



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Wednesday, June 28, 2017, 12:30 PM**

**Location: Training & Conference Center, The Chrysalis Center, 255 Homestead Avenue, Hartford**

**Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #15**

### Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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\*Stephan Balcanoff represented Connecticut Children's Medical Center and SINA.

\*\*Harry Garforth, of Amtrak, attended the meeting by phone.

## 1. Welcome & Introduction

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 15<sup>th</sup> Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. He also welcomed Harry Garforth, of Amtrak, who called in to the meeting. He reviewed the meeting's agenda items, and invited everyone to view the 3-D model after the meeting's conclusion.

## 2. Presentation

### Alternatives Screening

Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), reviewed the alternatives screening process and the Project Team's recommendation to eliminate the elevated and tunneled highway alternatives from further consideration. He said the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved this recommendation and the Level 1 Screening Report and that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection reviewed and provided comments on the document.

C. Hardin said the ongoing Level 2 Screening process involves further evaluation of the interchange options of the Lowered Highway Alternative with regards to the project's purpose and need, goals and objectives, impacts and public input. He concluded that the Level 2 Screening would result in a reasonable range of alternatives, including the No-build Alternative

and selected options of the Lowered Alternative. It is anticipated that three interchange options in the eastern half of the corridor and one option in the western half of the corridor will be included in the reasonable range of alternatives. C. Hardin then showed and explained the interchange options that are likely to advance to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in detail.

#### Multimodal Station Area Planning

Gina Trimarco, of TSC, reviewed the 20-acre multimodal station site. She said it is bounded by Asylum Avenue to the south, Cogswell Street to the west, and Union Station to the east. She noted that the tracks would be relocated about 1,000 feet to the west, which is about a four-minute walk from the existing Union Station. She said the planning process would consist of a 12-month effort culminating in a 15% design plan of the station's layout and programming. She said the data collection and programming phase has concluded and resulted thus far in seven preliminary concepts for stakeholder discussion and evaluation.

G. Trimarco introduced the various station concepts and asked the PAC to consider the timing difference between rail and highway completion dates; she said the highway may not be finished until 7-10 years after the rail. She said the station would be accessed by private vehicles as well as local and intercity buses and employer shuttles, requiring the group to also consider the surrounding street network. She said all concepts would include an underground concourse beneath Asylum Street.

G. Trimarco presented and explained that Concept A would relocate all bus facilities from Union Station to the new train station facility with pedestrian connections along the Asylum Street sidewalk. She said bus, kiss and ride (drop off and pick up), and parking facilities would be accommodated in a structured parking garage on-site. Differing from Concept A, Concept B would divide bus and rail facilities between Union Station and the new rail facility. G. Trimarco said Concept C would separate intercity and local bus services. She said local bus service and employer shuttles would be located within the rail facility, whereas intercity bus would remain at Union Station. Concept D would be built in phases along Asylum Avenue to accommodate construction of the highway. This Concept would include buses and rail service at the same facility. Concept E would be built over the proposed highway on a capped structure. This Concept would split the bus service between the new facility and Union Station. Concept F is similar to Concept D except that bus passengers would not have to cross various bays to reach the station concourse. Concept G as generated from a suggestion at one of the April public forums. It differs from all others because it is located on a site south of Asylum Avenue. This Concept utilizes the tunneled CT **fastrak** guideway concept and would include buses and rail service at the same facility.

#### Multimodal Station Concept Discussion

Jackie Mandyck, of the iQuilt Plan, asked how CT **fastrak** would be integrated into the different station concepts. G. Trimarco said all concept facilities except for Concept G would be served by an on-street CT **fastrak** stop. Concept G would include a CT **fastrak** stop within the transit facility. Tim Ryan, of TSC, said the Project Team is exploring some CT **fastrak** guideway options that tunnel beneath the lowered highway and surface at Bushnell Park West. He said that although this option would most closely mimic existing routes, it would be very expensive. He said relocating the railroad necessitates relocating the busway either over or under the highway.

Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, said the PAC requires more time to understand and consider the different station concepts and that the project should more greatly consider how to activate Asylum Avenue/Street as a comfortable pedestrian environment. She requested the Project Team to provide more outreach and meetings to discuss the station planning process. G. Trimarco acknowledged that distinguishing between concept

characteristics is challenging because some are quite similar. She asked the PAC to consider high-level planning topics, such as deciding where the bus and rail facilities should be integrated, and if they should be combined into the same facility or split between a new facility and Union Station.

Charles Hunter, of the Southern Connecticut Railroad, asked if the Project Team had considered a covered or enclosed pedestrian connection between facilities if bus and rail service are split. G. Trimarco said the Project Team has talked about providing a covered pedestrian access between the two facilities. There is also value in keeping people on the street to enhance the character and sense of place of Asylum Avenue/Street.

Jackie McKinney, of the ArtSpace Residents Association, asked the Project Team to consider the steep grade of Asylum Street as it can be physically challenging to those carrying luggage. She also said the intersection of Asylum Street and Spruce Street is greatly congested with buses and is very intimidating for drivers and pedestrians. She said the streets are too narrow for many buses.

