



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Monday, November 9, 2015, 1:00 PM

Location: Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., 416 Asylum Street, Hartford CT

Subject: Purpose and Need Working Group #4

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1. Project Briefing

The meeting began and everyone introduced themselves. Christine Tiernan provided a brief update on the scoping process and completion of the Scoping Summary Report, as well as impact-specific agency meetings that were held at the end of the summer. Topics included Section 106, air quality, and the Park River Conduit. Potential impacts to the CDECCA Power Plant on Capitol Avenue will likely require a coordination meeting with permitting agencies.

2. Recap of Purpose and Need Statement

The Project Team has made minor revisions to the Purpose and Need chapter to address comments from HUD and to incorporate the rail relocation element as part of the Goals and Objectives. The changes were highlighted in yellow in a handout to the group. Working Group members were asked to review the changes and respond with any comments.

Toni Gold asked when the rail relocation study would be made public. It is believed that the report will be posted in late November or early December. Representatives from CRCOG are concerned that they will not be able to review the report before it is made public and have been asking CTDOT for a copy. Toni Gold also noted that the recent public presentation showed renderings of development around Union Station between the highway and current

railroad. The renderings seemed presumptuous since they did not incorporate public input on the use of that land. In addition, the Union Station master planning team has recently been selected and should have input on what happens on that land.

Mike Riley suggested that the Purpose and Need Statement acknowledge the importance of the interstate highway system and include trucks when referencing traffic.

3. Alternatives Analysis Process

Tim Ryan gave a presentation, reviewing the alternatives screening process, preliminary traffic results and best performing options.

The I-91 interchange will be the subject of a future study by CTDOT. The I-84 Hartford Project will not include the interchange but will also not preclude options for improving the interchange at a later time. The issues with the interchange do affect traffic in the project corridor, limiting the extent of traffic improvements possible; however, the level of expansion needed, one additional lane in each direction with a separate lane for on/off ramps, is not easily implemented within the confined space adjacent to the river. Rich Armstrong explained that expanding the I-84 Hartford Project scope to include the I-91 interchange would dramatically increase the time and money needed to complete the project. It has been decided that this project will focus on addressing the structural deficiencies of the viaduct, while improving safety and operations as much as possible. Congestion will be reduced through modernizing the design (i.e., straightening the mainline, removing interchanges) but there will still be some level of congestion during peak hours.

Bob Painter asked how much influence CTDOT will have on the signal timing, compared to the City. Tim Ryan explained that CTDOT will at least take ownership of the ramp signals. Bob also asked that the graphics of the lower highway alternatives use colors and shading to better identify the new roads.

When discussing the tunnel alternative, Bob Painter stated that there are vocal supporters of the alternative, including the new mayor. He suggested that the presentation materials expand on the disadvantages of the tunnel. Slides could be added that demonstrate why I-84 is not the same as I-93 in Boston. Rich Armstrong mentioned that they are exploring a shorter tunnel option from Sigourney Street to the west.

Tim Ryan explained that any alternative that eliminates the Sigourney Street interchange has significant problems. Toni Gold would like to explore eliminating the exit, evaluating a concept developed by someone else that would include a roundabout under the Sisson Avenue ramps that connect to Capitol Avenue, and extend Russ Street to the Aetna campus.

The initial assessment matrix shows how well the different alternative options are able to meet the purpose and need, coded as green, yellow, red, black and clear (more analysis needed). The options with red and black do not meet the Purpose and Need or have a critical flaw and will be eliminated from further consideration soon. Commissioner Redeker did not want to remove them before presenting them to the public.

Christine Tiernan distributed an evaluation criteria table and requested the working group members start identifying criteria for each goal and consider which goals are more important

than others when comparing alternatives. Not all criteria will be quantitative. Suggestions for high priority goals include creating connections, producing aesthetic, pleasing places and maintaining the historic setting. Additional comments on the goals and objectives included:

- Under the 'Maximize the public investment' goal, the I-84/I-91 interchange should be addressed.
- The wording of the "sequencing staged construction" objective should be revisited to incorporate the potential compressed 1-year construction plan that would shut down the corridor completely during construction.
 - Mike Riley asked when the decision about the construction staging would take place. Tim Ryan explained that they need to first fully understand what needs to happen to construct the project conventionally and what the implications of that would be.
- The 'Reducing the physical impact of the interstate by reducing the footprint of I-84 and its ramps' objective should be clarified to focus on filling in the footprint with parks and open space, rather than more city streets.

Rich Armstrong asked if, during the development of evaluation criteria edits to the goals and objectives are identified, the Purpose and Need Statement could be "tweaked." Christine Tiernan stated that changes could be made if necessary because it is an evolving process and as we move forward, we learn more.

4. Next Steps

The Working Group will review the revisions to the Purpose and Need chapter and respond with any comments. Specific evaluation criteria should be drafted for further discussion. It was suggested that a previously developed example criteria presentation be reviewed.