



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Tuesday, September 22, 2015, 12 - 8 PM

Location: The Lyceum, 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford

Subject: Open Planning Studio #4

1. Meeting Schedule and Attendance

The fourth Open Planning Studio took place Tuesday, September 22, 2015 from 12 to 8 p.m. The meeting consisted of an open house where members of the public could obtain information and talk with project staff about the I-84 corridor and study process. There were information boards set up around the room and a computer station that allowed participants to see 3D simulation of the corridor with select alternatives. The project team gave a formal presentation to the general public at 12:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Forty members of the public signed in at the Open Planning Studio.

2. Boards

Several boards set up around perimeter of the room. They included:

1. I-84 Hartford Fast Facts (an infographic)
2. Program Overview (a flowchart of the overall project schedule)
3. Potential Building Impacts
4. Mainline Alternatives: Vertical Alignment
5. Mainline Alternatives: Horizontal Alignment
6. Construction Considerations
7. Options To Be Further Assessed

There were also 12 smaller boards located on the center table that displayed traffic operations of the surrounding roads for the interchange options. Some of the boards showing visualizations of select streets were also displayed on the center table.

3. Presentation

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone and introduced himself.

He gave an overview of the agenda for the presentation. He explained the purpose of the I-84 Hartford Project, which is to address the bridge's structural deficiencies, operational and safety deficiencies, and mobility deficiencies. He said that \$60 million dollars has been spent on the maintaining the viaduct since 2004. Vehicles are competing to get on and off the highway, which causes them to weave from lane to lane. I-84 was designed to carry 55,000 automobiles per day, but currently services 175,000 daily. R. Armstrong also provided a history of the project.

R. Armstrong said the project area extends from approximately Flatbush Avenue to the I-91 interchange.

He also reviewed the project schedule and said the project is currently in the Environmental Phase, which includes developing alternatives and preparing documents for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

D. Stahnke introduced the preliminary traffic analysis. He described how the team analyzes mainline operations first then ramp and local road intersection operations second. He reviewed the alternatives, spending some time on the traffic analysis results in each of the four vertical alignment categories.

Current Work Efforts

D. Stahnke next discussed the alternatives screening. He described the process of using the purpose and need to narrow the 150+ possible alternatives to a more manageable number. He reviewed the three major components of the purpose and need (bridge deficiencies, traffic and safety operations, and mobility). He noted that the No-build alternative does not adequately address the bridge functional deficiencies. For example, the bridges would continue to exist with substandard shoulders.

D. Stahnke discussed the ten options that the project team proposed to be eliminated at this point in the study as a result of critical flaws. The team proposed that eight options be eliminated because of traffic performance and two options be eliminated because of property impacts (4a and 4b). He proposed that 11 options be set aside for now, one because of traffic performance, two because they are contingent on closing the highway, seven because of poor/moderate traffic performance and one tunnel option (4c) because of substandard traffic performance and cost.

D. Stahnke explained that the project team recommends that 3 western and 4 eastern options, plus the No-build alternative, continue to be analyzed as part of the alternatives analysis. This means the 150+ possible east-west combinations would be reduced to twelve. The seven east and west options include:

1. 3A:E5(S)
2. 3B:E2(S)
3. 3B:E3(S)
4. 3B:E4(S)
5. 3A/3B: W3-1
6. 3A/3B: W3-2
7. 3A/3B: W3-3

Construction Considerations

D. Stahnke discussed the methods the project team will be considering to construct the preferred alternative. He talked about the benefits and drawbacks of using conventional construction and accelerated construction technologies. He also discussed ways to maintain traffic during construction, which includes sections and lane closures and increasing transit options. He provided an overview of a similar project to the I-84 Hartford Project, titled SmartFix40, which required replacing a viaduct that was 2.5 miles long in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Next Steps

D. Stahnke discussed the next steps for the alternatives screening process. He stated that the project team will be adding additional options to the 3-dimensional modelling; refining the alternatives on the analysis webpage; and further assessing the alternatives. He stated that the

team is going to be further assessing the previously noted bicycle and pedestrian considerations in the coming months.

He closed the presentation by discussing the upcoming public meetings in October 2015 and Open Planning Studios in November / December 2015.

12 p.m. Presentation Discussion:

D. Stahnke asked if anyone had questions or comments. No one indicated that they had any, so the presentation was adjourned.

