



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Friday, December 13, 2019, 12:30 PM

**Location: Training & Conference Center, The Chrysalis Center, 255
Homestead Avenue, Hartford**

Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #20

Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Toni Gold	West End Civic Association	toniagold@gmail.com
Mary Falvey	Hartford Preservation Alliance	Mary@hartfordpreservation.org
Arianna Basche	Trinity College	Arianna.Basche@trincoll.edu
Jackie Mandyck	iQuilt	jackie@thequiltplan.org
Yvonne Matthews	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association	matthews.yvonne791@gmail.com
Sandy Fry	City of Hartford	sandy.fry@hartford.gov
Aaron Gill	Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone	ajgill@edtengineers.com
Mark McGovern	Town of West Hartford	mark.mcgovern@westhartfordct.gov
Amy Parmenter	American Automobile Association	aparmenter@aaa-alliedgroup.com
Jennifer Cassidy	Business for Downtown Hartford	j.cassidy@snet.net
Anne Hayes	Travelers	aihayes@travelers.com
Bruce Donald	East Coast Greenway Alliance	bruce@greenway.org
Mike Zaleski	Riverfront Recapture, Inc.	mzaleski@riverfront.org
Mary Zeman	Bushnell Park Foundation	manager@bushnellpark.org
Jackie McKinney	ArtSpace Residents Association	jdmckinney07@gmail.com
David Nardone	Federal Highway Administration	David.W.Nardone@dot.gov
Doug Moore	Connecticut Department of Administrative Services	Doug.Moore@ct.gov
Cara Radzins	Capitol Region Council of Governments	cradzins@crcog.org
John Walsh	Aetna	walshj3@aetna.com

OTHER ATTENDEES		
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Phil Shattuck	iQuilt	phil@thequiltplan.org
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Ron Sacchi	GM2	rsacchi@gm2inc.com
Ken Gosselin	Hartford Courant	kgosselin@courant.com
Conor Quinn	HNTB	conor.quinn@mail.house.gov
Lashaunda Drake	Greater Hartford Transit District	ldrake@ghtd.org
Bill Mocarsky		bill@peopleofgoodwill.com
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NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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Ted DeSantos	Fuss & O'Neill	tdesantos@fando.com

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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1. Welcome & Introduction

Mike Calabrese, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), thanked everyone for coming. He walked through the meeting agenda, which included reviewing progress to-date, emerging considerations, and next steps. He said that the purpose of the meeting was to share project developments since the last PAC meeting in March and to hear questions and concerns from the committee. He introduced Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), to deliver the remainder of the presentation.

2. Presentation

C. Hardin began by reviewing agenda items from the most recent PAC meeting in March, which included construction staging and the process for developing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). He said the Project Team has been advancing the DEIS since that time and has nearly completed it. The program is funded through the Record of Decision (ROD), last scheduled for 2021.

C. Hardin outlined the project's Purpose & Need, namely addressing the deficient bridge structures, traffic operational and safety deficiencies, and mobility deficiencies. Other desirable outcomes include making I-84 a better neighbor to communities within Hartford. He said that

the Lowered Highway Alternative had emerged as the recommended preferred alternative by best satisfying the project's Purpose & Need. The Lowered Highway Alternative includes routing the highway below the level of local streets, realigning the railroad, constructing a new multi-modal station, ensuring access for CT **fastrak** to the Central Business District, improving local streets, and opportunities for capping the highway.

Taking a wider view, C. Hardin addressed public concerns heard throughout the life of the project, including whether it should be broader in scope. He explained that I-84 in Hartford is interrelated to several other transportation initiatives and challenges in the region. These include the rail corridor and its outstanding viaduct deficiencies and capacity constraints north of Hartford, the I-84 / I-91 interchange, CT **fastrak** expansion and desire for a dedicated guideway across the Connecticut River, the East Hartford mix-master interchange, and gaps in the East Coast Greenway. In response to these challenges, C. Hardin said the Department will step back to take a more comprehensive approach at evaluating mobility deficiencies in the region.

C. Hardin introduced the Greater Hartford Mobility Study, a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study that will efficiently incorporate existing work on the I-84 Hartford Project into a larger vision for mobility to comprehensively address interrelated projects. He said a PEL study may be more flexible than the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. He noted that there are many examples of PEL studies from around the country, including the I-84 Danbury Project in Connecticut. Factors influencing this decision include: the challenges of fulfilling NEPA requirements without precluding interrelated projects, outstanding stakeholder concerns, new opportunities to consider, recently completed viaduct rehabilitation work expected to prolong the structure's life until 2040, unresolved funding challenges, and mobility and congestion issues.

Turning towards the construction schedule, C. Hardin said the I-84 Hartford Project had not been expected to begin until the early 2030s. Furthermore, the project was only funded through the end of the environmental process, particularly the Record of Decision (ROD). There is no funding identified for construction. He said the PEL process could be completed in approximately 2-3 years, during which time funding opportunities for individual breakout projects could be identified. Individual projects could advance through NEPA and into construction without delaying the overall construction start period.

C. Hardin said next steps for the I-84 Hartford Project would include rescinding the project's federal Notice of Intent, suspending the environmental work, and folding it into the Greater Hartford Mobility Study. He emphasized that work done to-date would not be lost. He explained that the Greater Hartford Mobility Study would next determine a scope of work, develop a program for public involvement, , and identify important milestones and a study schedule. He concluded that public involvement would inform the Study and that additional stakeholders would be included given the Study's broader geography.

He introduced Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., to facilitate the upcoming discussion.