Jennifer Cassidy, of Business for Downtown Hartford, asked how many kiss and ride facilities would be included. G. Trimarco said some 20 spaces could be included. J. Cassidy said some 30-40 vehicles are dropping off and picking up passengers at the existing Union Station, so more should be included at the new facility. G. Trimarco said the Project Team has heard similar concerns and will consider them going forward.

David Morin, of the Parkville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, asked how many buildings the station would impact. G. Trimarco said the station concepts do not impact any buildings.

J. Mandyck asked how the Project Team plans to address the trident between Asylum Avenue, Farmington Avenue and Broad Street. She also asked how the future station traffic will be accommodated. T. Ryan said the Project Team is actively discussing these topics internally. For the trident, he said the Project Team is considering closing the north-south connection between Broad Street and Cogswell Street because 80% of traffic would be traveling east-west. He said that once the eastbound on-ramp from Broad Street is removed, the north-south connection from Broad to Cogswell will be less necessary. The issue with the current configuration of the trident is that there are too many high-volume traffic movements in a very dense area. Eliminating one of these movements could significantly reduce the size of the intersections and improve the Level of Service. He also said the Project Team is working to understand how many passengers would use the Hartford station and how that would impact the surrounding street network.

D. Morin asked how travelers would move from north to south without a connection between Broad and Cogswell Streets. T. Ryan said travelers could access Capitol Avenue and Asylum Street via Bushnell Park West (a new north-south road to the west of Bushnell Park), and between Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue via Asylum Place. J. Cassidy expressed opposition to closing the connection between Broad and Cogswell Streets.

Amy Parmenter, of AAA, asked the Project Team to consider autonomous vehicles in station design. T. Ryan said the team is designing for what they know now, and can accommodate future changes as they develop.

Aaron Gill, of the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, advocated in favor of Concept D Phase 2 because it best utilizes space in the urban core. He also encouraged the Project Team to consider the area's livability and neighborhood continuity, particularly considering the differing mindsets and travel patterns of the millennial generation. D. Morin agreed with much of A. Gill's remarks, but requested more information on Concept G.

T. Gold urged the Project Team to consider transit riders as customers and to more greatly prioritize the station's potential for retail and commercial development. G. Trimarco said the TTC will evaluate station concepts on a range of priorities, including economic development potential and identity and visibility. R. Armstrong said the group will also consider environmental and cultural impacts, as well.

Robert Painter, of the Hub of Hartford, expressed concern over Union Station's long-term viability. He said rail and bus services should be integrated as the grade of Asylum Avenue/Street is challenging, particularly during winter. He expressed reluctance in abandoning Union Station as part of the transit system, but could not see a good way to connect it to the new station.

T. Gold said maintaining the viability of Union Station would require activating the street level. G. Trimarco said that the Project Team will be able to more greatly consider urban design principles for street activation as the station concepts develop. She said that the City of Hartford has hired its own consulting team to consider economic development in the area.

Lt. Marc Petruzzi, of the State Police Office of Administrative Services, said it is important that CT *fastrak* is integrated into the station facility. G. Trimarco said the station is intended as an entry and exit point for the city with regional rail and buses traveling in all directions. She said discussions about parking needs are ongoing.

D. Morin asked if the Project Team will have identified a preferred station concept by August. R. Armstrong said they would not, but the range of concepts may be narrowed. Outlining next steps, G. Trimarco said the Project Team hopes to identify a preferred concept in September and to finish the year with 15% station design.

#### Interchange Study

R. Armstrong reviewed the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. He said the Project Team is studying the feasibility of improving traffic conditions along the interchange's existing alignment, realigning I-84 with a new interchange to the north, or realigning I-84 through a tunnel with a new underground interchange to the south. He said tunneling or capping over I-91 could be included in either the northern or southern alignment scenarios. He said big questions remain regarding the engineering and financial feasibility of each alternative. He concluded that the Project Team hopes to finish the Needs and Deficiencies Report and Purpose and Need Statement by end of summer. He said a conceptual screening process and public meeting would take place in the fall, with final analysis, reporting, and suggested next steps in 2018.

J. McKinney asked if funding for the interchange study and viaduct project were separate. R. Armstrong said they were.

Joe Sculley, of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association, asked if the northern alignment would address the existing bottleneck at the Bulkeley Bridge. R. Armstrong said the northern alignment would bypass the bottleneck and create three continuous through lanes between Hartford and East Hartford.

#### Environmental Documentation

Christine Tiernan, of AECOM, explained that the foundation of the DEIS is a series of technical reports elaborating on potential impacts and mitigation methodology. She said the Project Team developed an Impact Methodology Report to address regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). She said the Project Team is now revising the cultural resources technical report with comments from CTDOT and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). She said SHPO is also

concerned about the long-term viability of Union Station, and that the Project Team will further evaluate impacts to the station.

C. Tiernan said the lowered highway options do not exceed the national ambient air quality standards. She said CTDOT will soon review the air quality and noise and vibration impact reports. She concluded that the DEIS is anticipated for early 2019, with a public hearing in the spring of 2019, and a final environmental impact statement in late 2019.