6:30 p.m. Presentation Discussion:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Questions / Comments

One attendee questioned whether CTDOT had any short-term plans to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the corridor, noting that the conditions are not safe. R. Armstrong acknowledged that there are limited areas that can be altered at this time. He noted there are possibilities on Sigourney Street for a cycle track near Aetna, and the state is looking to consult with an expert experienced in bicycle-pedestrian planning and design on this area.

An attendee asked if bicycles are being considered as part of any of construction options. R. Armstrong said yes.

Another attendee asked what CTDOT's plan was for repainting the faded street lines on Broad Street. R. Armstrong said he also noticed that the lines are faded, but he was not sure what the Department's plan was to renew the lines. (Since the meeting, the lines have been re-painted).

One attendee asked if there is a dotted line in one of the alternatives represented the Greenway in the West End. A member of the project team said the dotted line represented a rail line.

Another attendee said that Option 3A/3B W3-2 would disrupt the East/West bike path. Nick Mandler, of TranSystems Corporation, said that in this alternative, the bike path would stay close to its current location. The East Coast Greenway is running parallel and that a 3-D model is available. R. Armstrong added that the project team could redesign it however it desired. It is not limited by the existing conditions. The favorable design options have no ramps on Broad Street. It is possible to create a bicycle-pedestrian path on Laurel Street too. The project team acknowledged that there are good options on the table. Some streets will still carry traffic, but the project team will try to pick the right streets for bicycle accommodations.

An attendee expressed that he was tired of feeling like a slave to the automobile. Another attendee said she commutes to work each day from Woodbridge, and she is in support of using an automobile to travel.

Park River Questions / Comments

One attendee asked if it was possible to unearth the Park River as part of this project. This person noted that it does not make sense to dig up an I-84 structure later in order to unearth the River. R. Armstrong said The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stated that the project team has to satisfy a certain flow rate in the river for flood control. If the project team can find a way to contain the river and maintain the rate, then it could daylight the Park River. It can be done, but someone would have to engineer it.

An attendee asked when the 3-D models of the alternatives would be available to the public. He said the alternatives would be easier to visualize that way. R. Armstrong said some of the alternatives are completed already. N. Mandler added that the project team has more of these renderings available and they will be posted online soon. R. Armstrong added that these should be available at the public meetings in October.

Construction Questions / Comments

Someone asked if it is possible to use transparent or a minimal amount of noise walls during the construction phase. R. Armstrong acknowledged that noise walls can be unattractive, and that it is possible.

Another attendee suggested closing I-84 and rerouting I-84's traffic to other highways, such as I-691 or I-91. R. Armstrong said that the project team will look into whether it is feasible to close the highway or not. The team will need to learn where traffic will go during construction, as well as how to move users towards options like ridesharing and CT *fastrak*.

Other Questions / Comments

An attendee commented that the trust for CTDOT within the community was shattered when Flower Street was closed. R. Armstrong said the project team is making itself available in day-long events like this one. This is the ninth time, that the CTDOT and the project team have hosted an all-day event like this. They've met with people in their living rooms and in their neighborhoods. CTDOT believes it is doing things much better than it's done in the past.

Another attendee asked about the feasibility of rebuilding I-84 under Park Street. T. Ryan said that it's possible, but the project team has had a hard time making it work. It is still looking at existing soil conditions. The project team is still exploring this option, but it has not quite solved it yet. D. Stahnke added that this topic was discussed at the Open Planning Studio that the project team had at the Parkville Community Center in August. The team will present this information. R. Armstrong said these concepts are still schematic and are not very detailed. Many options have been narrowed down. The project team is making good progress, but it still doesn't know all of the impacts.

Someone asked if the city would lose 10,000 parking spots. R. Armstrong said that perhaps there would be an opportunity to remove parking spots and encourage other means of transportation rather than using cars. Michelle Herrell, of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), said the FHWA is looking beyond the traffic initiative and is also looking at transit and rail use. There is a study that is taking place. The results may be available next year. The United States Department of Transportation is trying to encourage more transit use.

One attendee asked if it would have been cheaper to do the CT *fastrak*, the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Rail Program, and the I-84 Hartford project in tandem. The attendee asked why all of these projects were not done simultaneously. R. Armstrong said the rail and highway projects are being done simultaneously. The rail project made concessions for I-84 during its planning process.

Another attendee said it seems like there is a limited amount of money. R. Armstrong the project team does not yet know where the funding for a multi-billion project is coming from. That's being evaluated at the State level. CTDOT is moving forward with what the parts of the project that it can. The use of CT *fastrak* will be critical while I-84 is being constructed. He said the project team is happy that it is progressing.