETED!
- 11 Transit Royale  COMPLETED!
- 12 CTPass Program  IN PROGRESS
- 13 Unified Fare Project  IN PROGRESS
- 14 Unified Mobile App Solution & Open Payments  IN PROGRESS
- 15 Rail Station Customer Service Initiatives  IN PROGRESS
- 16 On-Board Electronic Information Displays  IN PROGRESS
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Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

- 18 M8 Electric Trains  COMPLETED!
- 19 New Rail Station Boarding Platforms  COMPLETED!
- 20 Statewide Bus Stop Enhancement Program  IN PROGRESS
- 21 New Rail Cars  IN PROGRESS
- 22 New Electric Buses with Customer-Picked Seats  IN PROGRESS
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- 25 New Train Stations  IN PROGRESS
- 26 Enhanced Wireless Connectivity Initiative  IN PROGRESS

Improved Service

Our customers told us that “Schedule & Frequency” is the area that needs the most attention. In particular, we heard that:

- Traditional bus and rail schedules do not meet every customer’s needs.
- Customers want better schedule alignment between bus and train service.
- Customers want more weekend/evening service with less wait time in-between.
- We need to address service gaps with alternative service delivery options like microtransit.
- There is a need for improved paratransit agency coordination.

The following pages describe actions that we have completed or that are in progress. However, we know there is more work to do. The “Areas of Opportunity” highlight two initiatives we have identified as future actions.

“There should be a ‘call-for-service’ option instead of buses on fixed schedules.”

“Make schedules easy to follow and predictable to suit people’s lifestyle needs.”



“Buses do not run frequently enough between major centers.”



1

Bus Service Improvements

COMPLETED



In the first phase of the Move New Haven initiative, 17 local fixed routes in the Greater New Haven Area were extended to 1 a.m. ADA paratransit service was also expanded to within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the fixed routes during the new hours and days of service.

A new express route, the 940 Meriden-Waterbury Express, was added to provide quick travel times between the two cities on weekdays.

2

Rail Service Improvements

COMPLETED



Six new express trains were added to the New Haven Line. They now run between New Haven and Grand Central in as little as 1 hour and 39 minutes, during the morning and afternoon rush-hours.

Seven trains were added to the Waterbury Line on weekdays. Service begins earlier in the morning and runs more often in off-peak hours. Each weekday, the Waterbury Line now runs 22 trains.

3

ParkConneCT 2022 & 2023

COMPLETED



ParkConneCT is a collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). It connects people to state parks and beaches during the summer months and promotes seasonal employment. The program serves Hammonasset Beach, Indian Well, Osbornedale, Sherwood Island, Silver Sands, and Sleeping Giant. Visit: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Park-Connect>

Improved Service

4 Additional Northeast Regional Train Service

COMPLETED



Two Amtrak Northeast Regional trains originating on the Hartford Line began on June 5, 2023. With stops in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Stamford, they provide customers with single-seat rides from Connecticut to New York Penn Station.

5 Bus Service Expansion Package

COMING SOON!



As part of the Connecticut Biennial Budget, \$9.1 million will be available in FY2024 and \$9.4 million in FY2025 to fund increased bus service. The focus of the expansion is on better access to jobs, training, and education by providing service that operates later, seven days a week.

6 Microtransit Pilot

COMING SOON!



CTDOT will fund up to seven microtransit pilot services in Connecticut, with some service starting as early as fall 2023. Microtransit service offers an on-demand transportation option. People can use technology to book and route their trips. Microtransit service helps expand transit equity to communities that have been historically underserved. It also helps seniors and individuals with disabilities access public transit, and creates first- and last-mile connections to existing public transportation systems.

7

Faster Train Speeds



Track improvements on the New Canaan Line will allow trains to travel through this section at 50 mph instead of 30 mph - improving safety, travel time, and reliability.

We are also improving safety and speed on the New Haven Line in Bridgeport and Stratford. When the work is finished, trains on this 3-mile section of the railroad will be able to travel 20 mph faster than they do now.

