



Back to School: I-84 Team Talks to Students & Youth



Children at the CREC Museum Academy explore the fundamentals of engineering by developing bridge structures.

Our Project Team is working hard to engage diverse communities in the I-84 Hartford project area. As such, in 2016 we expanded outreach to schools and community-based organizations, understanding the value of listening to students, youth, and their families. Everybody deserves a voice in planning the future of their community.

Outreach to schools involves organizing classroom activities, engaging the students, and sending project literature home in backpacks. Partnering with schools provides the opportunity to connect with parents and caregivers as well.

“After spending time with schools and community organizations, it’s clear that Hartford’s young minds have much to offer.”

However, two school programs have requested more. These include the Capitol Region Education Council’s (CREC) Museum Academy, located on two campuses in Bloomfield and Windsor, and Betances STEM Magnet School (BSTEM), located on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford. Both schools draw students and staff from Hartford and the 30-town region. The Project Team has been thrilled to dig in deeper!

For the Museum Academy’s kindergarteners, we developed an age-appropriate lesson in engineering. Students learned about structures and materials that make roads, bridges, and tunnels function best,

followed by a collaborative building exercise.

Curtis Porter III (read more on page 2) reached out to the Project Team about how to engage his students at BSTEM. Together with Mr. Porter and the Hartford History Center, we created an exhibit that visually explores transportation planning, engineering, construction, job opportunities, and how to get involved in the project.



Youth-oriented visuals explore facets of the project. This sample of an exhibit at BSTEM illustrates the viaduct’s impact on the environment as well as cutting edge design solutions.

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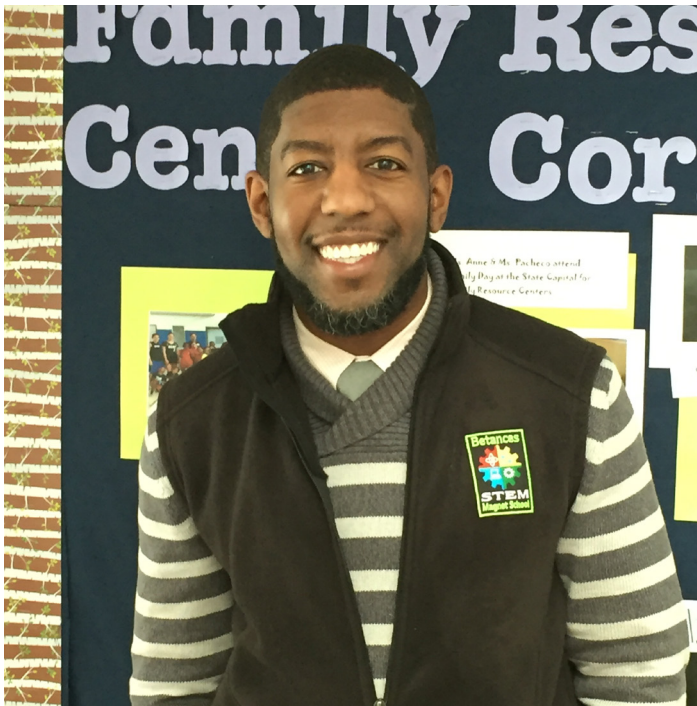
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— Faces & Places of the Corridor —

Welcome to Faces & Places of the Corridor, profiles of people who live, work, run businesses or lead groups, as well as notable places, within the I-84 study area. Know someone or some place that should be featured? Share your ideas!

Curtis Porter III: Planting the Civic Engagement Seed

BSTEM's Program Assistant and community activist encourages civic engagement for all ages



Curtis Porter III of Betances STEM Magnet School in Hartford encourages his students, and all Hartford-area schools, to be actively involved in the I-84 Hartford Project.

Curtis Porter III describes himself as a man of many hats. That's putting it lightly.

As Program Assistant at Betances STEM Magnet School, or BSTEM, Curtis oversees marketing, partnership building, and operations. He is also the family support services provider for this science, technology, engineering and math institution in Hartford's South End. If G. Fox & Co. were still open, Curtis would have bought out the hat department long ago.

Curtis, a Hartford resident, became involved in the I-84 Hartford Project after receiving emails from his "in the know" neighbors. He first attended an Open Planning Studio in June of 2016. Since then, Curtis has worked with the I-84 Hartford Project Team to develop an innovative school outreach program.

BSTEM builds strong relationships with families. Curtis explains that students whose parents stay involved in their education are more likely to succeed. Families are invited to frequent events, such as book fairs and "Donuts with Dads" to promote literacy among both children and adults.

The value of involving people of all ages in the I-84 Hartford Project is clear to Curtis. He hopes that everybody, beyond those that are "in the know", will participate. "All Hartford schools should promote the project, because it's going to affect us all."

