

Along the Lines Episode 36: Podcast Transcript - Introducing Benjamin Limmer

00:08.95

Ben Limmer

Hello, I'm Benjamin Limmer, Bureau Chief for Public Transportation at the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and I'd like to welcome you to Along the Lines, a podcast series where we'll share exciting news and updates, and explore current issues and ideas on Connecticut's public transportation system.

00:35.00

Garrett Eucalitto

Hello, I'm Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation. Welcome to another episode of Along the Lines. We know it's been a while, but today it's my pleasure to kick off the return of this podcast series in the best way possible. Today, it's my pleasure to introduce our listeners to Benjamin Limmer, the new Bureau Chief of Public Transportation here at Conndot, and the new host of Along the Lines. Welcome to the program, Ben, or should I say welcome to your program?

01:04.00

Ben Limmer

Hey, thanks a lot, Garrett. But thank you for supporting and bringing this podcast back to all of the listeners.

1:13.00

Garrett Eucalitto

Absolutely. We know it's the most listened to public transportation podcast in Connecticut. So let's jump in, shall we? Ben, can you ah tell our listeners a little about yourself and what excited you the most about joining Condott?

01:28.00

Ben Limmer

Yeah, sure thing. I've been in the public transportation and mobility industry for over 20 years, worked at multiple transportation agencies as well as large cities across the country, from Arizona to Florida and points in between. I began my career in public transportation managing large capital projects as well as transit services, then really transition into both preparing as well as implementing large voter approved transportation programs. From there I've held a variety of positions with a heavy emphasis on enhancing the customer experience expanding both community and public support for transit, and of course identifying new funding solutions for agencies, but just generally about bridging the gaps between transportation services and the

communities that are served. What excites me most about joining the Connecticut DOT team as well as the state, First Connecticut has one of the most robust public transportation systems in the country on a statewide level. There's strong community support I've seen already. Transit is playing a vital role in the future of the state. And of course at the leadership level, there's a very aggressive vision of the role of transit in the future. Of course, the organization has a strong reputation as well, and I'm happy to be a part of it.

3:16.00

Garrett Eucalitto

You've been with Conndot for about six months. So can you share your initial thoughts on what you've learned in that time about our public transportation here in Connecticut?

03:27.00

Ben Limmer

Yeah, in my time with the Connecticut DOT, I've worked at gaining a very deep understanding of the intricacies of the public transportation system. I've worked tirelessly to try and get out and ride all the services, meeting as many employees as I can, meet the transit partners the stakeholders ah that support public transportation services throughout the state, really with each of them, ah take the time to listen to them, what are things we're doing well, what are real areas of opportunity for the future, to just engage and learn from them. Um, I have had the privilege of engaging with many community partners and stakeholders, as I mentioned, and it's really been impressive to witness the dedication and commitment of the individuals who work tirelessly to provide transportation services. I've also recognized the importance of fostering strong partnerships for the future. As well as leveraging technological advancements to improve connectivity, enhance the overall customer experience, it really ensured the sustainability of our transportation system for the future.

04:50.00

Garrett Eucalitto

I'm glad you brought up the going out and, you know, riding the system. I think for those of us who are faced with, you know, making decisions on the future of our system from a policy perspective, it's really important for all of us at the Connecticut DOT to get out and actually experience the system that the users are experiencing every day. You know, I do that. I know you do that. I know you're encouraging a lot of your team to do that too. So can you talk a little bit more about what your goals as bureau chief, both short term and long term are for our public transportation system?

05:27.00

Ben Limmer

Absolutely. You know, by getting out and writing the services, engaging with service providers as well as stakeholders, the end goal of that was to be able to start to formulate what some of

our goals should be within the Bureau, and of course, to support the broader goals of the transportation system here at the DOT. So really, as the Bureau Chief, I've set ambitious goals for our public transportation system. In the short term, my focus is going to be on strengthening what we have, of course, strengthening the reliability and efficiencies of all services, really, including bus services, rail services, of course, ferry, as well as the other transportation services we provide. Along the way, I'm going to remain hyper focused on enhancing the customer experience each and every day, as well as working to implement sustainable practices to reduce the overall environmental impacts of our transportation system. I'm really committed to fostering collaboration with our transit partners and stakeholders to identify as well as address head-on key areas for improvement or just areas of opportunity.

06:59.00

Ben Limmer

Transitioning to the long-term, I really envision a robust, completely integrated multimodal transportation network that can really seamlessly connect communities, support economic growth throughout the state, as well as promote equity and accessibility for all residents of our great state. I will continue to work tirelessly to advocate for the necessary investments, partnerships, policies, projects, you name it, to make sure this vision becomes a reality.

07:38.00

Garrett Eucalitto

Well, it's exciting and, you know, I look forward to working with you as your colleague to help achieve those goals here for Conndot. The the focus on efficiency, reliability, those are things that, you know, we hear from the users, right? And the new CX plan reflects that what we heard, you know, reliability of services are going to be critical. As we look to public transportation's future, um we want to bring more people into the system. So here in Connecticut, I know public perception has always been an issue. It's a major issue in regards to public transportation, not just in Connecticut, but across the entire United States. So for those that, you know, have not used public transportation recently or have less than a rosy view of it, what would you say to them about the services we provide here in Connecticut?

