



THE I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

Fall 2014 Newsletter
Issue 5

What Will I-84 Look Like in the Future?



Good question! Now that we've completed a very thorough Needs and Deficiencies analysis, we are just beginning to take a hard look at conceptual alternatives to rebuild I-84. While the No Build alternative must be considered under NEPA (see [page 2](#)), there are other ways that I-84 could take shape in the future.

I-84 through Hartford must be rebuilt due to the condition of its deteriorating bridges. This type of opportunity comes around once-in-a-lifetime! To do it right, we want to address other deficiencies within the corridor as well. Elements like safety, congestion, mobility (including bikes and pedestrians), visual impacts and urban design will all be factored into the development of alternatives. And we need **your** help to do it!

While continuing to serve as a critical transportation corridor, I-84 must be carefully threaded through a busy urban setting. The study area includes many businesses, residences, and cultural resources – along with local streets, a railroad, the buried Park River, and CTfastrak. Quite a challenge!

The Connecticut Department of Transportation's (CTDOT) goal is to address these deficiencies and make I-84 a better neighbor to the City of Hartford. The preliminary concepts in this newsletter will be discussed in more detail at the upcoming Public Scoping Meeting in January. We hope to see you there!

Wait! Before You Turn the Page...

We all have opinions and priorities about the best configuration of I-84. We may love one option but dislike another. Yet someone else may feel the opposite!

So, as you review these concepts, please remember the following:

- » Every alternative will have some benefits and some impacts.
- » The alternatives will evolve. Right now they are still very preliminary. They will become more detailed and will then be tested against evaluation criteria.
- » Please share your thoughts. We welcome your input, and believe that the best solutions may come from you!



As we move through the study process, we want to partner with you as we assess the impacts and benefits of each concept. When the time comes to select an alternative, we will be able to discern which option best meets the project's purpose, needs, and goals.

Please attend!
A Public Scoping Meeting will be held
January 21 at the Hartford Public Library.
We'd love to see you there!
See page 6 for details.

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A First Glance at Preliminary Alternatives

Four preliminary alternatives have been identified, including the No Build and three Build alternatives representing a broad range of possible options for rebuilding I-84 through Hartford.

We are in the earliest stages of evaluating these alternatives. Each one will be further defined as we proceed through the joint process of alternatives analysis and environmental impact documentation. We will continue to seek input from the public to help us better understand the unique impacts and benefits of each option. At the end of the process, and with your help, we hope to select the solution that best meets the project's purpose, needs, and goals.

Preliminary Alternative 1:

No Build



The No-Build Alternative includes major rehabilitation and/or substantial replacement of several of the bridges that make up the viaduct to keep them operating safely. No alignment, width, geometric, or operational improvements would be made. This alternative would not impact or improve the existing interchanges or local streets.

Cost range of this alternative is \$1.9 – \$2.3 billion.

Legend		Substantial Bridge Replacement
		Bridge Rehabilitation
		Bridge Deck Replacement
		Bridge Superstructure Replacement
		CTfastrak Existing Railroad

Why Do We Evaluate a No Build Alternative?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which is part of the project planning and decision-making process, requires that the No Build alternative be an option, as it is the baseline from which impact, benefit, and cost of all other options can be measured.

In some cases, the No Build really IS a “do nothing” option, but in the case of I-84, doing nothing is not an option because of the condition of the bridges which carry it through Hartford. So, the I-84 No Build alternative involves maintaining the viaduct pretty much as it currently exists for the next 25 years. Extensive bridge repair and replacement work would be required, as regular maintenance becomes increasingly expensive and less effective over time.





Preliminary Alternative 2:

Rebuilt Elevated Highway



For preliminary Alternative 2, a new elevated highway would replace the existing viaducts with a new, single viaduct between Sigourney and High Streets. The new viaduct would be higher than the existing viaduct to provide minimum required vertical clearances over the railroad and local streets.

