



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Thursday, November 17, 2015, 8:30 - 11 AM

Location: The Lyceum Resource and Conference Center, 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford

Subject: PAC Meeting

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Anne Hayes	Travelers	aihayes@travelers.com
Jackie McKinney	ArtSpace Residents Association	Jdmckinney07@gmail.com
Andy Daly	The Hartford	andrew.daly@thehartford.com
Patrick Egan	The Chancery	patrick.egan@aohct.org
Michael Marshall	Aetna	Marshallml@aetna.com
Jennifer Cassidy	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association	j.cassidy@snet.net
David Fichandler	Hartford Hospital	david.fichandler@hhchealth.org
Barry Kriesberg	Hartford Hospital	barry.kriesberg@hhchealth.org
Toni Gold	West End Civic Association	toniagold@gmail.com
Frank Hagaman	Hartford Preservation Alliance	frank@hartfordpreservation.org
Hans Keck	The Hartford Courant	hkeck@courant.com
Aaron Gill	Frog Hollow NRZ	ajgill@edtengineers.com
Hank Hoffman	The Hartford	Hank.hoffman@thehartford.com
Jackie Mandyck	iQuilt	jackie@thequiltplan.org
David Morin	Parkville Revitalization Association	barridoncorp@aol.com
Robert Painter	HUB of Hartford	Painterbob4250@yahoo.com
Adrian Texidor	SINA	atexidor@sina.org
Mark Petruzzi	Troop H- Hartford/BIA	Marc.f.petruzzi@ct.gov
Michael Riley	Connecticut Motor Transport Association	cttruck@aol.com
Vicki Shotland	Greater Hartford Transit District	vshotland@ghtd.org
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Joe Sculley	Connecticut Motor Transport Association	joe@mtac.us
Lynn Ferrari	Coalition To Strengthen Sheldon-Charter Oak Neighborhood	Lynn.ferrari@gmail.com
OTHER ATTENDEES		
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Michelle Herrell	FHWA	michelle.herrell@dot.gov
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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Julie Georges	A. DiCesare Associates	georges@adicesarepc.com
Brett P. Wallace	Parsons Brinckerhoff	wallacebp@pbworld.com

2. Presentation

M. Morehouse welcomed everyone and explained that the day’s session would involve an interactive polling exercise at different stages throughout the presentation. He emphasized that the project team is keen to hear feedback from the PAC as well as members of the public.

On Alternative 4: The Tunnel

He began the presentation by presenting common feedback from the public regarding the tunneled alternatives. He said that most people believe that the tunnel presents opportunities for a greenway, improved air quality, and land development. He then explained that the northerly and southerly tunnel alignments were eliminated from further consideration because of significant building impacts, and that the remaining alternative—building the tunnel on the existing alignment—would be very expensive as it requires temporarily supporting the existing elevated highway while excavating below it to build the tunnel. He mentioned that it may be possible to include an interchange at Sigourney Street in a tunneled alternative, but that doing so would require significant property impacts.

M. Morehouse continued the discussion of the tunnel by stating that the absence of Sigourney Street ramps would increase congestion, and have a negative impact on air quality. He said that air quality could be particularly worse at each of the tunnel portals.

M. Morehouse stated that although some land would be freed up between Broad Street and Laurel Street, that land would enjoy little visibility and still lie next to the railroad. The cost premium for building anything over a tunnel would likely prove prohibitive.

M. Morehouse concluded the presentation of the tunneled highway alternative by asking if spending ten to twelve (\$10-12) billion dollars would be a wise investment considering the challenges and limitations. He then opened the floor for questions and comments from the PAC.

Tunnel Discussion

Bob Painter, Chair of the HUB of Hartford, asked if the tunnel would have fans or blowers to mitigate poor air quality. Christine Tiernan, of AECOM, said that a tunnel would have ventilation but has not yet been designed to that level. She said that air quality would be worst at the portals of the tunnel, however, not inside and in proximity to ventilation equipment.

Mike Riley, President of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association, said that strict regulations in Boston prohibit the transfer of hazardous materials through tunnels. He noted that 25 percent of the freight that moves through Hartford is fuel, and that rerouting that much freight around the tunnel would be a big problem for the freight industry and others.

