



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Thursday, February 25, 2016, 8:30 AM

Location: The Lyceum, 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford

Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #10

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Anne Hayes	Travelers	aihayes@travelers.com
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2. Welcome & Meeting Purpose

Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI), welcomed everyone to the 10th PAC meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. He provided an overview of the meeting agenda. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss further refinements and updates to various alternatives and hear the PAC's feedback.

3. Presentation

Introduction

M. Morehouse began by stating that outreach had been extensive throughout 2015. He said that at the public's request, the project team has continued to look at tunnel alternatives, despite their obstacles. He noted that the presentation would introduce a new, capped highway alternative and the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. He invited David Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), to discuss the lowered highway.

The Lowered Highway

D. Stahnke began his discussion of the lowered highway by focusing on the "hub" area around Asylum and Broad Streets. He said the team found that adding local streets and intersections to the existing network improved mobility for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. He explained that relocating the railroad to the north presented exciting opportunities for creating large new development parcels. He added that highway and rail alignments that keep the rail relatively closer to the existing Union Station and Downtown Hartford perform well.

D. Stahnke recognized concerns of locating highway access ramps directly on Cogswell Street in proximity to The Hartford. He presented three refinements to Alternative 3B E-2(S), one of

the best performing eastern interchange options. The refinements included frontage roads extending Chapel and Walnut Streets and a new road called Bushnell Park West. He pointed out the similarity of these refinements to the results of the Hub of Hartford Study.

D. Stahnke acknowledged poor existing pedestrian conditions in the Park Street area. He explained that relocating the highway below Park Street included many obstacles and few benefits. Doing so requires pushing the highway below the water table, mandating expensive maintenance and building impacts, and not achieving an attractive Park Street corridor. He instead presented visualizations of Park Street with a slightly higher highway overpass, a light shaft, and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Tunnel Options

M. Morehouse next discussed the tunnel. He said that the project team had continued to study tunnel options after a poll at the previous PAC meeting showed discomfort in eliminating Alternative 4 from further consideration. He noted that the tunnel still includes many obstacles, including poor mobility and potentially poor air quality. He reiterated that the tunnel presented few realistic options for new development and could carry significant building impacts.

The Capped Highway

M. Morehouse said that the project team developed the concept of a capped highway in response to PAC and community feedback. He said this option may permit a new pedestrian connection at Flower Street.

D. Stahnke compared the costs of Alternative 4C with the capped highway. He said that the tunneled highway (Alternative 4C) would cost roughly \$2 million per linear foot, whereas the capped highway would cost \$400,000 per linear foot, or 20% of the cost of the tunnel. He explained that there are three options for building the cap. Option 1 would construct a cap between Asylum and Broad Streets at a cost of \$325-400 million and extending a little less than 1000 feet. Option 2 would extend the cap west as far as the Park River Conduit, a total length of 1,800 feet and costing \$600-750 million. Option 3 would extend the cap as far west as Sigourney Street, requiring the relocation of part of the Park River Conduit and impacting some properties along Capitol Avenue. He said that relocation of the conduit would cost \$45 million, and that a cap to Sigourney Street would cost \$1,350-1,650 million for a total length of 3,000 feet. He presented graphics of the capped highway at different extents and potential routes for the East Coast Greenway. He concluded that the capped alternative may have conflicts with the Aetna campus, although there is still much to learn. Moving forward, he said the project team would work to identify total construction costs and determine the cap's added-value.

Tunnel / Capped Highway Questions

Jackie McKinney, of the Art Space Residents Association, asked about the price difference between the capped highway and an updated viaduct. D. Stahnke said that although the elevated highway was more expensive than the lowered highway, the cap would make this alternative more expensive than the lowered highway. He said the project team would work to refine cost estimates.

Andrew Brecher, representative for the Mayor of Newington, asked if the cap would support air rights development. D. Stahnke said that air rights development is very expensive, whereas a linear park would not require the cap to be as strong or expensive.