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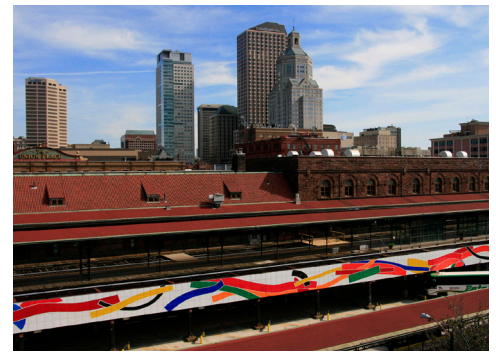
Curtis hopes his students will do more than watch from the sidelines. Whether taking soil samples during the environmental process, sponsoring a park bench, or competing to design a new city bicycle rack, Curtis has big ideas for how Hartford students can get involved.

No stranger to community organizing, Curtis emphasizes the importance of providing broad opportunities, and incentives, for students to participate in a meaningful way. For example, BSTEM promoted the November Open Planning Studio by offering a dress-down day to those who attended. A handful of BSTEM "Nerdy Birds" took him up on the offer. They were thoughtful attendees with fresh perspectives!

Like an I-84 event, Curtis' office door is always open to students, faculty, and parents (and there are often snacks).

Learn more about Betances STEM Magnet School by visiting betancesstem.com, or by following @BSTEMhartford on Facebook, Twitter and several other social media.

Serving Transit Riders with Station Area Planning



Successful transit-oriented development, such as the Orenco Station in Hillsboro, OR, (left) provides pedestrian-oriented development around quality rail stations or bus terminals. Rethinking the I-84 viaduct and rail in Hartford presents an opportunity to reinvent our city's transit hub at Union Station (Foreground, above). Image courtesy of Barbara Steele

Under the alternatives that involve relocation of the railroad, a new rail station would be needed. This presents a chance to rethink Hartford's transit station as a multi-modal activity hub.

Together, the I-84 Project Team and City of Hartford will study how an improved station area might look, function, and integrate with the surrounding area.

A shift in the rail line will render the existing rail platform at Union Station unusable. This presents an opportunity to create a better, more functional transit hub while re-purposing the historic Union Station.

This inter-modal planning effort will include two main tasks: transit planning and land use planning.

What facilities and services are needed, and passenger amenities desired, at a new transit station?

Transit Planning

What facilities and services are needed, and passenger amenities desired, at the new station? Items to consider include rail platform length, number of bus bays, enhanced mode transfer, waiting areas, information boards, ticket kiosks, smart transit features, retail and dining space, bicycle parking, and parking connections.

Planners will identify needs for both Amtrak and CT*rail* Hartford Line service. The analysis will also assess intercity bus services, such as Greyhound and Peter Pan, as well as local bus routes that serve the station area. Current and estimated future ridership for each of these modes, as well as connection needs, will be evaluated. These studies will help define station space and use, access, and parking needs.

The I-84 Project Team and City will work together with a newly formed Transit Technical Committee. Representatives of local transportation providers, such as Greater Hartford Transit District, Amtrak, Connecticut Transit, CTDOT, and independent bus operators, will share their needs and desires for the new station area.

Once needs are established, planners and engineers will develop preliminary concepts for the transit hub.

Land Use and Roadway Connection Planning

Integration of the new station with the surrounding neighborhoods and city is essential. The adjacent area will provide prime opportunities for transit oriented development (TOD). TOD refers to a mix of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented land uses centered around high-quality rail stations or bus terminals. This type of development, successfully used in communities across the world, allows a sustainable lifestyle that reduces or eliminates car dependence.

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Back to School, continued

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The Project Team also collaborates with the Center for Latino Progress (CLP) to develop teen workshops on civic engagement. After introducing the project to students, they were given hands-on time to explore the project website, submit their comments, and understand the importance of being actively engaged in their community's development.

The greatest benefit of broad community outreach is promoting a shared sense of responsibility for the project's success.

This type of broad community outreach seeks to prepare and engage those affected by the project of all its opportunities and impacts. Its greatest benefit, however, is promoting a shared sense of responsibility for the project's success. After spending time with schools and community organizations, it's clear that Hartford's young minds have much to offer.

Do you know a school or community group that wants in on the action? Please contact Michael Morehouse at mmorehouse@fhiplan.com for more information.



Students at Center for Latino Progress (CLP) view an I-84 Hartford presentation before hands-on time with the website and a Q&A session. The program is designed to inspire civic engagement at all ages.

Serving Transit Riders, continued



Hartford's Union Station was completed in 1889 to serve multiple rail operators and a thriving local economy. Above, pedestrians and motorists gather outside the station circa 1919. Could the past inspire how this facility evolves to suit modern travelers' needs?

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The I-84 Project Team and City of Hartford expect to collaborate closely on this exciting effort. The City will spearhead the development plan for the surrounding land. As the City determines its vision and creates conceptual plans, the Project Team will update station design and program needs accordingly.

This initiative, although led, financed, and constructed by different parties, will be coordinated for optimal success.

What Will Become of the Existing Union Station?

Union Station's history is deeply intertwined with that of Hartford. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and will remain a protected landmark. However, it's poised for change. Could it become a reinvigorated commercial center, a hub for bus operations, or another idea that has yet to emerge? Stay involved as this element of the project develops!