08:28.00

Ben Limmer

Yeah, great question. What I would say, and this includes both current as well as future customers, but also individuals who might live in a part of this state with less transit service. I would say to all of them that the Connecticut DOT and the Bureau of Public Transportation remains absolutely committed to providing a high-quality on-time ride, regardless of which form of public transportation they might use.

09:05.00

Ben Limmer

Addressing public perception is absolutely critical and crucial to what we do. And I want to assure those who may have, you know, maybe some reservations about using public transportation that we remain dedicated to improving our services to best serve them. You know, our goal is to provide safe, reliable, and efficient transportation options that meet the needs of all of our communities that we serve throughout the state. And we are actively working on, you mentioned the customer experience action plan, that's a perfect example, ah actively working on continuously enhancing the experience that all of our customers have on our services. To support that, that of course includes implementing technology driven solutions

10:00.00

Ben Limmer

But of course, continuously engaging with the public to understand what suggestions they might have, what concerns they might have, is there any feedback they can provide about how we are doing. And we do recognize the value that all of that input has on public transportation and eventually reaching our goal of you know reducing congestion, promoting sustainability, and fostering community connections, because that's really what it's what it's all about. And by continuously striving for improvements, and as well as being transparent along the way, we aim to really build trust and confidence in citizens throughout the state.

10:49.00

Garrett Eucalitto

Yeah, it's a, I think the feedback we receive from the users of the system, no matter how big or how small the piece of feedback, you know, oftentimes I've encountered, uh, users or travelers who think, you know, it's not a big deal. I didn't want to bring it up, but every little piece of feedback is, is important and can have a huge, uh, you know, change on our system for the better. So since you started as bureau chief around six months ago, you've been crisscrossing the entire state like you pointed out. You're getting to know our transit operators, our community partners, municipal elected officials, state legislators, and you're now a resident. You went through the DMV process and you're now here in Connecticut. You're a Nutmegger. So what would you like to share your impressions of you know our great state to the listeners? What do you think makes Connecticut so special?

11:42.00

Ben Limmer

Yes, absolutely. Well, Connecticut is truly a special place, Garrett. As I've explored different parts of the state, I'm constantly amazed by the diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, you know, strong sense of community history. The communities are vibrant and all of those ingredients are really what makes Connecticut unique. From the charming coastal towns to the picturesque countryside, Connecticut really offers that rare blend of natural beauty as well as urban sophistication.

12:23.00

Ben Limmer

You know, I've worked in other parts of the country and what really sets Connecticut apart is its strong sense of community, the genuine warmth of its residents. I've been very impressed by the dedication and passion of everyone I've met, the transit operators, partners throughout our communities and you know that I've had the pleasure of meeting. Their commitment is obvious and their commitment is really to provide excellent transportation services while embracing the values and needs of the local communities. And all of that has been incredibly inspiring for me. And it is an honor to be part of a state that values sustainability, innovation, and the wellbeing of its residents. It uses public transportation to support those goals.

13:18.00

Garrett Eucalitto

One of the great things about Connecticut too is that public transportation can get you to all the key pizza places in New Haven. So I'm going to have to bring you out there um using CT rail or in the New Haven line and then our CT transit system to take you to Pepe Sally's and modern over the course of the summer. That sounds great. I tell you, I am hungry already. I have hit all three, but I want to try each of them one more time and then I will figure out which one is, which one is the best fit. Careful. The decision on pizza has ruined many a political career. So just be careful with your decision. So all of us at CTDOT are excited you're relaunching this podcast. So what can the listeners expect from this podcast now with you in the driver's seat?

14:10.00

Ben Limmer

Yeah, certainly. I mean, I have been out engaging, listening, open to feedback. And this podcast is crucial to continue those efforts. Our listeners can absolutely expect an engaging and informative podcast that really explores various aspects of Connecticut's public transportation system. I do plan to bring on local as well as national guests who are really experts in their fields. Yes, including transit professionals, but also community leaders, policymakers, as well as other stakeholders. I look forward to delving into topics such as economic development, innovative transportation solutions, equity in transportation, and really the overall future of mobility in Connecticut, and what does that look like?

15:09.00

Ben Limmer

You know, throughout these conversations, I'm going to aim to provide valuable insights, foster a deeper understanding of what the transportation issues as well as opportunities are, really showcase the exciting initiatives happening in our state. I'm confident that our listeners are

going to find each and every episode informative, thought provoking, as well as inspiring. And if you have a suggested topic, any of the listeners out there that you're interested in, please do not hesitate to let me know.

15:48.00

Garrett Eucalitto

That's great. So Ben, before we end this special episode, is there anything else you would like to share with ah ah your listeners?

15:56.00

Ben Limmer

I'd like, to close, I'd like to express my gratitude to all the listeners for their continued support and interest in Connecticut's public transportation system. I encourage you all to stay engaged provide feedback be part of the conversation. As we work together to shape the future of transportation in our state, I'm excited about the journey in front of us, and I look forward to sharing more insights, stories, innovations through this podcast. And of course, I'd like to thank our special guest today, Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto, for introducing me to all the listeners of this podcast.

16:42.00

Ben Limmer

Once again, my name is Ben Limmer. Join us next time for another episode of Along the Lines. Remember, you can always find previous episodes of Along the Lines on your favorite podcast platform, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and SoundCloud. You can always find previous episodes and more information on our website alongthelinesct.com. Thanks for listening to this episode of Along the Lines. This is your host, Benjamin Leonard. If you've enjoyed this podcast, please remember to subscribe and share.