

# **ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT**

## **2003-2004 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Estuary Transit District (ETD) was formed in 1981 by the nine towns of the Connecticut River Estuary Region. These nine towns include Clinton, Chester, Deep River, Essex, Killingworth, Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, and Westbrook. The District's mission is to provide local, coordinated public transportation for the residents of the area. The affairs of the District are managed by a board made up of one representative from each town, each having a weighted vote based on the population of the town they represent. The Delegates serve in a voluntary capacity to adopt bylaws and rules for the conduct of the affairs of the district. Current delegates on the ETD Board are Chairman Doris Sanstrom, Westbrook; Vice Chairman, Bill Foster, Essex Secretary Virginia Zawoy, Clinton; Treasurer Cornelius McCrudden, Old Saybrook; Jean Davies, Chester; Raymond Mozzochi, Deep River; Barbara Klein of Killingworth and Ning Rich of Lyme. With the loss of long time member David Jones there is one vacancy for the town of Old Lyme. Regular Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month at 8:00 A.M. in the ETD office at Saybrook Junction Market Place, 455 Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook, CT. All meetings are open to the public.

The District began the year with a fleet of seven vehicles. Some of these buses had well over 100,000 miles so efforts began early on to replace the oldest of these. During the year 2 new buses were purchased and 2 used buses were transferred from the Estuary Senior Council for use in ETD services. 2 buses were sold at auction and at this time 1 more bus will soon be removed. At year's end the current fleet stands at 8 buses. All buses are 14 passenger and wheelchair accessible. 4 of these vehicles have bike racks installed on the front and plans are to get racks for the rest of the fleet. In the upcoming year 2 more vehicles will be purchased and 2 will be retired. Capital funding for replacement vehicles comes from State & Federal Department of Transportation Grants.

The Estuary Transit District recorded a total of 47,345 trips on its services which represents a 22% increase over last year's 36,606 trips. The District oversees the operation of 2 distinct public transit services

The first of these is the Shoreline Shuttle service which operates on a flexible service route (fixed route with off-route stops available) in the shoreline towns of Clinton, Westbrook, and Old Saybrook, Monday through Saturday. Off route service is scheduled with 24 hours advanced reservation. The Shoreline Shuttle has been able to provide continuing service along the Route One Corridor since 1999. In January 2004 the fares were increased from \$1.00 for on route stops and \$2.00 for off route service to \$1.10 and \$2.20 respectively. This service meets the CTRANSIT 'S' route in Madison and offers free transfers. These transfers allow riders to travel from New Haven to Old Saybrook for a \$1.10 fare. Free transfers are also available for monthly rail pass holders using the Shoreline East Commuter trains. Transfers accounted for some 3,171 trips out of the total 31,972 trips recorded for the Shoreline Shuttle service.

The second service is a public dial-a-ride program referred to as the Public Bus. The Public Bus service is a "personalized" transportation program available in all nine towns

in the region. This program saw several changes during the year. In September 2003 ESCI announced that it was discontinuing its senior dial-a-ride program. When that service ended the Public Bus experienced a 30-40% increase in ridership. In January 2004 ETD established a regular fare for the service of \$1.10. This new service revenue was used to offset the costs of operation. Ridership for this service averaged over 1,200 rides per month and at year's end 15,373 trips were provided. Compared with last year's numbers we saw a dramatic increase of over 61%

Historically the board met several times a year to set policy, approve expenditures and establish an operating and capital budget for the next year. Since its inception District services were provided by contracts with the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA) for administration and with the Estuary Council of Seniors Inc. (ECSI) for the operation of transit services. During the fiscal year just ended June 2004, the District began a process of reorganization.

In July 2003 the Estuary Transit District Board decided to end its contract with CRERPA with the intention of managing its own affairs. The split was amicable and ETD found new office space in the same complex at 455 Boston Post Rd, Old Saybrook. Stan Greimann rejoined ETD as the Interim Administrator while the board set about the task of finding a new Administrator to fill the position. Estuary Transit services continued without interrupt due in large part to the efforts of the board Chairman, Doris Sanstrom coupled with the help and experience of Stan Greimann. In November 2003 the board hired its first full-time employee with the appointment of James Rode as the Administrator.

In January the District took a hard look at the transportation programs it provided to the region. Keeping its mission in mind, the board saw a need for an expansion of services in the area and, with the help of their new Administrator, a plan was developed. The plan called for an expansion of service hours with a greater focus on the coordination of ETD services with other transit providers in the area. There was concern that an expansion of transit operations would place an undue burden on the service provider, ECSI. Bearing that in mind, the board decided at its meeting in March 2004 to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) with the intention of putting its service contracts out to bid. The competitive RFP process that began in March ended in June with the awarding of those contracts to DATTCO Inc.

For more than 20 years the Estuary Council of Senior Clubs Inc. (ECSC) was the operator of the Public Transportation programs in the region. These programs could not be the success they are today without the hard work of the ESCI staff and Drivers. In the upcoming fiscal year ETD will continue its campaign to revamp transit services throughout the area. Building on the success of its shoreline flex route, the District will develop new routes in the towns of Chester, Clinton, Deep River, Essex and Old Lyme and a public dial-a-ride service is in the works. Regular bus stops will be established at the local train stations and schedules will be coordinated to facilitate transfers. New marketing efforts have begun and the District continues to work closely with several different agencies to promote greater community involvement in public transportation.