Legend

-  Existing I-84
-  Potential I-84 Alignment
-  Bridges
-  Potential Interchange Locations
-  Revised Existing Local Street
-  Potential New Local Street
-  CTfastrak
-  Existing Railroad

Though still an elevated highway, this alternative would differ in several ways from the existing highway. I-84 in both directions would pass above Asylum and Broad Streets. The High Street overpass would potentially be eliminated because of insufficient vertical clearance. The number of interchanges would be reduced from the present eight full or partial interchanges to possibly two or three at locations yet to be determined. The specific number and location of interchanges will be evaluated for connectivity, traffic operations, and feasibility. A reduction in interchanges would result in fewer ramps and more efficient operation of the highway; however, this will have to be balanced with the need to provide access and the ability of local streets to handle changes in traffic patterns. This alternative would result in a somewhat smaller footprint on the city compared to the No Build alternative, in part due to the reduced number of interchanges and their associated ramps. The impact of each alternative is yet to be determined.

Cost range of this alternative is \$4.3 – \$5.4 billion.



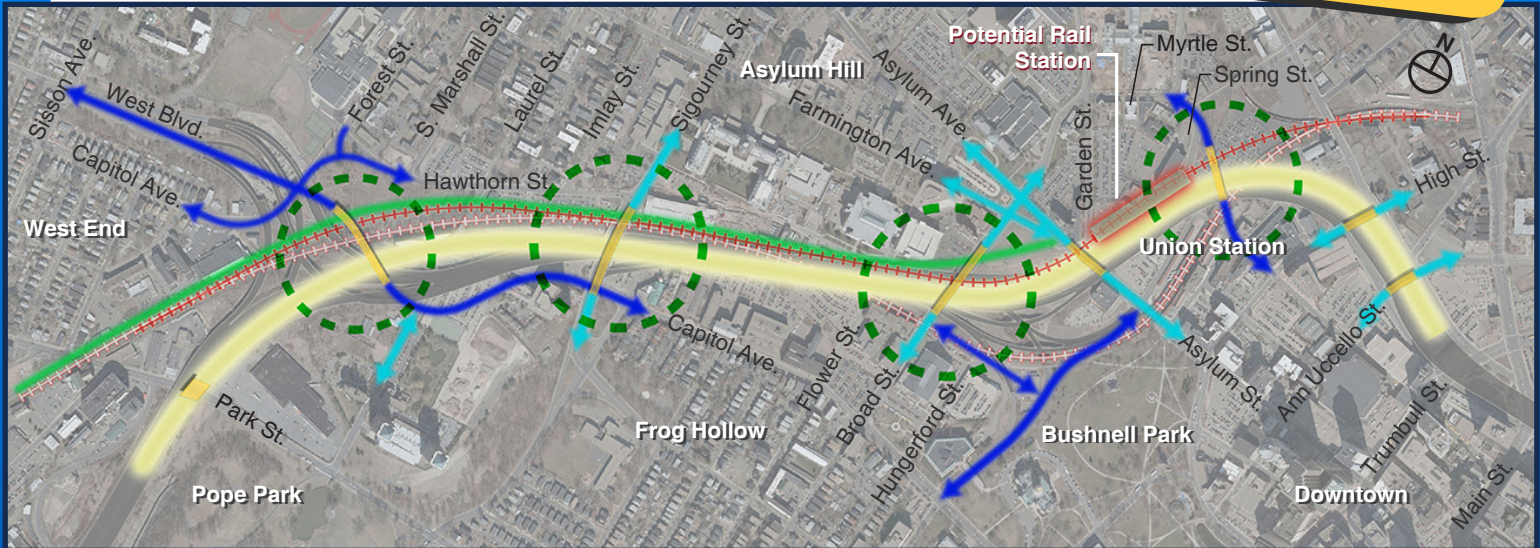
Why Consider a New Highway That Remains Elevated?

This alternative is driven by the presumption that the railroad would remain in its current location. If the railroad cannot be relocated, the highway will need to continue to be elevated to cross over the tracks in two locations.