Anne Hayes, Director of Parking for Travelers Insurance, inquired about access for emergency vehicles in a tunneled alternative. Tim Ryan and Dave Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation, said that emergency access would not be much different from what currently exists, but would be improved by wider shoulders and pedestrian egress paths.

Adrian Texidor, of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) suggested that the project team assumed venting the tunnel would not impact air quality. M. Morehouse said that adding ramps at Sigourney Street for the Tunnel alternative would improve congestion compared to a Tunnel alternative that does not have ramps at Sigourney Street, but air quality at the tunnel portals would still be of concern. C. Tiernan said that the environmental studies conducted by AECOM for the tunnel are qualitative in nature. She said that venting will certainly have an impact on air quality, but at this point it is unclear to what degree. David Spillane, of Goody Clancy, said that land freed up by the tunnel is already adversely challenged. He noted that Boston is still figuring out what to build over their tunnel, and that although additional land may be created, the costs for development are significant; open space is likely the area's best use. M. Morehouse addressed walkability, stating that the area in question has never had additional north-south cross streets and that the building line prohibited the creation of new local roads without impacting existing buildings.

Aaron Gill, of the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, asked if the project team considered lowering the railroad below grade. T. Ryan explained that the project team looked to lower the rail line as much as possible, but lowering it any further would require closing Park Street. Brett Wallace, of Parsons Brinckerhoff, discussed the necessary platform dimensions and clearance standards for rail, and how a tunnel might limit or impact contemporary rail standards.

Marc Petruzzi, Commanding Officer of Troop H of the State Police, asked how the tunnel impacted CT *fastrak*. T. Ryan explained that CT *fastrak* would be rerouted in some fashion to Union Station.

A. Gill asked if the cost for the tunnel took into account a potential increase in local property values. M. Morehouse said that the study has not assessed property values, but the addition of a mixed-use trail behind Capitol Avenue could positively affect property values.

Jackie McKinney, President of the ArtSpace Residents Association, said that the tunnel seems attractive because it obscures vehicles driving on the highway, and that it creates developable land. M. Morehouse said that the tunnel does create developable land, but primarily along a short cap between Asylum and Broad Streets. He said that the areas by Asylum Hill are still good for development, but the longer portion along Capitol Avenue and the Aetna campus has limited access, follows the railroad, and would be expensive to build on. He said that the project team is looking at capping over the highway by Park Street, and that there may be development opportunities there.

On Alternative 2: The Elevated Highway

M. Morehouse presented the elevated highway alternatives. He said that the public comments on this alternative the least, and that it operates very poorly despite being half the cost of the tunnel. He added that few people want to see the highway rebuilt as an elevated structure and that many have commented that they would consider the project a failure if the highway was rebuilt elevated. He pointed out that elevated alternatives would need interchange ramps at Asylum Street and/or Broad Street. Having ramps at either of these streets has a negative effect on bicycle and pedestrian corridors due to the amount of traffic congestion. He concluded that although the elevated highway has the lowest building impacts, it would require long term maintenance, a greater construction duration, and create little developable land. He asked the PAC if there were any comments or requests for clarification, of which there were none.

Alternative 3: The Lowered Highway

M. Morehouse presented the lowered highway alternatives. He said that the lowered highway presented opportunities for partial tunnels, improved highway safety and efficiency, better spacing of interchanges, the elimination of left-hand on and off ramps, reconstructed cross streets that better accommodate cyclists and pedestrians, and better connections to Asylum Hill. He acknowledged that the highway may still act as a sort of barrier between urban neighborhoods, but would create new connections to other parts of the city and better distribute traffic on the revised local street network. A lowered highway would also improve operations across all travel modes, and improve and enhance the trident by eliminating highway interchange ramps at Asylum and Broad Streets and adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities. He said that the lowered highway performs best for traffic flow on the mainline as well as the local street system, but does not completely eliminate congestion; congestion would be reduced but at times remain between Laurel and Broad Streets as well as by the interchange with I-91. Despite some congestion, the highway would be safer and flow better.

