



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 2:30 PM**

**Location: Union Station, Hartford, CT**

**Subject: Transit Technical Committee Meeting #1**

### Attendees

| Name             | Organization                          | Phone Number      | Email Address  |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
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|               |             |              |  |
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Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the Transit Technical Committee (TTC) is to serve as technical advisors to the I-84 Hartford Project Team in planning and developing concepts for a Hartford Multimodal Station, should the railroad be relocated as part of the project. The TTC members are expected to represent the potential users of the future Station, and present consensus based recommendations for the planning and conceptual design of the Station.

This meeting was the first of several meetings and served as an introduction to the project.

Summary of Meeting

TSC first presented the project background and the highway alternatives under consideration for the I-84 project. Two of the project’s four highway alternatives (the Lowered Highway and Tunneled Highway alternatives) would require relocation of the railroad to the north side of I-84. Updates were given on how the current Lowered Highway Alternative has been adjusted—four tracks (with two island platforms) at the station instead of three (with one platform), and highway access ramps to Cogswell Street moved further to the east to eliminate a potential conflict with the loading dock operations at The Hartford Insurance Company.intersection Additional discussion then centered on the 20+ acre Multimodal Station study area which is bounded roughly by Church Street, Union Place, Asylum Avenue, and Cogswell Street. A 12 month schedule for the station planning and conceptual (15% level) design for the Multimodal Station was presented.

A programming discussion followed. Meeting participants were encouraged to envision what a new station would look like, using a series of functional values as a framework to base their visioning. Specifically, participants were encouraged, as users of the current station, to say what they liked and disliked about the current station.

Comments are grouped by subject for easier understanding.

*Amtrak Design Category for Stations*

Amtrak described how they categorize their stations:

- \* Category 1 station is typically a large terminal station, fully staffed with Amtrak personnel, services multiple transit modes, and has amenities.
- \* Category 2 station is a through station, has some Amtrak staff, supports multiple transit modes, and provides amenities such as waiting spaces.
- \* Category 3 station is unstaffed by Amtrak, platforms with only shelters and/or canopies, and has no amenities.

Amtrak does not envision the Hartford station as a “Category 1” station. To the agency a “Category 1” station implies extensive back-of-the house space: Division offices, a crew base, a terminal location, etc. Since this a through station, Amtrak sees it as a Category 2 station for their needs. Note that there are a wide range of “Category 2” stations in the Amtrak system. This station would be at the top of the range.

It was discussed that with future station uses, there may be a need to add more functions, thus bumping up the station to a “Category 1” station. CTDOT Rail is planning to add 16 trains a day for commuter rail, and there would be 6 additional NEC Corridor trains, and possibly another long distance train to Montreal. When/if this occurs, the station could be classified as a Category 1; but for the current Amtrak functions, Amtrak considers it a Category 2 station.

It is not known who will operate or own the station but it is expected that Amtrak will assist in deciding what type of Multimodal Station should be planned.

### *Parking*

The city has a surplus of surface parking, so surface parking is not envisioned for the new station. However, parking around the new station must be easily accessible and cheap. There are approximately 200 surface spaces now which are used by transit customers, many apartment dwellers, and nearby office workers. The study to date has indicated that there will be a need at the station for 500 to 600 parking spaces (this includes the current 200 existing spaces).

Structured parking makes better sense than surface parking and could be shared with surrounding uses. The parking facility could be located between the new and old station. There are no parking requirements for Amtrak stations; however they ask for a few free parking spaces for staff use. They have a parking model they have used in the past to estimate parking needs at their stations but it has not been validated and they do not want to rely on it. They are developing a new parking model. Downtown stations generally only have 20% of their riders park at the station.

### *“Keep” Aspects of Union Station to be Carried Over to the New Station*

Historic stations are valued by the public and are viewed as city anchors; 700,000 people pass through Hartford Union station annually. Part of it is romanticism/nostalgia for the past. “Volume—mass—details” are important features of this sense of “place”— a sense of arrival and destination. If the transportation function leaves the building, it will affect the key purpose of the building and the funding required for upkeep of building functions. Amtrak suggested that new stations in Rochester and Schenectady, NY could be models for a new Hartford station.

Office space and retail/restaurant space are key to the building’s success; the upstairs offices are 100% occupied. The Great Hall is a big attraction as a venue, including weddings, press conferences, and office parties.

### *Aspects of Union Station Not to be Used in the New Station Design*

The (historic) viaduct that carries the trains over Asylum and Church is too low, which affects the intercity bus vehicle type that can access the station; double decker buses can’t fit under the viaduct.

Tight turns make 60 foot *CTtransit/CTfastrak* articulated buses impossible to access the station. Taxis are not close enough to the station; people don't want to haul luggage far. If taxis are not visible, people will not take them. Right now, most taxis are located on Allyn Street. In addition, Uber and Lyft impede taxis, by taking up space in the taxi loading zones, and double parking around the station. There are also not enough delineated areas for drop offs/pickups. The Back Bay Amtrak Station in Boston is an example of something not to do, as the diesel fumes in the cut make boarding the trains undesirable.

### *Intercity Bus Requirements*

Intercity bus operators want to maintain the easy access to/from highway, easy pull outs, and be able to pull into spaces with new bus height requirements (i.e. double decker buses).

