



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Wednesday, April 20 2016, 6:00 PM**

**Location: Parker Memorial Community Center, 2621 Main Street, Hartford**

**Subject: Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Working Group #6**

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
Sandy Fry	Greater Hartford Transit District	<a href="mailto:sfry@ghtd.org">sfry@ghtd.org</a>
Maureen Lawrence	Connecticut Department of Transportation	<a href="mailto:maureen.lawrence@ct.gov">maureen.lawrence@ct.gov</a>
Ed Dimio		
Courtney Chandler		
Jillian Massey	Capitol Region Council of Governments	<a href="mailto:jmassey@crcog.org">jmassey@crcog.org</a>
Chris Hansen	FHWA	<a href="mailto:christopher.hansen@dot.gov">christopher.hansen@dot.gov</a>
Lance Goldberg		<a href="mailto:goldbergl@fpsct.org">goldbergl@fpsct.org</a>
Tim Courtney		<a href="mailto:trc@lego.com">trc@lego.com</a>
Mitch Glass	Goody Clancy	<a href="mailto:mitch.glass@goodyclancy.com">mitch.glass@goodyclancy.com</a>
Mike Morehouse	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.	<a href="mailto:mmorehouse@fhiplan.com">mmorehouse@fhiplan.com</a>
Dave Stahnke	TranSystems Corporation	<a href="mailto:dkstahnke@transystems.com">dkstahnke@transystems.com</a>
Pat Padlo	TranSystems Corporation	<a href="mailto:ptpadlo@transystems.com">ptpadlo@transystems.com</a>
Rich Armstrong	Connecticut Department of Transportation	<a href="mailto:richard.armstrong@ct.gov">richard.armstrong@ct.gov</a>
Randal Davis	Connecticut Department of Transportation	<a href="mailto:Randal.Davis@ct.gov">Randal.Davis@ct.gov</a>

### 1. Meeting Location

The meeting was held in the large community room of the Parker Memorial Community Center.

### 2. Presentation / Discussion

Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc. (FHI), gave a brief introduction. He thanked all for attending and said that the purpose of the meeting was to hear the group’s feedback and design concerns on bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure in the project corridor. He invited Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, to deliver a presentation on the East Coast Greenway (ECG) concepts.

#### East Coast Greenway Concepts

M. Glass provided a brief overview of the East Coast Greenway and the project team’s mobility goals. He said that an elevated ECG could be used to both screen the highway from sight and minimize noise pollution, as well as provide an additional east-west connection. Sandy Fry, of the Greater Hartford Transit District, clarified that the existing signed route for the ECG was not the long-term intended route. She said that the long-term plan routes the greenway down Capitol Avenue to Forest Street, where it passes by Hartford Public High School and the Mark

Twain House before continuing north along the Park River Greenway and / or Griffin Line. She said that the existing route along Whitney Street is a temporary solution.

M. Glass continued his presentation by stating that the project team envisions the greenway to be much more than just a facility for the ECG. He said that the facility could be a linear park connecting to points north, south, east and west, making it a destination unto itself. He suggested that it could help spur broad economic development opportunities. He concluded that the total cost of an elevated linear park between Bushnell Park and Sisson Avenue would cost \$200-240 million. He tentatively called it Hartford's High Line Park.

M. Glass presented three conceptual sketches of greenway alternatives. Of these alternatives, one is at-grade and the other two are elevated, with one option standing out as a cantilevered structure over the highway. He pointed out that each of these concepts connects to a cap over the highway in the Asylum / Broad Streets area that serves as an urban connection between Broad Street and Bushnell Park. He noted that a deck could be extended slightly west of Broad Street.

Regarding the elevated concepts, he explained how access ramps could be placed at Flower Street to provide a connection over CT *fastrak* and the railroad, with additional access points to neighborhood spaces like Columbia Street. He said that both elevated options would consist of a below-grade crossing at Sigourney Street, with ramps winding up to Sigourney Street and the Sigourney Street cycle track. He said the concept could include a new bike and pedestrian-only bridge over the highway to the east of Laurel Street. He concluded that both elevated options could have a barrier wall below the structure that would serve to screen the highway from sight and minimize noise pollution. He said that this screening structure could be visually dressed with vegetation or public art. Those at street level would see a planted wall with a park above it. He presented renderings of this elevated facility and comparable facilities in Chicago, NYC, and Copenhagen.

M. Glass explained the primary differences between the at-grade and elevated greenways. He said that the at-grade option would cross Broad Street below-grade and would not allow for the connection at Flower Street. He said that ramps could still be built to wind up to Sigourney Street and that a connection could be made to Laurel Street, but not via an exclusive bike and pedestrian bridge. He said a screen could still be built to obscure the sight and sound of the highway from those utilizing the greenway facility.

The group saw the ECG concepts as favorable. There was a discussion on utilizing the existing rail viaduct to connect the linear park to Union Station. M. Glass said that although this connection would serve well as a bike path, it was poor from an urban design and economic development standpoint. He said that leaving the viaduct in its existing location maintained its role as a barrier between Asylum Hill and Bushnell Park; the viaduct is uncomfortable to travel beneath, and one side is made of unattractive concrete. He said it would be difficult to imagine new development with the viaduct still in place. He concluded that the ECG could travel through new development over the Asylum / Broad Streets cap into Bushnell Park.

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), said that a project of this magnitude was likely the only way that a facility such as an elevated ECG could ever be realized. He offered the examples of the Mortensen Riverfront Plaza (a result of the reconstruction of the Founders Bridge and I-91), and the CT *fastrak* multi-use trail as similarly achievable projects.