Preliminary Alternative 3:

Lowered Highway

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In this alternative, originally proposed in the HUB study (the precursor to the I-84 Hartford Project), the railroad would be relocated to the north of the highway to allow I-84 to be lowered to, or below, ground level between Park and Trumbull Streets. Local roads crossing the interstate would all be bridges over the highway.

Legend	Existing I-84	Revised Existing Local Street
	Potential I-84 Alignment	Potential New Local Street
	Bridges	CTfastrak
	Potential Interchange Locations	Existing Railroad
	Potential Rail Alignment	

The number of interchanges would be reduced from the present eight full or partial interchanges to possibly as few as two or three at locations yet to be determined. The specific number and location of interchanges will be evaluated for connectivity, traffic operations, and feasibility. A reduction in interchanges would result in fewer ramps and more efficient operation of the highway; however, this would have to be balanced with the need to provide access and the ability of local streets to handle changes in traffic patterns. This alternative would have a smaller footprint on the city compared to the No Build alternative, in part due to the reduced number of interchanges and their associated ramps. The impact of each alternative is yet to be determined.

Cost range of this alternative is \$3.8 – \$4.6 billion.

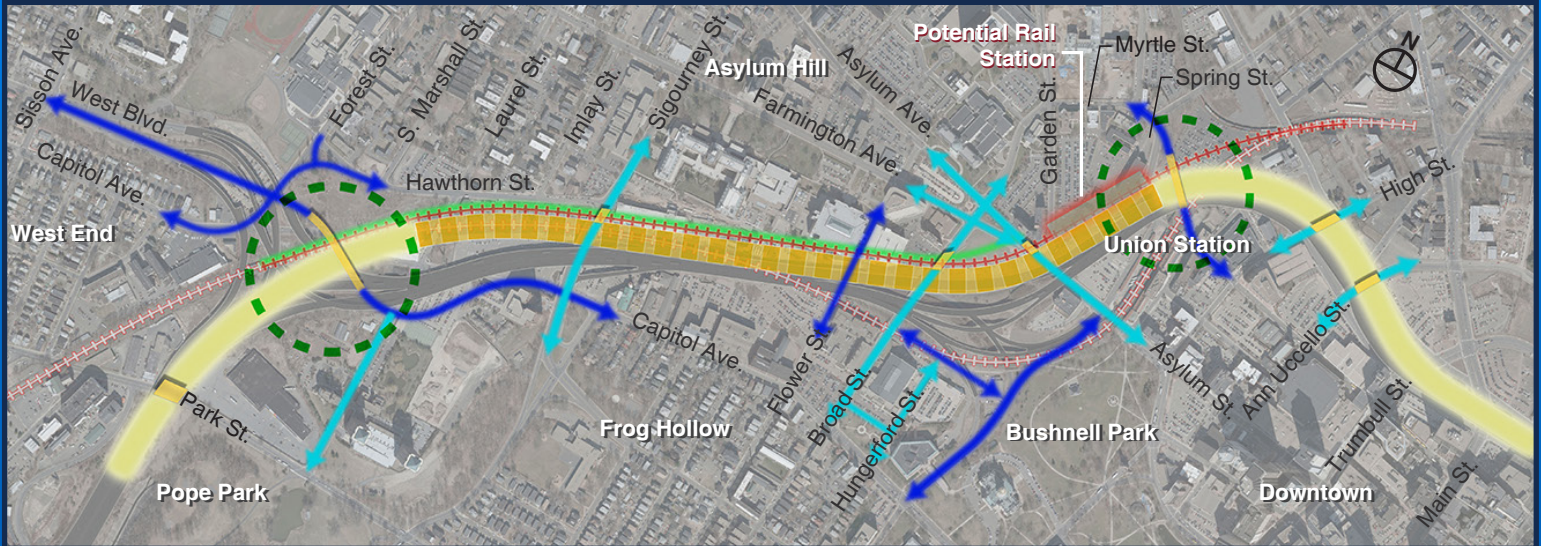
Over the Coming Months...

