

April 3, 2020

## **Connecticut Department of Transportation - COVID-19 Update**

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) continues to monitor and modify operations in the wake of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak. We are committed to being responsive to the needs of the public and are balancing the needs of commuters with our ability to maintain operations while we contend with this unprecedented situation.

CTDOT headquarters in Newington and our district offices are open, but only those with CTDOT-issued badges and those with confirmed appointments with Department staff will be allowed entry.

Members of the public wishing to contact agency staff to report problems, concerns or to provide any comments or feedback should continue to visit our website and utilize the "contact us" form, which is being monitored by Department staff.

The following is an update on CTDOT programs and facilities:

### **Construction**

Road and bridge construction projects are continuing as planned. Contractors are being instructed to follow best practices and to follow public health guidelines for sanitizing and minimizing potential for virus transmission.

On Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Department emailed all CTDOT contractors and consultants assuring them that continued investment in infrastructure, now more than ever, will facilitate economic recovery and to that end, construction projects are continuing as scheduled. In addition, project development activities including project design work and other support activities are continuing. Other essential activities including project advertising, bidding and award, design support of construction, and bridge inspection, are all continuing.

Daily vehicle traffic volumes statewide have dropped substantially and are currently averaging 40% to 50% below normal. As a result of significantly fewer vehicles on the roadways, road and bridge construction operations are being allowed to modify their activities to include new, longer duration, and weekday lane closures. These modified activities will allow contractors to complete more work without hampering traffic flow and will be reversed when traffic volumes begin to rebound.

### **Maintenance**

Department facilities and garages are open. Highway and roadway maintenance, including snow plowing, pothole repair, sign and guiderail repair, debris removal, tree removal, traffic signal repairs, and other related activities – are continuing.

To minimize potential virus transmission and to avoid disruptions or impacts to operations, the Department has implemented staggered highway maintenance staffing shifts. We have also engaged a cleaning company to perform additional cleaning at all Highway Operations facilities as a proactive measure to supplement routine disinfecting and sanitizing of high-touch items and common areas.

### **Public Transportation - RAIL**

With declines in ridership on trains as a result of increased teleworking and adherence to the "Stay Safe, Stay Home" directive, the Department announced several changes in rail services. We are also increasing the cleaning of trains to keep frontline employees and customers as safe as possible.

The New Haven Line is operating on an hourly schedule, with extra trains during peak times weekdays. This is approximately 50% less than a normal weekday schedule. The New Canaan Line and Danbury Line are also operating on a reduced schedule.

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, the Department announced the start of substitute bus service on the Waterbury Branch commuter rail line, beginning Monday, April 6, 2020. With ridership down since the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, buses will allow riders to maintain social distancing, and will have the added benefit of allowing rail line infrastructure improvements to progress more quickly.

CTDOT and Metro-North are working together on a \$116 million capital improvement project, when completed, will enable increased Waterbury Line rail service. The enhanced bus service will be provided by Peter Pan and will provide additional travel options for those who must still travel.

Updated Waterbury Branch Line substitute bus schedules will be posted to the following web site:  
[www.mnr.info/mnr](http://www.mnr.info/mnr)

The Hartford Line, both CTrail Hartford Line and Amtrak Hartford Line services, are running on a new special weekday schedule. The new schedule is be posted on the web site and at Hartford Line train stations. Shore Line East continues to operate on a weekend schedule seven days per week.

All rail customers are encouraged to pre-purchase their rail tickets before boarding. Hartford Line and Shore Line East customers may purchase rail tickets using the CTrail e-Tix mobile app or through Ticket Vending Machines located at New Haven Union Station, New Haven State Street Station and all Hartford Line stations.

Updated train schedules are posted to the following web sites. Customers are encouraged to check the following web sites for specific updates before travel:

- New Haven Line: [www.mta.info/mnr](http://www.mta.info/mnr)
- Shore Line East: [www.shorelineeast.com](http://www.shorelineeast.com)
- Hartford Line: [www.hartfordline.com](http://www.hartfordline.com)

MTA daily Coronavirus updates can be found at [www.mta.info/precautions-against-coronavirus](http://www.mta.info/precautions-against-coronavirus)

### **Public Transportation - TRANSIT**

CTtransit bus service and transit district services continue to move significant numbers of customers statewide. Ridership is about 50% of a typical weekday. Many of these riders are traveling for essential purposes such as work or medical care. They have no other transportation options. We have directed service providers to modify boarding procedures and fare collections to enhance protections for both bus drivers and passengers.

Bus services continue to operate on a weekday schedule with some exceptions. CTtransit express buses to the City of Hartford are operating on a reduced schedule due to significantly lower ridership. In all locations statewide, customers must board from the rear door (when available) with the exception of persons in wheelchairs and others who require the bus to kneel.

CTDOT strongly encourages the public to reserve bus and public transit for ESSENTIAL TRAVEL ONLY such as getting to and from work or for procuring essential needs such as food and medication. Customers should practice social distancing while waiting at bus stops and while riding the bus (The Centers for Disease Control recommends a distance of six feet from others, when possible). Customers who feel sick should not use public transportation.

Driver absenteeism has been low, however, there are signs of increasing absenteeism in recent days. Additionally, the demands on the workforce are increasing as additional bus service is deployed to reduce crowding to ensure adequate social distancing onboard the buses. We are developing a contingency plan if there are manpower shortages.

We are also increasing the cleaning of buses to keep front-line employees and customers safe.

Updated bus schedules can be found at [www.cttransit.com](http://www.cttransit.com)

### **Public Transportation - FERRIES**

The two Connecticut River ferries – Rocky Hill/Glastonbury and Chester/Hadlyme - have been suspended indefinitely as of April 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Service Plazas and Rest Areas**

Service plazas on I-95, I-395 and most on the Merritt and Wilbur Cross Parkways remain open with stepped-up cleaning and sanitization procedures. Only take-out food is being served and all seating areas are closed. Visitors are being directed to purchase their items, and to remove them from the facilities to prevent people from congregating.

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, four service plazas on the Merritt Parkway in New Canaan and Orange were closed.

State rest areas remain open 24/7 with enhanced cleaning and sanitization procedures.

### **CTDOT Internal Operations:**

90% of Department employees eligible to telecommute are doing so successfully. Meetings are being held by teleconference, and video conference wherever possible.

With more of our workforce teleworking and others in the field with limited access to our intranet, we are creating a webpage to serve as a one-stop shop for all information related to COVID announcements from the Department.

CTDOT received a shipment of masks and is distributing more than 1,700 masks to our maintainers, rest area attendants, and paratransit drivers; all of whom are unable to telework and continue to work every day to keep the traveling public safe. We've also made more than 200 masks available to field staff or employees that are required to go into the field.