

THE I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

Working Group Purpose and Need Report of Meeting #3

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60 Forrest Street | Hartford,

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Rich Armstrong	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	860-594-3191	richard.armstrong@ct.gov
Stephen DelPapa	CTDOT	860-594-2941	stephen.delpapa@ct.gov
Michelle Herrell	FHWA	860-494-7577	michelle.herrell@dot.gov
Tim Ryan	TranSystems Corporation (TSC)	860-417-4553	tpryan@transystems.com
Michael Morehouse	FHI	860-256-4912	mmorehouse@fhiplan.com
Stacy Graham-Hunt	FHI	203-843-5991	sgraham-hunt@fhiplan.com
Christine Tiernan	AECOM	212-973-2906	christine.tiernan@aecom.com
Michael Riley	Motor Transport Association of Connecticut	860-520-4455	ctruck@aol.com
Toni Gold	West End Civic Association	860-232-9018	toniagold@gmail.com
Bob Painter	HUB of Hartford	860-463-1496	Painterbob4250@yahoo.com
Jennifer Cassidy	Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association	860-247-8996 x 12	j.cassidy@snet.net
Khara Dodds	City of Hartford	860-757-9076	Khara.c.dodds@hartford.gov
Lia Yim	CRCOG	860-522-2217	byim@crcog.org
Jennifer Carrier	CRCOG	860-522-2217 x 212	jcarrier@crcog.org

1. Recap of February 6, 2014 Meeting

- i. Mike Morehouse provided an overview of the meeting agenda and explained that the project team has been working on revising the Purpose and Need Statement since the previous meeting. The next step for the group is to help the team identify performance criteria to measure the project's success.
- ii. Mr. Morehouse gave a recap of the last meeting, which took place on February 6, 2014 and included discussion of the project's Vision Statement. A summary of the evaluation criteria used in other NEPA projects throughout the country was presented by Christine Tiernan of AECOM.

2. Update on P&N revisions

- i. Rich Armstrong, of Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), presented a revised draft of the Purpose and Need Statement. He addressed each of the changes made to the document, which reflected most of the suggestions made by the group as well as Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). He also found archived documents about the history of I-84, dating as far back as 1945, and included some of that information in the new draft. Mr. Armstrong said he wanted to blend the historic information into the Purpose and Need Statement because it could help the group decide what they might want to do differently with the highway in the future, based on the documented outcomes.

- ii. Mike Riley, of the Motor Transport Association of CT, asked what existed at the location before I-84 was constructed and asked if Mr. Armstrong looked at other alternatives that were proposed at that time.
- iii. Mr. Armstrong said the city streets, including Farmington Avenue, Park Street, Albany Avenue and Capitol Avenue, were being overloaded with traffic before I-84 was constructed. He said the original concept for an east-west highway was conceived to carry traffic over a short distance into and across the city. When the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 was passed by President Eisenhower, I-84 assumed the general alignment of the east-west highway through Hartford. Tim Ryan said that I-84 was supposed to be part of a network of highways through and around Hartford, and that the current alignment was never meant to carry as much traffic as it does now.
- iv. According to the original design plans, approximately fifty-five thousand cars were expected to travel on the highway each day by 1975. However, those traffic volumes were reached within the first year it opened to traffic in 1970. The highway also allowed a significant increase in traffic at the West Hartford/Hartford town line. Prior to the highway, the daily traffic crossing the West Hartford/Hartford town line was approximately 100,000 vehicles. As soon as the highway opened, the traffic crossing the town line increased to 150,000 vehicles per day. The traffic grew by another 25,000 by the 1990s. Mr. Riley said the increase through the 1990s was smaller than the increase through the 1970s. Mr. Ryan said the highway could have possibly reached capacity and people could be using alternate routes.
- v. Mr. Riley stated that it would be helpful if the revisions could be highlighted in the document. Mr. Armstrong said a version of the document with tracked changes would be sent to the group.
- vi. Bob Painter, former Chairman of the Hub of Hartford, stated that, in addition to addressing traffic, the highway project needs to consider how the CT*fastrak* will work to help alleviate traffic coming from the west.
- vii. Toni Gold, representing the West End Civic Association, continued the discussion by asking how the team will reduce the impact of the highway while improving intermodal connections.
- viii. Mr. Painter asked if other highway removal programs have been examined such as the Route 34 Project and the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle. Ms. Gold remarked that some of the other removal projects (such as Route 34) are highway “spurs” and not full ‘interstate’ highways. Seattle is moving ahead with a tunnel. I-84 is its own unique situation.
- ix. Mr. Riley said he did not see anything in the Purpose and Need Statement about congestion. Mr. Armstrong said it was in the “need” section of the statement along with the other transportation issues.
- x. Ms. Tiernan told the group to keep in mind that this is an evolving document and will continue to be revised.