8

On-Street Bus Rapid Transit



CTDOT is starting to design a new on-street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that will make bus service quicker and more reliable. This will benefit busy corridors in New Haven, Hamden, and West Haven by dedicating lanes for bus travel. This project is in partnership with the City of New Haven. It will include several on-street BRT enhanced bus stops and improve bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA infrastructure in the area.

Improved Service

Areas of Opportunity for Improved Service

Comprehensive Statewide Service Analysis

A comprehensive statewide service analysis has been identified as a key area of opportunity. This is a chance to look at our bus and rail services in a holistic way. Bus and rail should complement each other and work together. We must also consider other mobility options, including micro-mobility and active transportation. A comprehensive analysis would include some or all of the following:

- Transit accessibility and equity
- Origin and destination data to assess post-COVID travel patterns and identify where people want to go
- Barriers to and opportunities for regional travel
- Identifying the unique service needs of specific groups or events
- Bus and rail connections and schedule alignment

ADA Paratransit/Mobility Accessibility Roadmap

Improving ADA Paratransit and on-demand services for seniors and individuals with disabilities is a priority for CTDOT. Customers expressed desire for improvements with all aspects of their trip: schedules, service coordination, reservations, stop amenities, paying, reliability, ride quality, and driver and customer interactions. A statewide ADA Paratransit and Mobility assessment, with robust outreach to customers and stakeholders, is needed. It would include:

- Analysis of service levels and needs
- Opportunities for better service coordination
- Identifying alternative service delivery methods
- Updating and standardizing scheduling and reservation systems
- Customer service and operator training



Easier to Use



Our customers told us that they want a transit system that is easier to use. In particular, we heard that:

- It should be easier to plan a transit trip.
- There needs to be more bus/train user education.
- Customers want real-time bus/train information.
- Customers want to be able to access all this information via mobile app or website.
- There should be easier ways to pay fares.
- Fares should be simplified and equitable across providers.

The following pages describe actions that we have completed or that are in progress. However, we know there is more work to do. The “Areas of Opportunity” highlight two initiatives we have identified as future actions.

“I would like to see where my bus is on my phone.”

“There needs to be a better way to get live updates.”

“Have the platform LED signage reflect what is really happening, not just clock time.”



Easier to Use

9

Mobile Ticketing for Buses

COMPLETED!



CT*transit* and CT*fastrak* customers can purchase 2-hour Adult, Senior/Disabled, and Youth passes for all local buses through the Token Transit App. They can also use Transit app, Moovit, or Google Maps to purchase tickets through Token Transit. More types of passes may become available in the future. River Valley Transit (RVT), Southeast Area Transit (SEAT), and Windham Regional Transit District (WRTD) already use Token Transit.

10

Transit is a Trip Campaign

COMPLETED!

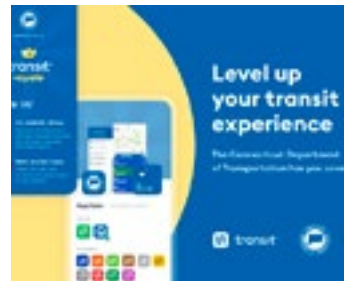


The “Transit is a Trip” campaign encourages the use of public transportation through videos, TV spots, social media, and a webpage. The campaign promotes destinations that are accessible by transit and provides personalized trip planning to make it easier to use public transit. See www.transitisatrip.com.

11

Transit Royale

COMPLETED!



CTDOT partnered with Transit app to offer Transit Royale to Connecticut residents, free of charge. Transit Royale is an upgraded version of Transit app that gives riders a better, more personalized experience when planning transit trips. Transit app, which helps riders plan and track transit trips, is free to download on both iOS and Android.



12 Ctpass Program



The Ctpass program was established to support workforce development and encourage transit use. The program makes it easier and more affordable to get passes. Ctpass will offer group rates for the CTtransit bus system and is open to state, local agencies, and other eligible organizations.