There is much to evaluate in the coming phases of work. The joint alternatives analysis and environmental evaluation process will provide a clearer picture of the implications of each of these alternatives—the pros and cons (and remember that one person’s “pro” might be another’s “con”). As we move forward in this process, we will be better able to define each alternative. How many interchanges are really needed? Where will they go? What are the implications for local streets? What will the impacts be? There are so many questions to be answered. We hope you will continue to stay involved and keep in touch.



Preliminary Alternative 4:

Tunneled Highway



In this alternative, the railroad would again be relocated to the north of the highway to allow I-84 to be constructed below grade and covered from Myrtle Street to Laurel Street in a tunnel.

Legend

- Existing I-84
- Potential I-84 Alignment
- Bridges
- Potential I-84 Tunnel
- Potential Interchange Locations
- Revised Existing Local Street
- Potential New Local Street
- CTfastrak
- Existing Railroad
- Potential Rail Alignment

The number of interchanges would be reduced from the present eight full or partial interchanges to possibly as few as two or three at locations yet to be determined. The specific number and location of interchanges will be evaluated for connectivity, traffic operations and feasibility. A reduction in interchanges would result in fewer ramps and more efficient operation of the highway; however, this will have to be balanced with the need to provide access and the ability of local streets to handle changes in traffic patterns. This alternative would have a much smaller footprint on the city compared to the No Build alternative, in part due to the reduced number of interchanges and their associated ramps, and because the highway would be underground for a substantial span. The impact of each alternative is yet to be determined.

Cost range of this alternative is \$8.3 – \$10.4 billion.

Cut and Cover

This tunnel alternative would be constructed using a technique called “cut and cover.” The highway would be constructed in a concrete conduit, then covered to create a tunnel. Some have commented that a tunnel is their preferred solution to rebuilding I-84. Will the benefits justify the higher cost and outweigh the impacts? We don’t know yet. Stay tuned!



Photo credit: Gunnar Ries

What is Scoping?

Scoping is the first official step of the environmental process. It is an early opportunity for the team to get input on the project. During scoping, the regulatory agencies and the public are formally consulted about project goals, alternatives, and key impact concerns. The comments we receive during scoping become part of the official public record for the project. A Scoping Summary Report, issued at the end of the scoping process, responds to these agency and public comments, and helps the project team set the direction for the continued analysis of alternatives.

We hope you can attend our Public Scoping Meeting on January 21, 2015 at the Hartford Public Library, located at 500 Main Street. **An open house session will begin at 3pm. A formal presentation will be made at 5:30pm, followed by a comment period.**

Commenting at the Meeting

There are several ways for your comments to be incorporated into the scoping process:

- » Speak at the meeting (all comments will be recorded and transcribed)
- » Submit a written comment form (provided there)
- » Speak one-on-one with a person who will record your comment (if you prefer not to speak in public)

Whether or not you're able to attend the Public Scoping Meeting on January 21, we hope you will take a few minutes to learn more about the project and send us your comments or questions.

What if I can't attend?

Not to worry! The scoping comment period extends from December 18, 2014 through February 20, 2015. If you're unable to attend the meeting, please visit our project website after the meeting to view materials. Feel free to submit comments as follows:



- » Use the comment form on our website, www.i84hartford.com. (This is our favorite way to receive comments!)
- » Send a written comment to:
Richard Armstrong
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

Why does I-84 need improvement?



The main reason I-84 needs to be rebuilt is the condition of its bridges. However, as currently constructed, I-84's obsolete design has many features which contribute to safety and congestion issues, as shown above (the red indicates areas where accident rates are four times the state average). Today we have a rare opportunity to create a much improved interstate highway. All of the alternatives, except the No Build, propose reducing the number of interchanges and revamping the design of the highway and interchanges to address most of these issues, and to render I-84 a better neighbor to Hartford communities.

Habla usted español?

Una versión de este boletín está disponible en español. Visite <http://i84hartford.com>.