3. Discussion

Amy Parmenter, of American Automobile Association, asked the Project Team to clarify the Study timeline and the progress of incorporating the I-84 Hartford Project into the Study. She asked when the PAC would next be asked to participate. M. Calabrese said the PEL would be a 2-3 year process and that public involvement activities would likely begin in the spring or summer of 2020.

Jackie Mandyck, of iQuilt, asked what would be included in the Study's scope of work and whether CTDOT would need to seek additional federal funds to undertake the PEL Study. M. Calabrese said the Project Team would develop a process for addressing the entire region and examine the I-84 Hartford viaduct, the I-84 / I-91 interchange, CT**fastrak** expansion, the rail corridor analysis, and the East Coast Greenway, among other initiatives. He noted that the purpose of the Study would be to ensure no one initiative precludes any other. He said funding for the PEL has already been secured. He concluded that the Study would be broader and less detailed than the I-84 Hartford Project.

J. Mandyck asked if future initiatives would still need to go through the NEPA process. M. Calabrese said individual initiatives would still go through NEPA. The Study would identify individual projects and potentially expedite them to begin the NEPA process. He cited ongoing improvements to the I-91 approach to the Charter Oak Bridge as an example of a project that could have been identified through the PEL and expedited into NEPA and construction. J. Mandyck said she was pleased the Study would look beyond only the I-84 Hartford Project.

Jackie McKinney, of ArtSpace Residents Association, asked if Congressman John Larson's tunnel proposal would be considered in the Greater Hartford Mobility Study. M. Calabrese said the Congressman's proposal would be addressed in the Study and encompassed in discussion of the I-84 / I-91 interchange.

Bruce Donald, of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, asked if the northern alignment of I-84 to the North Meadows would be included. He clarified that the outstanding gaps in the East Coast Greenway in the Hartford region are within East Hartford to the Connecticut River, and from Bloomfield into northern Hartford. M. Calabrese said the northern alignment was encompassed within the I-84 / I-91 interchange study.

Mark McGovern, of the Town of West Hartford, asked if the PEL study posed a risk to already planned projects like the West Hartford CT**rail** station, which is at 30% design. A representative of CTDOT Office of Rails said the West Hartford station had already completed the NEPA process and is awaiting funding for completion.

Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, asked the Project Team to elaborate on the factors contributing to the transition from the I-84 Hartford Project to the Greater Hartford Mobility Study. M. Calabrese said many factors contributed to the decision, namely the identification of potential conflicts between viaduct replacement and interchange improvements. M. Morehouse said returning to the I-84 / I-91 interchange as an action connected to the I-84 Hartford Project may pose significant legal challenges. He added that a funding source is still undefined. He concluded that these factors make it a good time to reevaluate the region's mobility challenges at a broader scope and in a way that will not preclude future interrelated actions.

Yvonne Matthews, of Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, asked if the northern I-84 realignment was still on the table. M. Calabrese said the alignment would be considered as part of the PEL.

M. Morehouse asked the PAC if they believed the transition to the PEL study was a good development. Responses were mixed. J. McKinney said she was disappointed the project could be pushed back another 20 years.

An attendee asked how many projects the Greater Hartford Mobility Study might identify and how will they be prioritized. Kimberly Lesay, of CTDOT Office of Environmental Planning, said the PEL process would help to identify funding sources, priorities, and potential breakout projects. She explained that the PEL could be scaled as needed. She emphasized that the PEL could help determine NEPA categorization for various interrelated projects, potentially including categorical exclusions, and thereby make the best decisions for the Hartford region.

J. McKinney inquired about the state of the rail viaduct over Asylum Street. A representative from CTDOT Office of Rails said the viaduct is in poor condition and limits train frequency to single tracking, largely due to fatigue wear on the structure. He noted that Amtrak regularly repairs and monitors the structure to keep it in service. He concluded that a plan for a four-tracked station could increase operational frequency.

Mary Falvey, of the Hartford Preservation Alliance, said it makes sense to take a step back given the lack of funding and asked why this decision wasn't made earlier. She emphasized that NEPA challenges are in fact designed to protect remaining cultural and historic resources. She requested more information on the PEL process and encouraged maintaining the PAC to solicit frequent public input. M. Morehouse said recent rehabilitation of the viaduct has lessened the urgency to replace the structure and enabled the Department to address regional mobility more holistically. K. Lesay recognized the value of the NEPA process and emphasized that the PEL study will address the cumulative impacts of interrelated actions. She said the Department would solicit public feedback at a broader geography and use the PEL to identify efficiencies in future NEPA processes.

T. Gold asked if PEL studies were a new program. K. Lesay said PEL studies were a newer concept in Connecticut but have been advancing in many other states following Executive Order 13807. M. Morehouse said the case for a PEL became obvious as the I-84 Hartford Project developed and its complexities were further examined, including its interrelated nature to the I-84 / I-91 interchange, CT **fastrak** and rail corridors, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The Greater Hartford Mobility Study enables consideration of all these elements with a PEL framework. Dave Nardone added that this concept of looking at different modes in a pre-NEPA realm is not new to CTDOT. Major Investment Studies (MIS) have been done in the past such as the one that created CTfastrak instead of widening I-84.

T. Gold asked if the consulting team for the I-84 Hartford Project would be the same for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study. M. Calabrese said the same team would be maintained.

M. Morehouse said he hopes PAC members will stay involved moving forward and thanked them for their contributions. He invited them to reach out to the Project Team directly with any further questions or concerns. He noted that the project website has been updated and encouraged PAC members to take printed copies of factsheets on the Greater Hartford Mobility Study and PEL studies.