3. Evaluation Matrix discussion

- i. Mr. Morehouse moved to the topic of measuring the success of the I-84 Hartford Project. He said the Purpose and Need Working Group is important because it can help define the criteria for determining the success of the project.

- ii. Mr. Morehouse asked the group to define success. Gold said minimizing vertical and horizontal space of the highway.
- iii. Mr. Riley asked Ms. Gold what her vision was for the I-84 Hartford Project. She said her ideal vision would involve reducing the highway's impact; minimizing it vertically and horizontally; tunneling the highway; reducing the number of interchanges from three to one; removing the interchanges on Sisson Avenue, Sigourney Street, and Asylum Avenue; provide better connections to land-use; and create one on Laurel Street with a roundabout that slows traffic entering the city street network. She said she was not sure about how to integrate the different modes of transportation. She stated that under her vision, the highway would be better for through traffic and for trucks.
- iv. Group members discussed improving the highway capacity. Ms. Gold said building a larger highway would encourage more drivers to use it. Mr. Painter said he was not interested in increasing the capacity of the highway; rather reducing its use. Mr. Armstrong said the project team is trying to reduce congestion, not increase capacity.
- v. Jennifer Cassidy, representing the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, said she would like to see less people use the highway for short trips, such as going from Downtown Hartford to Asylum Avenue.
- vi. There are about eight interchanges within three miles on I-84, Mr. Ryan said. These were built so people could reach local businesses easily. Having only one interchange would likely increase traffic on local roads. There has to be a balance, he said.
- vii. Mr. Painter asked if Mr. Riley could provide information about truck traffic, which is predicted to increase significantly over the next 10 years. Mr. Riley confirmed that truck traffic is forecasted to grow. Rail freight is an option for certain types of long-haul freight that is not time-sensitive, but much of the freight in our region moves by the trucking industry.
- viii. Mr. Armstrong said improving the highway's geometry, including rearranging ramps could reduce congestion on I-84 by eliminating the weave sections that create traffic 'friction' through the corridor.
- ix. Ms. Gold asked if the City had assigned a transportation planner. Khara Dodds, representing the City of Hartford, stated that they have not filled the position yet.
- x. Jennifer Carrier, representing the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), said they are working with the City to develop an integrated planning portal to share data. The current Integrated Transportation Plan is trying to determine how all of the city's projects are being coordinated.
- xi. Mr. Armstrong said the origin and destination data will be helpful for the interchange development discussion.
- xii. Mr. Riley said Hartford's streets need to be designed to accommodate trucks. He said a success would be moving interstate freight through Hartford. Freight gets moved all around the world, and it gets stuck in Hartford.
- xiii. Mr. Painter stated that if mass transit options were more attractive, people would be more willing to use them instead of traveling in single occupant vehicles on the road. Ms. Carrier said CTfastrak will help the community realize some of the benefits of using mass transit as a new fleet of vehicles will be launched soon.

- xiv. Ms. Cassidy said she would like the team to look at the impact to school buses, particularly on Asylum Avenue. The buses impact the flow of traffic as they queue up on the street.
- xv. Mr. Morehouse said the group needs to come up with performance measures to ultimately rank alternatives. He reviewed the performance measures that were used for other projects, which were also shown at the last meeting. Ms. Tiernan went over a template that could be used for this project.
- xvi. Ms. Gold asked if the evaluation criteria were based on the information in the Purpose and Need Statement. Ms. Tiernan said the evaluation criteria will be based on the Purpose and Need Statement and other environmental factors.
- xvii. Mr. Dodds asked how positive and negative impacts were measured and addressed in the ratings. Mr. Armstrong said the overall score of an alternative concept would be lower than another concept with more favorable attributes.
- xviii. Mr. Painter said topics discussed at this meeting could also be added to the matrix.
- xix. Ms. Gold asked that the terms “improve operations and safety” and “improve mobility” be explained. Ms. Tiernan said operations and safety could include the configurations of the interchanges; Mr. Morehouse said mobility could include all modes of travel, including bicycle, pedestrian and transit – its more about moving people, but could also include the movement of freight. Mr. Armstrong said there is a direct correlation between those terms, which is why they are grouped together.
- xx. Ms. Gold said it would be helpful to the general public if the alternatives comparison matrix had a map, which included columns and graphics. She said people are becoming more interested in the project, so the information should be made clear. She thinks people look at graphics more so than spreadsheets.
- xxi. Mr. Riley said there is nothing on the matrix about the movement of freight. Mr. Morehouse stated that mobility and intermodal are inclusive of freight, and we would be developing performance measures that included freight under those items
- xxii. Mr. Painter said if the project team is planning to use color on the matrix, he advised against using the “donuts,” which he said did not provide enough color.
- xxiii. Mr. Morehouse asked group members if they wanted to continue meeting often. Mr. Painter said yes as long as they continued to make progress.
- xxiv. Mr. Morehouse stated that at some point in the future we will need to get the full Public Advisory Committee involved in a conversation about ranking alternatives.