### *Other Programming Issues*

- \* *CTtransit* needs to continue to serve this end of the Downtown and subsequently needs to provide room at the station for local bus connections
- \* *CTtransit* is looking to expand connections to the airport from the station, so there should be a highly visible stop for the Route 30X (Bradley Flyer).
- \* The new station should act as a community center with a conference room, press room, meeting space, etc.
- \* If the two stations are separated into different modes (train one place, bus another), there needs to be a visual connection or intuitive wayfinding signs.
- \* The new station should integrate with, and be a catalyst for, new development.
- \* A "cap" is being considered over the I-84 highway to the north and south of Asylum Street in conjunction with the Lowered Highway alternative; this cap would allow for some development or open space on top of it.

### *Functional Values*

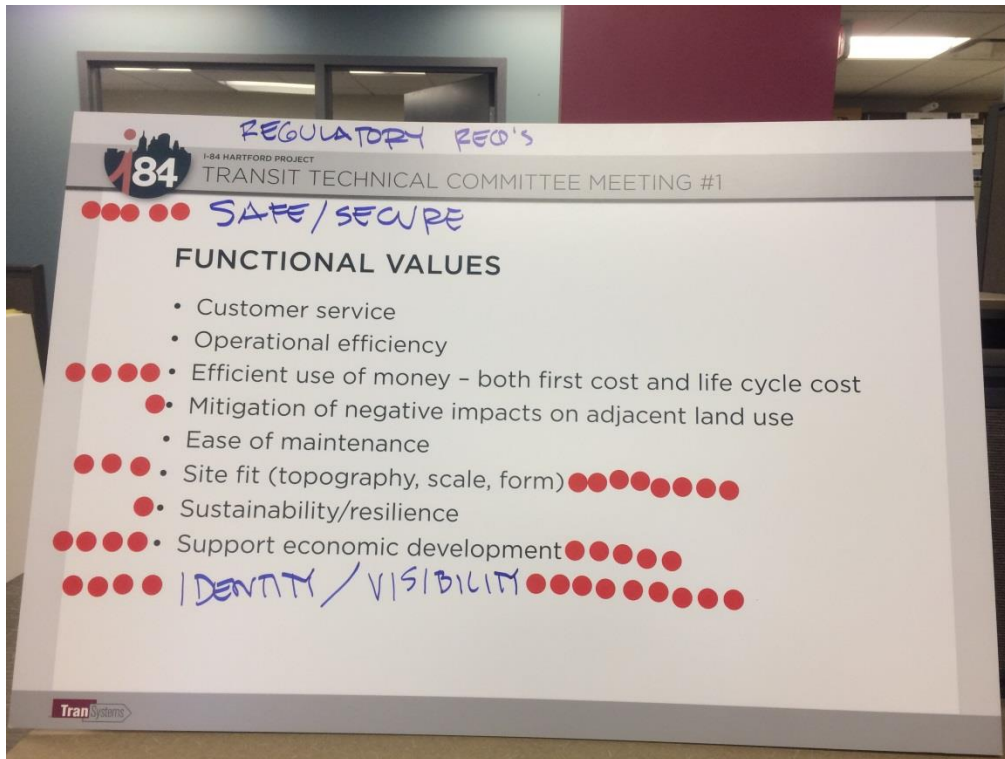
These additional values were proposed.

- \* Safe Access/Egress (Risk Avoidance) Note: This can be folded into ADA requirements that need to be followed
- \* Safety/Security
- \* Identity/Visibility

(Note: For ADA requirements / Regulatory values - these would be considered part of the basic design requirements regardless of other features and are automatically assumed).

### *Functional Values Priorities*

The participants received **two dots** and were instructed to prioritize functional values – excluding: Customer service and operational efficiency as these two are considered part of the basic design requirements. The photo below shows how each value was rated.



If one considers “Site Fit (topo, scale, form)” and “Identity/Visibility” describing similar goals/aspirations – then this is the overwhelming preferred priority.

The other items rise in importance include safety/security, support economic development and efficient use of money.

*Thoughts on Analogy Images*

Football has more players on the field, much like the number of stakeholders involved in the process. Baseball is more complex: it runs 162 games, not 16.

The Bernini statue is “awe-inspiring,” like the station should be

As for Superman versus Batman, we want Hartford to emulate Metropolis, not Gotham (too dark) and Hartford is “Clark Kent waiting to become Superman”

The Oxford Shoe is comfortable, classic, and serviceable, yet with style much like Union Station. Not style at the expense of function (high heel) or too comfortable at the expense of style (sneaker), although sneakers are worn by everyone

Puzzle implies that everything should fit together.

*Thoughts on the Character of Hartford*

The following places symbolize the city: Mark Twain House, Bushnell Park, Hartford Stage, State Capitol, Science Center, Bushnell Park and the Riverfront. Hartford is different from 20 years ago because millennials are moving into town, baby boomers retiring in town and needing transit and services, more residential conversions, more renovation/ investment of older buildings, and, conversely, fewer jobs in the city. One vision for Hartford is that in the next 20 years, the city will have less surface parking and more bike infrastructure.