### Complete Streets

M. Morehouse said that the project team is narrowing in on a preferred alternative and must further consider the interface between the highway and local streets. He said that as ramps are

removed, traffic is diverted from major arterials, improving their status as multimodal corridors. He explained how this process includes examining bike and pedestrian facilities, and low impact streetscape features like storm drains and green buffers. Directly addressing the working group, he said that the project team is currently focusing on the northeastern limits of the corridor. Presenting a rendering of Cogswell Street, he asked the group if there were any heavily traveled spaces that merited a bike shelter, wider sidewalks, pedestrian refuges, or additional crosswalks.

M. Morehouse explained how, as currently proposed, highway ramps spill onto Cogswell Street in front of The Hartford. Cogswell would remain two lanes in each direction. He was asked how this road could be made comfortable for cyclists. He answered that dedicated comparable space (when looking at the the full cross-section of the street, including the pedestrian realm) to pedestrians and bicyclists can make them more comfortable.

M. Morehouse continued his discussion of the local road network by highlighting proposed frontage roads to the north and south of the highway and a new connection over the highway via an extension of Hoadley Place. He said that some intersections could get special treatments like protected intersections for cyclists.

Returning to the Cogswell Street and Trident area, M. Morehouse referred the group to a street cross-section featuring five vehicle travel lanes (two travel lanes in each direction with a left-turn lane) divided by a six-foot-wide median. A cycle track would run down one side of the street, separated from vehicular traffic by a two-foot buffer. He pointed out that a near equal amount of space is devoted to bike and pedestrian traffic as to vehicular traffic. There was a discussion of regular pedestrian signalization versus push-button signalization. One person commented that the medians on Cogswell Street should be extended to provide a mid-street pedestrian crossing refuge.

### Urban Design

Discussion of the Cogswell Street and Trident area turned to urban design considerations, particularly in regard to the rail station head house. Dave Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), said that the rail would be below ground in Asylum Hill and feature 1000-foot-long platforms. He said that this new station would serve the existing six trains each day operated by Amtrak, as well as the future 17 between New Haven and Hartford and 12 between Hartford and Springfield, operated by Hartford Line service. He said that there must be greater conversation on transit, specifically how to connect the new station to the existing Union Station. He proposed a central air-rights parking garage over the highway in between the two facilities, giving it the feeling of one central hub, rather than two divided facilities.

R. Armstrong inquired how a central air-rights garage would be accessed. Nick Mandler, of TSC, said that access could be provided from the northwest of the station via a Garden Street extension. Randal Davis, of CTDOT, said that there would need to be a significant drop-off access point to the south of Asylum Street. D. Stahnke said that the team had not yet gotten into the details of station access, but was evaluating several proposals made in the rail alternatives study. He said that the project would likely maintain intercity bus service at Union Station, but would also have to consider local bus transfer facilities.

S. Fry began a discussion on the connection between bus and rail facilities. She said that she favored an earlier design that featured a pedestrian bridge between the two facilities, and hoped that the project team had not dismissed that option. M. Glass referred her to the Urban Design Alternatives board. D. Stahnke said that the goal would be to make travelers feel as if they were in one single and connected facility.

M. Morehouse said that many of the standards incorporated in design proposals come directly from the City's new zoning regulations. He noted, however, that the team aims even to improve upon those standards. He suggested enhancing existing crossings over the highway, including Sigourney, Laurel and Trumbull Streets. He said that the team has some guidelines that he can bring to future meetings.

### Transit

M. Morehouse asked the group how they would feel about fewer, but improved bus stops. S. Fry said that it would depend on the street and the surrounding urban environment. Jillian Massey, of the Capitol Region Council of Governments said that a recently conducted survey found that existing riders prefer fewer stops but better frequency. Responding to a question from R. Davis, the official said that data was not broken down and analyzed demographically, but that there were significant differences between the preferences of existing and potential riders.

There was a discussion of the existing inadequacy of bus stop facilities and obstacles to building ridership. R. Davis asked if CTtransit had considered skip-stop service. Group members indicated that communication obstacles had prevented the success of skip-stop service in the past. There was a comment about improved bus stop facilities Downtown that were funded by TIGER grants.

### Cycling

A commuter cyclist from the West End inquired about the Broad Street bike lane. R. Armstrong said that the painted Broad Street lane was a mitigation measure to account for the closure of Flower Street as part of CT**fastrak** construction. Regarding the multi-use trail, he said that the team is looking beyond the immediate corridor to consider other planning initiatives, like the ECG, CT**fastrak**, and the bike lanes on West Boulevard.

S. Fry said that the bike lane signs on Broad Street are located in the wrong place.

### **3. Other Comments**

There was a question on the project's timeline. R. Armstrong said that although there are still many options on the table, the project team is starting to focus on the lowered highway. He said that the team hoped to soon eliminate the elevated and tunnel alternatives from further consideration, with the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) permission. He said that an environmental impact study must be completed in order to obtain a record of decision in 2018. At this time, the CTDOT must deliver a financial plan to the FHWA before entering final design and beginning construction. He concluded that construction would ideally start sometime between 2020 and 2022.

Responding to a question about funding, R. Armstrong said that this project could qualify for as much as 90 percent federal funding. He pointed out, however, that federal funds are limited, and that there are some 30 other projects on the Governor's *Let's Go CT* transportation plan that are still unfunded. He said that without increases in state funding, many of these projects could not be completed.

Chris Hanson, of FHWA, said that much will need to happen in great detail to make the project happen. He stated, however, that it was exciting to see such a passionate and community-oriented vision. He explained how 50 years ago roads were built with little consideration for the people who lived in the immediate vicinity. He concluded that it's very exciting to see what the I-84 Hartford Project has developed so far.