M. Morehouse added that the lowered highway complements railroad realignments detailed in a recently completed rail study; a realigned railroad performs best to the north of the existing highway. He said that the I-84 Hartford Project and the Hartford Rail Alternatives Analysis take an integrated, multimodal approach. He concluded by saying that the highway, realigned in tandem with the railroad, would create lots of developable land, and that depending on ramp placement, the highway could be capped and given the effect of a tunnel. The lowered highway would be at least one billion dollars less expensive than an elevated highway, and could have significant building impacts. It would, however, massively enhance Asylum and Broad Streets while eliminating mainline curves and improving highway geometry.

Lowered Highway Discussion

Toni Gold, a representative of the West End Civic Association, expressed that the lowered alternative was an excellent option. She said she favors the elimination of ramps at Sigourney Street and the creation of a large roundabout near Sisson Avenue. T. Ryan noted that it may be possible to eliminate the Sigourney Street ramps, though perhaps not the best for traffic

operations, as the two most heavily traveled existing interchange ramps are the westbound Asylum Avenue and Sigourney Street off-ramps. T. Ryan further stated that the design team is currently evaluating the roundabout proposal in lieu of the Sigourney Street ramps.

One PAC member asked if expected costs included relocation of the railroad. M. Morehouse said that it does.

Jennifer Cassidy, Chair of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, said that she is concerned that little has been developed over the tunnel in Boston, and that nothing may be developed over a cap in the Asylum Hill neighborhood. She asked if the trend of failed development could occur in Hartford. Brian Natwick, CTDOT, stated that construction is difficult when located over the highway itself, but the lowered highway creates developable land alongside the highway as well as premium spaces like Bushnell Park.

J. McKinney asked Mike Marshall, Head of Global Asset Management at Aetna, how the insurance group would feel about tinkering with or removing Sigourney Street ramps. M. Marshall said he was not sure what would be achieved by relocating ramps to Laurel Street or further west, and asked Hank Hoffman, of The Hartford, how that company would feel about the removal of the Asylum Street interchange. H. Hoffman said that The Hartford favors improved traffic conditions and improved multimodal mobility, but obviously is concerned where ramps connect the highway with the local road system.

M. Petruzzi said that he is still concerned about the mainline curve by Union Station. He asked which alternatives improved the curve. T. Ryan and M. Morehouse said that many of the lowered options can soften the curve, and that safety will be further improved by the addition of shoulders and the elimination of an interchange at High Street. They said that alignment 3B best addresses the existing curve deficiencies.

A. Texidor asked if streetscape improvements were still possible under tunneled alternatives. M. Morehouse said that they were possible, but development over the tunnel would be challenging and expensive.

David Morin, President of the Parkville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, asked if the cost of decking over the highway was included in the cost of a lowered highway. T. Ryan said that it is unlikely that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would pay to deck over the freeway; developers would be financially responsible for building above the deck or tunnel. David Nardone, of FHWA, clarified T. Ryan's response and said that FHWA's funding participation in decking could be considered on a case-by-case basis. R. Armstrong noted that the existing tunnel in Hartford was built in the 1980s and designed to support a six-story building. Despite this, nothing has been developed over that tunnel.

B. Painter asked if the project team was investigating improving the trident area. Nick Mandler, of TranSystems Corporation, said that the project team was looking into the trident but has not yet included it in alternative design because there are so many possibilities for improving it.

3. Poll

M. Morehouse conducted a poll of six questions, of which 23 voters participated.

Question 1: How comfortable do you feel about removing Alternative 2 (New Elevated Highway) from further consideration?

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| 1. Very comfortable | -65% |
| 2. Pretty comfortable | -30% |

- 3. Bit uncomfortable -4%
- 4. Very uncomfortable -0%

Question 2: How comfortable do you feel about removing Alternative 4 (Tunnel) from further consideration?

- 1. Very comfortable -52%
- 2. Pretty comfortable -26%
- 3. Bit uncomfortable -13%
- 4. Very uncomfortable -9%

Question 3: How comfortable do you feel, overall, with moving ahead with only the No Build and various options of Alternative 3 (Lowered Highway)?

- 1. Very comfortable -65%
- 2. Pretty comfortable -22%
- 3. Bit uncomfortable -9%
- 4. Very uncomfortable -4%

Question 4: Do you feel we have presented you with a solid understanding of how each alternative might look or work?