Marc Petruzzi, Commanding Officer of Troop H asked if the capped tunnel included cost estimates for ventilation and safe transport of hazardous material. D. Stahnke said that those were some of the greatest concerns of the capped highway. He said that under FHWA regulations, any stretch longer than 300 feet is classified as a tunnel, and that additional regulations apply to expanses over 800 and 1,100 feet.

Joe Scully, of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association, said that the cap should not restrict the transportation of hazardous material or divert freight off I-84 through Hartford. D. Stahnke recognized that concern. He noted that some capping options fell below 1,100 feet and did not restrict the transport of hazardous material.

Aaron Gill, of the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Association, said that his association supported the cap for its positive contributions to air and noise quality, and asked if the project team considered expanding the cap as far as Park Street. He said that Knox Parks could use additional green space and that his association does not advocate for built development over the cap west of Broad Street. He requested a green connection between Pope Park and Downtown, and West Hartford and Downtown. D. Stahnke said that the cap was very expensive and asked where it would really be needed to tie the city together. He agreed that the cap would be a great area for Knox Farms to expand, as their current facility may be impacted.

M. Morehouse asked if the PAC would like the team to continue exploring the capped highway alternative. Most people nodded yes. A. Gill said that the group should not drop Alternative 4 before learning more about the capped highway.

Mobility Screening

M. Morehouse said the project team was in the process of evaluating bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure through the project corridor. He presented routing options for the East Coast Greenway and on-street bicycle networks. He noted that *CTfastrak* and the Hartford Line will be important throughout construction. He stated that the project team believes they can stage construction so that *CTfastrak* service will be uninterrupted throughout construction and rerouted under the highway. He cited a recently completed CTDOT study of the Hartford Line that found that railroad relocation is preferable. He stated that the rail project will be incorporated into the I-84 Hartford Project moving forward.

Urban Design

David Spillane, of Goody Clancy, next said that urban design goals aim to reconnect the city and improve district functions on either side of the highway. He focused his discussion on the Asylum and Broad Street area and the Sisson Avenue area. He said that there could be about 20 acres of new developable land around Sisson Avenue and 25 acres in the Asylum and Broad Streets area.

D. Spillane explained the differences between air rights development and development over solid ground. He suggested public parking or greenspace for air rights development over the capped section between Asylum and Broad Streets. He said that development in this section focused on reshaping Asylum Street as a corridor with continuous urban fabric between Downtown and Asylum Hill, incorporating new development along Asylum Street and the proposed Bushnell Park West. He presented a series of graphics showing existing and potential conditions in the Asylum and Broad Streets area. He noted that the Bushnell Park West road could create an important new connection between Asylum Street and Capitol Avenue.

I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study

Rich Armstrong, of CTDOT, introduced the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. He said that the State Bond Commission had provided funding for the 12-18 month study, supported additionally by Federal funds.

R. Armstrong explained existing capacity deficiencies at the interchange, noting that with 275,000 vehicles per day, the I-84 / I-91 interchange is the most heavily travelled in the state. He said that both I-84 and I-91 are reduced to two through lanes in each direction due to the constrained location of the interchange, making this area a major bottleneck. He said the project team would take a broad look at relocating I-84 to the north and creating a new river crossing into East Hartford. He said the project team would look at other routing options, but that they were unlikely to find more southerly routes through the city. He said that the same project team would undertake the study as a parallel project.

Conclusion

R. Armstrong presented a calendar of events for the year 2016. He said public meetings and Open Planning Studios would be held periodically. He stated that the project team hopes to have identified an alternative by May 2016.

4. Discussion

M. Reilly asked if more through lanes could be added to the highway to increase capacity. D. Stahnke said that lanes could not be added because of impacts to the Aetna campus. T. Ryan added that the primary capacity constraint was at the I-91 interchange.

