



## **Report of Meeting**

**Date and Time: Wednesday, June 15, 2016, 12 to 8 PM**

**Location: Samuel V. Arroyo Center, 30 Pope Park Drive, Hartford**

**Subject: Spanish Language Open Planning Studio\***

### **1. Meeting Schedule and Agenda**

The Open Planning Studio (OPS) was held Wednesday, June 15, 2016 from 12 to 8 PM. The public meeting included an open house for members of the public to obtain information and speak with the Project Team about the I-84 corridor and the study process. There were informational boards positioned around the room and a computer station that offered people the opportunity to see a three-dimensional model of the lowered highway alternative. Another computer station allowed people to see potential travel routing changes as part of the lowered highway alternative.

25 members of the public attended the meeting.

### **2. Boards**

Several informational boards were placed around the perimeter of the room. They included:

1. I-84 Study Area Map
2. Fast Facts
3. 2016 At A Glance
4. Project Schedule
5. Mainline Alternatives: Vertical Alignment
6. Mainline Alternatives: Horizontal Alignment
7. Connecting People With Jobs
8. I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study
9. Sample Refinements to the Lowered Highway
10. Lowered highway With Capped Section
11. CT *fastrak* Routing: Alternative 3 W3-E2 (S)
12. Sigourney Eastbound On-Ramp Options
13. Urban Design Analysis
14. Potential Corridor Concept
15. Bicycle Network Opportunities
16. East Coast Greenway Overview
17. Potential East Coast Greenway Alignment
18. Multi-Use Greenway: Concept for I-84
19. What are your priorities?
20. Potential Building Impacts: All Alternatives
21. Potential Building Impacts: Lowered Highway
22. Broad Street rendering
23. Park Street rendering

### **3. Presentations**

There were two public presentations. The first began at 12:30 PM and the second at 6:30 PM.

\*This document was translated into English from the original Spanish

All those who attended were offered lunch or dinner. Both presentations included the same content, explained below.

#### Introduction and Event Purpose

Alejandro Brito, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the OPS and began his presentation. He said that the Project Team is close to making design decisions regarding the reconstruction of I-84 in Hartford. He explained that the presentation had two purposes. The first was to inform the public about the project, and the second was for the Project Team to hear the public's concerns. He asked the audience to keep in mind the following questions:

- How is the design of I-84 going to affect you?
- What improvements do you want to see for the highway?
- What are you most concerned about?

#### Project Summary

A. Brito noted the I-84 Hartford Project study area. He said that the limits of the project extend from slightly west of Park Street until the existing tunnel in Downtown Hartford.

Presenting a history of the I-84 corridor in Hartford, A. Brito explained that the highway was built as an elevated highway in the 1960s to avoid the railroad, which it passes over in two places. He said that the railroad was built in the 1830s and that the idea of an east-west highway was conceived in the 1940s. He noted that I-84 was constructed prior to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

A. Brito explained that the project is necessary because of the structural deficiencies of the bridges that support the highway, operational and safety deficiencies, and mobility deficiencies. He said that 50 years on, the bridges have reached the end of their useful life, and that the State of Connecticut is spending millions of dollars to maintain them in working order. He explained that the existing highway has many tight curves and lane drops. He said that these contribute to an average of two accidents a day, and that parts of the corridor have as many as four times the number of accidents for the state average of this type of highway. Finally, he noted that it is difficult to move throughout the corridor by car, bicycle, on foot or via transit.

A. Brito provided a summary of the project schedule. He said that the project team is in the environmental phase of the project, at which time they are developing alternatives. He stated that the Project Team anticipates having one or two alternatives by the end of the year. He concluded that the Team hopes to start construction in 2021 or 2022. At this time, he introduced Rosmary Rodriguez, of CTDOT, to explain the primary alternatives.

#### Alternatives Analysis

R. Rodriguez explained that there are four alternatives. She said that the first alternative, the no-build alternative, would only include work to maintain the existing bridges until the year 2040. She clarified that Alternative 1 would cost \$2 billion and that it would not include any improvements to the highway's safety or efficiency, nor to mobility in the I-84 corridor. She explained Alternative 2, the elevated highway, and said that it would cost \$5-6 billion. She said that the majority of the elevated highway would pass above the local streets, except for Sigourney Street, which currently passes below the highway. Explaining Alternative 3, the lowered highway, she noted that this would require relocating the railroad, and the construction of a new train station and part of CT *fastrak*. She said that this would present the opportunity to relocate the highway so that it would pass below the main local streets. She clarified that all of this would cost \$4-5 billion. She concluded the alternatives summary with Alternative 4, the

tunnel, which would cost \$10-12 billion and would relocate the highway underground. She said that this alternative is too expensive and not feasible.

R. Rodriguez explained the various possible horizontal alignments for the highway. She said that the corridor is very constrained, except for in the area near Asylum Hill. She noted the various ramp options in this area. She said that there are 10 options in the west of the corridor and 15 in the east, which would include closing the Trumbull and High Street ramps in order to improve highway safety and operations.

R. Rodriguez next presented a number of traffic diagrams of the proposed alternatives. She concluded that traffic would function best under Alternative 3, the lowered highway. She noted the necessity of ramps at Sigourney Street. She said that these ramps would be possible under a tunnel alternative, but cautioned that this option would require many building impacts along Capitol Avenue and the Aetna campus. Moving onward, she introduced Ashley Heredia, of CTDOT to discuss more lowered highway details.

A. Heredia began her portion of the presentation by reviewing the potential building impacts of the lowered highway. She said that the majority of residential building impacts would include buildings along Spring Street in the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

A. Heredia presented a video of the lowered highway. The video provided a guided tour through the I-84 corridor. It started at Park Street and showed the potential improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. Continuing to the east, the video presented changes to the Sisson Avenue interchange, which would include relocating the ramps to Laurel Street and Capitol Avenue, as well as a new local connection between West Boulevard and Hawthorn Street. The video showed many changes in the Asylum and Broad Street area, including the relocation of the existing ramps, and economic development opportunities. The video finished at the existing tunnel, and showed the closing of the Trumbull and High Street ramps and their replacement with a frontage road system.

After the video, A. Heredia explained other aspects of the project. She said that the lowered highway would include better local street connections, bicycle lanes, more comfortable streets for pedestrians, a new linear park and potential development, as well as improvements to CT *fastrak* and the Hartford Line railroad. She concluded that the project would be in the interest of all of the public, not only those who drive through the city.

Discussing community activities, A. Heredia said that the Project Team goes to many events throughout Hartford. She said that these events include festivals, farmers markets, visits to schools and churches, and information sessions for large and small groups. She noted that the next OPS would be held September 13 at Immanuel Congregational Church.

A. Heredia next asked the audience if they had any questions or comments, and to put stickers on the priority board.

#### **4. Discussion**

There was a comment about air and noise quality relevant to the lowered highway. A member of the public said that noise and air pollution are already too horrible, and that they would clearly be worse with the highway at ground level. Alexandra Campos Castillo, of CTDOT,

explained how barriers on the side of the highway and an elevated linear park could protect the neighborhoods from highway noise and air, and how replacing the bridges with a ground-level highway would eliminate the noisy joints that currently connect the many bridges.

Chris Hansen, of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), said that he was very excited by the Spanish-language presentation and available visual resources. He said that the OPS was an excellent example of community engagement.

Andrea Merejo, of FHWA, said that she liked how everything in the presentation was clearly explained, including the various plans, impacts and potential concerns.

A member of the public said that they liked the project because currently there is too much traffic in Hartford, which creates many challenges to bringing their children to school, sports and other events.