13 Unified Fare Project



The goal of the unified fare project is to make transit fares in Connecticut simpler and more equitable, as well as to increase transit ridership, by identifying a unified statewide fare policy and structure. The project will also identify potential expanded discount programs. It will be followed by public outreach to get input on the project recommendations.

14 Unified Mobile App Solution & Open Payments



CTDOT received a federal planning grant through the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transit (SMART) program. This grant will help us evaluate the best unified mobility app solution for CT and pilot open payments on transit. Open payments allow customers to “tap to pay” for a quick and easy transaction. The planning will include a roadmap for using the same app to provide real-time information on all transit services.

Easier to Use

15

Rail Station Customer Service Initiatives

 IN PROGRESS


In partnership with Metro-North, we are working to improve customer information and message features at 34 rail stations along the New Haven Line and Branch lines. Upgraded information displays at stations will provide better real-time arrival and departure information.

16

On-Board Electronic Information Displays

 IN PROGRESS


On-board bus electronic information displays can provide real-time information and messages including rider rules, stop identification, and service alerts. CT*transit* is currently piloting two on-board information displays in the Hartford Division. It is working with CTDOT to develop standards and a more widespread installation.

17

Passenger Information Displays and Connectivity Initiative

 IN PROGRESS


This initiative will upgrade the customer service systems on the Hartford Line and Shore Line East. It will include Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS), EV charging, ticket vending machine systems, and wireless connectivity.



Areas of Opportunity for Making Transit Easier to Use

Customer Awareness and Education

Using public transportation can be intimidating to those who have never used it before. Even to those who use it every day, a trip on a new bus route or rail line can be overwhelming. A broad customer awareness and familiarization campaign with an emphasis on short videos is a known area of opportunity. Some of the video topics would include:

- Public Transit 101
- Fares and how to pay them
- Service options
- How to find and read the train and bus schedules
- What to expect when you get to your stop or station
- Transit etiquette

Improving Transit Website Experience

Transit provider websites vary widely across the state. They vary in their route and schedule information, service alerts, user interface, and website security. New webpages with more consistent content and navigation would help create a more seamless and easier to use public transportation system. The Department would provide resources for website and application standards, design, upgrades, and maintenance.



Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

Our customers told us that “Stations & Stops” is another area that needs our attention. In particular, we heard that:

- Customers want to see improvements to rail stations, bus shelters, and on-board experience.
- There is strong desire for well-maintained bus shelters with good lighting, clear schedules, and electronic signage with real-time information.
- Customers want to see more accessible train stations with customer service personnel, bike storage, and food/beverage services.
- On-board cleanliness, comfort, and wireless connectivity are high priority for our customers.

The following pages describe actions that we have completed or that are in progress. However, we know there is more work to do. The “Areas of Opportunity” highlight three initiatives we have identified as future actions.

“Bike parking information for each station with number of secure spots available.”

“Wi-Fi is critical and a huge gap in what riders need on an important commuter route.”



“Bus stops should be uniform style across all routes for each transit operator, properly maintained. Make them look like a system!”



18 M8 Electric Trains

COMPLETED!



Electric trains are now running on Shore Line East. The M8 Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) produce no carbon emissions. They feature outlets at each seat, brighter interior spaces, updated restrooms, seats with higher backs, and improved luggage racks.

19 New Rail Station Boarding Platforms

COMPLETED!



A new passenger boarding platform at Clinton Station on Shore Line East allows for twice the train service to the station. The platform project included dual elevators, platform seating, covered bike parking, electric vehicle charging stations, and blue light security phones.

A new high-level boarding platform at the Merritt 7 station in Norwalk is now open for riders, featuring additional seating, a Metro-North ticket vending machine, and increased pedestrian connectivity.

20 Statewide Bus Stop Enhancement Program

IN PROGRESS



Many bus stops in the state do not have shelters, seating, or proper information. CTDOT is committed to creating a better waiting experience for bus customers. It will be investing \$17 million over the next 5 years to improve bus stops statewide. The program will help build and install ADA-compliant bus stops and shelters with schedule information. Busier stop locations could include more features, such as real-time signage, solar lighting, and trash receptacles.

Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

21

New Rail Cars



CTDOT is negotiating with a rail car builder for the design and build of 60 new rail cars. These cars will add to and replace the diesel-hauled coaches on several lines, including the Hartford, Waterbury, and Danbury Lines. They will offer better amenities, more accessibility, and greater reliability.

22

New Electric Buses with Customer-Picked Seats



In September and October 2022, CTDOT held “Bus Seat Labs,” where riders had the chance to test several types of seats. Based on customer input, all new electric buses will have seats with silica cushions. These seats will be durable and easier to keep clean. New buses will also have USB 3.0 ports for all passenger seating, a Wi-Fi system, and a new three-position bicycle rack.

23

Major Rail Station Enhancements



Major upgrades are being planned for the state’s busiest multimodal station, Stamford Transportation Center (STC). CTDOT is finalizing the STC Master Plan, which will propose transformative improvements to modernize the STC for all station users.

CTDOT and the City of New Haven also formed the New Haven Union Station Partnership to revamp multiple levels of the historic station building, as well as the east and west surface lots with increased customer amenities.



24 Rail Station ADA Accessibility Improvements



Accessibility will be improved over the next few years at four stations on the Waterbury Line. Level-boarding platforms will be added to the Ansonia, Seymour, Derby/Shelton, and Beacon Falls stations.

25 New Train Stations



Federal funds have been secured to begin the design of a new station in Enfield on the Hartford Line. Another station on this line, Windsor Locks, is being constructed at a new downtown location.

26 Enhanced Wireless Connectivity Initiative



CTDOT is evaluating a solution to enhance the wireless connectivity of passenger cars on its rail network. Coverage is being tested on the New Haven Line and Shore Line East. This data will be used to develop the best ways to provide dependable wireless service on those lines.

Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

Areas of Opportunity for Enhanced Accessibility and Comfort

Continuous Evaluation of the Rider Experience

To get regular, first-hand information about conditions on our transit system, the Department is considering a “mystery rider” program. CTDOT staff would ride transit regularly to get an in-depth look at how the system is operating. These insights and data would be used to develop projects or programs to address cleanliness and safety issues, and other operational improvements. CTDOT would also explore the potential for a more formal ambassador program that would train volunteers to assist customers at stops and stations.

Operator Recruitment Support and Coordination

Public transit employees and operators are vital to a better public transportation experience for everyone. CTDOT wants to help and support service providers to recruit and retain operators and transit staff. The following have been identified as ways for CTDOT to support these goals:

- Promote careers in public transportation
- Help to develop the workforce with a statewide CDL training program for transit bus operators
- Facilitate recruitment coordination among the service providers
- Explore leadership training programs
- Express appreciation for operators and front-line employees on a statewide level

CX Training and Assessment

A better employee experience improves the customer experience. CTDOT has identified this as an area where the Department could support service provider partners. CTDOT can help make sure public transit employees are getting the best tools to deliver a positive customer experience. With its service providers, CTDOT identified a need for a training assessment and for a statewide Customer Experience (CX) training program.



What's Next?

CTDOT is committed to continuous improvement of the customer experience. This plan is a starting point. Our success will be the result of our strong partnership with statewide bus, rail, and paratransit service providers and our commitment to continue to listen to you, our customers, and to respond to your feedback and suggestions. We will:

- ✓ Continue to listen, learn, and find ways to act on the insights you share with us. Expect to see us speaking with customers at stations and stops across the state.
- ✓ Coordinate with our partners to implement the actions that will make a difference to you.
- ✓ Provide annual updates on progress—what is working and what needs to be adjusted to help us create a more customer-centric system.
- ✓ Update this plan every 3-5 years to reflect evolving customer needs and priorities.



Let's Stay Connected!

Visit: TransitCX.com

Email: DOT.TransitCX@ct.gov

Call: 860-594-3618

Mail:

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Connecticut DOT

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
ACTION PLAN

Putting Customers First