Robert Painter, of the Hub of Hartford, asked if the project team had taken into account future traffic in the areas of Downtown North and the Dunkin Donuts Stadium when proposing the closure of the Trumbull and High Street interchanges. T. Ryan, of TSC, said the existing traffic volumes on those ramps are low at peak hours, however, those few cars entering the highway worsened congestion between the I-91 interchange and in the Asylum Hill interchange. He said proposed frontage roads in the area would provide access to Downtown North and the baseball stadium, while also eliminating some highway traffic and improving local and mainline mobility.

M. Petruzzi asked what could be done to discourage motorists from exiting and reentering the lowered highway via frontage roads in order to avoid mainline congestion. M. Morehouse said that frontage roads would be engineered for very low speeds and include traffic lights.

J. Scully said that he is excited that the project team is considering capacity increases over the river and hopes the study is completed before construction begins on the viaduct. R. Armstrong said the interchange study was very important and that the commissioner also recognized the study's value.

A. Gill said the project team should consider how rerouting could impact the North End in the way that the rest of the city was impacted by I-84 in the 1960s. R. Armstrong said the northern reroute would be very challenging and potentially have many impacts. He reiterated that this was a very broad and preliminary look.

Marcus Jarvis, of YTC Construction, asked if the project team was considering moving Union Station. D. Spillane said that the Union Station building would stay in its existing place, but that relocating the railroad would require a new access point. He said the existing Union Station could remain open as a bus facility. M. Jarvis said this could open up Union Station for new development and that rail and bus facilities should be kept in close proximity.

J. McKinney said she was concerned about impacts to the Aetna campus. She asked what could be done to encourage large companies to headquarter in Hartford, and to prevent large vacant lots like the site of the Statler Hilton. M. Morehouse said that the City of Hartford was very interested in the project and supported development.

Adrian Texidor, of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), said that the project team must be mindful of impacts to Hartford's police presence and mobility. M. Morehouse said the project team would keep this in mind, and that they were holding an Emergency Services Roundtable the following morning, Friday, February 26th.

Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association (WECA), said that the cap by Capitol Avenue or the Trident should be used as a greenway or park space rather than parking. M. Morehouse said that adding greenspace was a great consideration of the project, but that additional parking would be needed for the Hartford Line.

Amy Parmenter, of AAA, expressed excitement about the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. She said commuters would not consider the project successful without reductions in congestion.

David Morin, of the Parkville Revitalization Association said his community would challenge the elimination of the Sisson Avenue ramps. He noted that the Sigourney Street ramps are already expected to be the most trafficked, and that his community would be rerouted to that busy access point under project proposals. He said his community is requesting improved communication with the project team moving forward. M. Morehouse said that TSC was in the process of developing travel path routings, detailing ideal routes and travel time savings. He said that although proposed changes to the highway may not deposit motorists directly onto Sisson Avenue, they would save time on the highway itself. He said he would like to sit down with D. Morin and the Parkville neighborhood to discuss the area's mobility in greater detail.

T. Gold addressed D. Morin and said that the Sisson Avenue on / off ramps are a blight in her West End neighborhood. She said that the West End Board had no objection to removing the ramps, and that it could be a great improvement to the area. D. Morin acknowledged the opportunity for development in the area, but said he was obligated to represent his community. T. Ryan said that the project team did have a western option that replicated direct access to Sisson Avenue, but without left-hand off ramps from I-84 eastbound. He said the project team developed that option in direct response to community concerns, and could discuss it further.

5. Other Remarks

There was some discussion about transfer access between the existing Union Station and a new rail station annex. T. Gold said there should be a sheltered connection between facilities. Jackie Mandyck, of iQuilt, said that people transferring between bus and rail should be encouraged to walk on city streets, rather than an underground passage.

M. Reilly said that I-84 was a very important corridor for travelers from all around the country. He said that the I-84 Hartford Project is not a neighborhood renewal project, but a highway project, and it must be conducted as so. He said that if millions of dollars are spent without improving capacity, then nothing will be achieved travel-wise.