

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Monday, April 27, 2015, 12:00 PM

Location: Christ Church Cathedral Auditorium, 45 Church Street, Hartford

Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #6

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1. **Welcome & Meeting Purpose**

Michael Morehouse welcomed everyone to the kickoff of the week-long Open Planning Studio and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. He stated that the purpose of the meeting, and the Open Planning Studio, is to introduce the detailed designs concepts to the PAC and public and refine them over the course of the week. Rich Armstrong stated that a major goal of the study is to collaborate with the I-84 community and get people visiting the studio this week.

2. **Alternatives Presentation**

Presentation

R. Armstrong provided information on the recent design work related to the I-84 alternatives. He provided an overview of the information presented at the January 2015 Public Scoping Meeting. He

described the four alternative plan views and then discussed work that has occurred on the alternatives since the January meeting. He noted the importance of getting feedback on the alternatives from the PAC.

Dave Stahnke discussed the geometry and design speeds of the current highway. He stated that a member of the State Police attended the OPS earlier in the day and discussed his safety concerns and experiences with crashes on I-84. D. Stahnke said that there are areas where curves could be straightened in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 to raise the design speed and improve safety.

D. Stahnke next discussed the various alignments and ramp options for the Alternatives 2A, 3A, and 3B. He stated that the buildings in blue on the graphics could be impacted from one or more of the build alternatives. He discussed that the alignment of 3B would straighten out a dangerous curve and achieve a 55-mile per hour design speed.

T. Gold questioned the elevation of the highway in Alternative 3B. D. Stahnke answered that the highway would be lowered in Alternative 3B, and in this situation, the Capital View Apartments would be taken.

D. Stahnke continued on. In Alternative 3C, the current highway could be shut down and a new one built online. Alternative 4A is a tunnel that would be constructed to the north of the current I-84 alignment. This tunnel alternative would be the easiest of the three tunnel alternatives to build, but there would be significant impacts to the Aetna campus. Alternative 4B, another tunnel alternative located to the south of the current I-84 alignment, would have impacts to the Park River conduit. Alternative 4C is the third tunnel alternative and would be built on the existing alignment. Alternative 4C would have less impacts than 4A or 4B, but would have the longest construction period. D. Stahnke closed his portion of the presentation by discussing the naming convention for the alternatives.

Next, M. Morehouse said that the team understands that the information is complex. The goal for the meeting is to allow the PAC to spend time reviewing the drawings around the room and begin providing comments back to the team. He briefly discussed the week's schedule for the Open Planning Studio, and invited PAC members back throughout the week to participate.

M. Morehouse continued on to discuss the design graphics for the different alternatives. For the Elevated Highway graphics (Alternative 2A), he noted that the highway geometry is consistent among the drawings, but the interchanges are in different locations. He stated that the third Elevated Highway option is essentially a hybrid of the first two. The mainline geometry is consistent but the interchanges are in different locations in Alternative 3A. 3A requires staged construction. Moving the mainline alignment in Alternative 3B allows an interchange to be located up near Church Street, instead of in the Broad/Asylum area. Alternative 3C most closely resembles what came out of the HUB study.

On the west side of the study area, many of the ramp configurations can work with Alternatives 2 or 3. All of the highways function from a traffic perspective. The impacts of the ramps and their effect on local roadways will be evaluated in the coming months. M. Morehouse closed his portion of the presentation by discussing the design graphics for three variations of a cut-and-cover tunnel.

Next, Mitch Glass discussed opportunities for development in select areas of the corridor. He presented renderings of Asylum Avenue, Sigourney Street, Broad Street, and Capital Avenue. There were questions regarding which alternatives are represented in the renderings. M. Glass responded that the renderings could work with any of the lowered alternatives. The Broad Street rendering would only be possible if the ramps are relocated.

There was discussion that many of the alternatives meet the three basic points of purpose in the project Purpose and Need: addressing the structural deficiencies, improving traffic operations and safety, and reducing congestion. The team will soon be working to learn if these alternatives also meet the goals and objectives. M. Morehouse stated that while many alternatives meet the Purpose and Need, some will fall short in meeting all of the objectives. The team wants to learn from the public which alternatives have impacts that are unacceptable, and which ones do not.

The team closed the presentation by stating that all graphics can be viewed along the sides of the room.

Additional Discussion

There was a question whether a visualization was completed for the Myrtle Street area. M. Morehouse answered that this is a good suggestion and perhaps the team could look at it over the course of this week.

Bob Painter asked about the cost differences in the alternatives, including the tunnel. M. Morehouse stated that the tunnel is about double the cost of the other alternatives. It could cost \$10 billion or more. D. Stahnke noted that the cost is inflated out to the mid-point of construction.

B. Painter asked whether there will be traffic issues near the reduced number of interchanges. D. Stahnke said the team has only completed a preliminary traffic analyses on the mainline for the alternatives. The mainline, ramps, and local road networks will all be assessed in great detail in the coming months.

Jackie McKinney asked if the team is looking at which solutions could add economic development. D. Stahnke noted that the presentation and boards do highlight some of this, but this topic will be looked at in much more detail as we move forward and refine alternatives.

Adrian Texidor questioned whether the team is working with City to come up with a construction strategy for each alternative. D. Stahnke stated that this study has not reached the construction staging level of detail. The team does, and will continue to, meet with the City regularly. Tom Deller noted that the City of Hartford is following the I-84 Project closely to get the best project for the people.

Lynn Ferrari questioned whether the team has a sense of where the rail study is headed. D. Stahnke answered that line is owned and operated by Amtrak. The rail viaduct over Asylum Avenue has poor geometry, and Amtrak as well as the freight carriers would like to see it improved. A decision on this has not been made yet, and the two teams will continue their on-going coordination.

Mike Riley cited concerns with the congestion on I-84. This project needs to increase the throughput of I-84 through Hartford. D. Stahnke answered that yes, the I-84 Project will improve highway operations,

as much as possible within its limits of construction. If an alternative cannot improve the operations on the mainline, it will not move forward.

David Morin questioned whether the slides can be made available electronically or as a printout. D. Stahnke said that the team will post this information to the website. He noted that materials will be revised accordingly throughout the week.

Mike Marshall asked if the list of goals and objectives will become a weighted criteria. M. Morehouse answered that he was not sure yet, but we will flesh out the details of what each criteria include.

M. Marshall asked if how noise will be controlled if the highway is lowered. Will there be a noise wall? M. Morehouse said that this is a design function that will have to be addressed. Deborah Howes added that in order for a noise barrier to be constructed, residents affected have to want it.

Oz Griebel asked about the timeline for planning and construction. R. Armstrong stated that this year is really critical, and the team would like to reach consensus on the alternatives analysis by early 2016. A formal environmental documentation phase will follow, to be completed by 2017-2018 at the latest. Design and construction will follow that, with construction likely to start in 2021-2022.

J. McKinney asked whether there will be an impact on the Downtown North development. R. Armstrong stated that we are tracking their progress and coordinating with them. There are not any know conflicts or issue between the projects.