- 1. Yes -78%
- 2. No -4%
- 3. Somewhat, not entirely -17%

Question 5: With regard to possibly removing the tunnel (or any alternative) from further consideration, what factors matter most to you in making that decision?

- A. Whether it helps...
 - 1. Very important to me -52%
 - 2. Quite important to me -35%
 - 3. Neutral -9%
 - 4. Not very important to me -0%
 - 5. Not important -4%
- B. Whether It causes local road traffic issues
 - 1. Very important to me -15%
 - 2. Quite important to me -18%
 - 3. Neutral -18%
 - 4. Not very important to me -9%
 - 5. Not important -5%
- C. The amount of impact to buildings / neighborhoods / aesthetics
 - 1. Very important to me -35%
 - 2. Quite important to me -26%
 - 3. Neutral -26%
 - 4. Not very important to me -4%
 - 5. Not important -9%
- D. The cost
 - 1. Very important to me -32%
 - 2. Quite important to me -41%
 - 3. Neutral -9%
 - 4. Not very important to me -5%
 - 5. Not important -14%

Question 6: Many have expressed their preference for a tunnel. Do you feel that we have done enough to communicate both the benefits and the limitations of a tunnel option?

- 1. Yes -65%
- 2. No -22%

3. Not sure

-13%

4. General Discussion

A. Gill said that while development over the highway may not be possible, development next to it presents a once in a lifetime opportunity. He said many of his neighbors would be upset if a greenway were not created between Bushnell and Pope Parks, and that a tunneled highway would increase property values in the area. M. Morehouse asked him how he would feel if land were made available for development along a lowered highway. He acknowledged that A. Gill had good reasons for improvements in aesthetics and connectivity, but stated that even before the highway was built, the railroad and river divided the city along an industrial landscape.

J. McKinney said that she absorbs a little more information at each meeting, thus explaining why she voted "Somewhat, not entirely," for Question 4. She said she is unsure what she is going to hear two meetings from now, but feels somewhat comfortable as the presentation does not slam its audience with too much profound information. M. Morehouse said that the project team always worries about repeating too much information, but audience feedback seems to indicate that it takes a few times to process all of the information presented. B. Painter asked if the 17% that voted "Somewhat, not entirely," feels the tunneled alternative has not been adequately examined, and stated that it should be kept for further study. D. Morin said he would like more information on what a partial tunnel would look like. J. Cassidy said that every time she attends a PAC meeting she notices something new.

A. Texidor said that he has not seen enough from the City of Hartford's Department of Development Services, and would like to know more how different alternatives will affect the neighborhoods. He expressed that he does not feel the project displays sufficient systematic thinking, particularly in regard to transit oriented development (TOD). M. Morehouse invited him to join the urban design working group.

H. Hoffman asked if the cost of construction of a tunnel could become a total roadblock. R. Armstrong answered that the decision to move forward will be made at a high level. He said that the governor's transportation plan includes several big projects of which the I-84 Hartford project is ranked highly. He concluded that the CTDOT currently gets about \$1.4 billion per year for all transportation projects. A. Texidor said there were many assumptions being made about what was financially feasible, and he noted that FHWA will fund 80% of the project cost. R. Armstrong responded that the total amount of federal funding is limited, so additional state funds would be needed to fill the gap. A. Texidor asked if tunnel construction could count as a capital improvement project, in which case it could be bonded. R. Armstrong said that yes, it could be counted as a capital improvement project.

D. Morin asked if an alternative would be selected in December, to which R. Armstrong answered that he did not expect a decision until 2016.

M. Morehouse thanked the PAC for meeting and excused those who needed to leave. He invited those with additional time to stay for a presentation of the 3-D model by N. Mandler.

5. Three Dimensional Model Presentation

N. Mandler presented the 3-D model of the corridor. The model included existing conditions and proposed alternatives.

PAC members requested to see:

- Lowered and tunneled alternatives behind Capitol Avenue
- The East Coast Greenway along lowered highway alternatives and new local roads
- Bushnell Park West (a new local road running between Capitol Avenue and Asylum Street)
- CT*fastrak*, connecting to Broad Street and Bushnell Park West
- Sightlines through the tunnel
- Opportunities for reconnecting Flower Street for automobiles or pedestrians
- The trident