T. Gold asked if concerns about street life and retail viability would be examined. C. Tiernan said these considerations would be included in the land use and socioeconomic technical report. She said the Project Team is now beginning this report, but still requires input on many factors related to the station facility.

A. Gill asked if the land use report would look as far back as the 1960s before the highway was built. C. Tiernan said the report would allude to 1960s conditions, the highway's detriment to the community, and efforts to repair its damages.

T. Gold asked if it was possible to analyze the effects of different alternatives on street life. C. Tiernan said the DEIS would not get to that level of detail but would address appropriate landscape and urban design.

J. McKinney asked about the effects of the project alternatives on air quality. C. Tiernan said that the region currently meets all federal air quality standards, except for ozone. Ozone is regional in nature, and would not be influenced by the changes to the corridor. In addition, preliminary analyses show that because congestion is reduced in the Lowered Alternative, it can have a positive effect on other pollutants.

#### Stated Preference Survey

D. Stahnke explained that the stated preference survey was targeted towards those who drive on the I-84 corridor and aimed to understand their response to various construction scenarios. He said data from the survey will be inputted into the project's travel demand model, which also includes transit use. He said 60% of responders use I-84 to travel to or from work, and that 28% of responders would not change their travel behavior under any conditions. He explained that 72% would switch from private automobiles to transit under certain conditions. He noted that good parking facilities in outlying areas would be important to accommodating those who may switch to transit.

J. Cassidy asked if it may be more efficient to give commuters transit passes rather than utilize employer shuttles. D. Stahnke said that this may be more efficient and noted existing efforts by local employers to encourage transit use. He said the Project Team is currently surveying Hartford businesses to see if they are interested in shuttles. G. Trimarco added that the survey includes a question on whether employers would provide their staff with transit benefits.

J. Sculley inquired about accelerated construction. He said freight and commerce cannot afford a prolonged total shutdown of the highway. D. Stahnke said a prolonged shutdown is unlikely, although accelerated construction techniques may be feasible in some areas.

Bruce Donald, of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, said cycling and walking options should be included in conversations with employers. D. Stahnke said that this initial survey was targeted towards drivers and that the Project Team is also greatly considering cyclists and pedestrians.

D. Morin asked if the survey addressed those who commute in and out of Hartford for medical purposes. D. Stahnke said the survey captured many different uses and travel purposes.

Adina Giannelli, of Bike Walk CT, asked if there was a plan to collect bicycle and pedestrian data. D. Stahnke said the Project Team has a robust traffic demand model and uses bicycle and pedestrian counts from the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

A. Gill asked if efforts to reduce traffic delay while trying to encourage transit use and active transportation were counterintuitive. Nick Mandler, of TSC, explained that optimizing traffic flow is not the project's main goal. He said the primary concern regarding vehicle traffic is to stop congestion from backing up onto the highway, where it causes crashes. He said not all roads will be designed to move perfectly, and that there will still be some congestion at peak hours. He said the primary goals of the project are to address bridge deficiencies and reconnect neighborhoods.

Stephan Balcanoff, of Connecticut Children's Medical Center, asked how Springfield, Massachusetts, is addressing traffic during I-91 viaduct construction. D. Stahnke said Springfield is also developing conceptual alternatives for replacing the I-91 viaduct and will evaluate them further over the next few years.

Sandy Fry, of the City of Hartford, asked if the Project Team would consider mode-shift to cycling and walking when evaluating construction sequencing. D. Stahnke said that CTDOT will evaluate signal systems and other considerations in the local street network to better accommodate all travel modes and increase system efficiencies in advance of highway construction.

#### Public Outreach

Marcy Miller, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. reviewed public involvement activities. She said the Project Team held two Open Planning Studios in April and continues to meet with stakeholders and neighborhood revitalization zones, and to host pop-up events at community functions. She said the Project Team conducted a public questionnaire to better understand the efficacy of project outreach activities and communications. She outlined forthcoming activities, including adaptation of the CT *fastrak* kiosk, distribution of project informational flipbooks to Hartford, East Hartford and West Hartford public libraries, and youth outreach.

J. McKinney said that the Project Team should do a better job communicating and explaining this on-going maintenance work to the public. R. Armstrong said the Project Team will do a better job explaining this work at public meetings.

#### Other Items

D. Morin said he would like to see a PAC meeting dedicated to issues around neighborhood connectivity and north-south travel. A. Gill said the PAC focuses primarily on connections between Downtown and Asylum Hill and should consider other areas as well. R. Armstrong encouraged everyone to view the 3-D model and examine the techniques under consideration to improve neighborhood connectivity and pedestrian comfort. He said the next meeting could focus on the multimodal station and connectivity.

D. Morin asked if the Project Team was reaching out to local colleges. M. Miller said the Project Team hopes to install a project informational kiosk at Capitol Community College. Julia Rivera, of Trinity College, said a good way to reach many educational institutions is to work with the Hartford Consortium for higher education.