



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Monday, October 5, 2015, 1:00 PM**

**Location: Fitzgerald & Halliday, 416 Asylum Street, Hartford**

**Subject: Traffic and Parking Working Group #4**

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### 1. Introductions

The meeting began and everyone introduced himself / herself.

### 2. Presentation / Discussion

Tim Ryan began a presentation with updates about the project and the alternatives. Mike Marshall asked about traffic congestion on the highway. T. Ryan said there are several factors that cause congestion, including weaving, ramp spacing, and lack of usable shoulders for incident management.

Amy Parmenter asked which of the alternatives is the most promising. Rich Armstrong said the lowered highway alternative is performing the best so far in the screening process.

Mike Riley said a bypass could potentially help freight vehicles. T. Ryan explained that the project team examined the feasibility of a bypass, and it does not solve the need of replacing the structurally deficient bridges. In addition, 60 percent of rush hour traffic gets on or off in Hartford.

M. Riley asked if relocating the I-91 interchange to the north was included in the I-84 Hartford Project. T. Ryan said the project area does not include the I-91 interchange. R. Armstrong added that it would be a different project. There were additional questions from the group concerning the capacity issues associated with the I-84/I-91 interchange. T. Ryan explained that expanding the existing interchange in its current location is prohibitive because of its close proximity to the Bulkeley Bridge, Connecticut River, and several buildings.

T. Ryan then displayed a draft northern relocation concept graphic, involving the relocation of the I-84/I-91 interchange to the north meadows area. A new bridge would be required to bring I-84 over the Connecticut River and into East Hartford. The cost of this concept could be twice as much as the lowered highway alternative. Building a new bridge over the Connecticut River would also involve an additional CEPA and NEPA process.

A. Parmenter asked if the northern relocation concept should be offered as an additional alternative. She said it costs the same as the tunnel alternative, and could potentially solve more problems. R. Armstrong said there may be a commitment to look into a separate study for this, but the I-84 Hartford Project team focus only on the two-mile section of the viaduct.

Anne Hayes asked how far out of the way the northern relocation concept would take drivers. T. Ryan said the relocated highway would be approximately one mile longer than the current alignment.

Eric Boone suggested relocating I-84 through the southern part of Hartford, noting that it seems like there would be minimal eminent domain. He suggested connecting I-84 to Route 5/15 at the Charter Oak Bridge. T. Ryan said the team has looked at possible bypass solutions. A bypass to the south would have significant impacts and cost implications.

M. Marshall questioned the costs associated with relocating the railroad. He asked if the lowered highway cost includes the railroad relocation. T. Ryan said that the lowered highway does include this cost, and it is less expensive than the elevated highway.

A. Parmenter said the I-84 Hartford Project message to the public needs to be clear that the project is about the deficient bridges. She voiced concern about the public perception that the project could be perceived as a waste of money when it does not solve every transportation problem in the City.

T. Ryan discussed proposed ramp closures. M. Riley confirmed with T. Ryan that the ramps presented would be the only ramps closed and that I-84 / I-91 interchange would remain the same.

E. Boone asked if the project would implement exclusive pedestrian phases, where all vehicular approaches are stopped to allow pedestrians to cross in any direction. N. Mandler said the project team is leaning towards exclusive pedestrian phases to accommodate pedestrians with disabilities. A. Parmenter asked about the possibility of drivers still turning right on red. A. Hayes said drivers will still turn on red, even if it is not allowed. M. Marshall commented that Hartford's current traffic signals are not coordinated. E. Boone asked how the alternatives

would be integrated into Hartford's signal system. N. Mandler said that the effort to update the systems will be coordinated with the City.

The group next discussed local road assumptions. M. Riley asked if there is a current standard width for lanes. N. Mandler said each municipality has its own guidelines. Mike Morehouse noted that the guidelines are flexible. M. Riley said the maximum (and standard) truck size is 8.5 feet wide. He suggested the need for more than three inches of road on both sides of the trucks. T. Ryan said the team is proposing 11-foot local road lanes widths, 10-foot turning lanes widths, and a minimum of 5-foot shoulders.

The group discussed the project team's preliminary traffic analysis. E. Boone asked if the preliminary traffic results correspond with field observations. N. Mandler answered that the two are similar.

Hank Hoffman asked when the traffic count data was collected. N. Mandler answered that it was collected in 2013, and the traffic is expected to increase approximately 0.2 percent per year.

H. Hoffman said the preliminary traffic analysis might not be reflective of the employment changes that took place at The Hartford last year. Many employees are now working out of the Simsbury office. N. Mandler said there will be fluctuations in the traffic data from year to year.

A. Parmenter asked when the high traffic seasons are. N. Mandler answered that the peak season is in the summer, during July and August. The analysis includes higher traffic seasons.

N. Mandler continued to review the alternatives. M. Riley asked if Alternative 3B would impact the high school. N. Mandler and T. Ryan said that the high school would be avoided.

A. Parmenter asked where the project team was in the decision-making process with the elevated highway and tunnel alternatives. She asked when the project team would stop considering these options. R. Armstrong said there would be three public meetings during the month of October, and the project team would announce that they are not performing well for traffic and other considerations. M. Riley asked who would make the decision to eliminate these alternatives. R. Armstrong answered that the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration would make the final decision. The Governor may also be involved. R. Armstrong said the decision was likely to happen in the fall.

M. Riley said sharp road curves are dangerous for trucks because the truckers cannot see around the corner. T. Ryan said the project team is proposing to address many of the obsolete design features in this project. Alternative 3B best addresses this concern. A. Parmenter asked if signs or a mirror would help with the curve(s). R. Armstrong said sub-standard geometry is the problem.

E. Boone asked what the minimum cost would be to patch up the viaduct as needed until a more comprehensive solution is figured out. T. Ryan said \$60 million has already been spent on doing patch work and it is anticipated that another \$60 million will be spent to maintain the viaduct in the coming years. The No-Build alternative, which maintains the current bridges to the year 2040, costs approximately \$2.5 billion.

One attendee said that information about traffic during construction needs to be communicated with the public.

The group discussed Alternative 3A – Option E5 (S). M. Riley asked if the Bushnell Park granite wall would be removed. R. Armstrong said the wall may stay because it is considered part of the park and a historic resource.

H. Hoffman asked if constructing a new railroad station was part of the project. R. Armstrong and T. Ryan said a railroad study would soon be released. The study includes a comprehensive analysis of possible railroad alignments and a possible rail station annex to Union Station. A new station would be required to service the trains on the north side of the highway. There are preliminary discussions to use Union Station as a bus hub for CT Transit and CT *fastrak*.

The group closed by discussing potential parking impacts and mitigation. New parking garages could compensate for the surface parking losses. C. Harden noted that the current City regulations prohibit parking garages taller than four decks above grade.

M. Riley added that truck drivers should be able to stop and have safe places to park their vehicles. E. Boone said that a truck stop is planned to be built on I-91 and could be used if drivers were willing to go the extra distance to Leibert Road, near Harte Nissan. M. Riley said the North Meadows truck stop is a good idea and will help.

### **3. Next Steps**

The project team stated that there are three public meetings scheduled in October. D. Moore also said he would like the project team to share I-84 Hartford Project info with Source One.