



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Monday, October 30, 2017, 2 PM and 5 PM

Location: The Chrysalis Center, 255 Homestead Avenue, Hartford

Subject: Multimodal Station Working Sessions #2

Attendees

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1. Meeting Purpose and Format

Two public working sessions were held to present information to Public Advisory Committee (PAC) members and other interested members of the public on continued progress regarding the multi-modal station planning process and surrounding road network. Both sessions had the same content and format. Each event lasted for approximately two hours.

2. Local Roads Presentation and Discussion

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), introduced himself and the consultant teams working with CTDOT and the City of Hartford. He said these teams were collaborating to identify a variety of different solutions to the complex multi-modal station planning area, including ramp placement, street network layout, station siting, and development opportunities. He introduced Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., to moderate the discussion.

M. Morehouse summarized the August 2017 multi-modal station working session and presented the meeting agenda. He said the session would address road network opportunities and multi-modal station concepts. He noted that the project is concentrating on the No-Build and Lowered Highway Alternatives, the latter of which includes three well-performing eastern interchange options and one well-performing western interchange option. He said the design process is undergoing a period of refinement to better understand the various trade-offs of each interchange option and potential street networks.

M. Morehouse said the working session was postponed from September to evaluate more design concepts and collaborate with specific stakeholders. He introduced Tom Jost, of WSP and the City of Hartford's Capital Gateway Master Plan consulting team, and Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC) and CTDOT's I-84 Hartford Project consulting team.

Alternatives Update

C. Hardin provided an update on the alternatives analysis process. He said the Project Team is focusing on Alternative 3B-E5(S), an eastern interchange option of the Lowered Highway Alternative that relocates the highway 200-250 feet west of its existing alignment to address a horizontal curve in the Union Station area that does not meet current design and safety standards. He explained how the eastbound ramps of this interchange option would intersect with Bushnell Park West, a new local road connecting Capitol Avenue to Asylum Street, and westbound ramps would intersect with a realigned Cogswell Street and Edwards Street. He noted several new roadways that improve connectivity and add network redundancy, including Bushnell Park West, a Spruce Street extension to South Chapel Street, and Road B connecting Broad Street to Bushnell Park West. He said the Project Team is also evaluating improvements to Asylum Avenue and Broad Street for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Design Focus Areas

T. Jost said that multi-modal station area planning objectives include improving north-south and east-west connections, economic development, and sense of place. He introduced four focus areas for group discussion.

a) Garden Street

T. Jost said the Project Team refined eastern interchange and street network options to extend Garden Street southeast across the highway and terminating at Spruce Street. He said this would form a strong entry point to Union Station, divide the network into developable sites, and increase sightlines. C. Hardin said the Garden Street extension would add redundancy to the network and reduce pinch points at the Trident, the intersection of Farmington Avenue, Asylum Avenue, Broad Street and Cogswell Street. He illustrated how the extension would enhance north-south and east-west mobility across the highway. He concluded that the new road would be of similar grade to Asylum Avenue, and would require raising Spruce Street by four feet to accommodate the slope. He said the Project Team is working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to document potential visual impacts to Union Station.

b) Myrtle Street Realignment

C. Hardin said the Project Team refined Alternative 3B-E5(S) to address public concerns regarding changes to traffic patterns in Asylum Hill. He illustrated a realignment of Myrtle Street that would encourage the maintenance of existing traffic patterns in Asylum Hill and discourage increased volumes on Fraser Place and Ashley Street. He said traffic volumes at the intersection of Myrtle Street and Fraser Place would not merit a traffic signal.

c) The Trident

T. Jost said the intersection of Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue is a challenging area. He said the configuration that most efficiently moves traffic and addresses mobility

would disconnect Broad Street and Cogswell Street. He said the objectives for the Trident area include enhancing mobility, developing a strong sense of place, and eliminating fatal flaws, like queueing onto the freeway and traffic signal cycles longer than 120 seconds. He introduced four concepts for improving the trident within the context of Alternative 3B-E5(S):

Discontinuous Broad Street: This concept has the best traffic performance and would rebuild Asylum Avenue, Farmington Avenue, Broad Street and Cogswell Street at a more human scale. C. Hardin explained how the section of Broad Street between Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue would be closed to vehicular traffic, although bicyclists and pedestrians could still make that north-south movement. He said the multiple intersections at the Trident are spaced too closely, and the discontinuous Broad Street would simplify those intersections. He said fewer cars would make the north-south connection between Broad Street and Cogswell Street under the Lowered Highway Alternative.

Farmington Avenue Extension: T. Jost said realigning and extending Farmington Avenue to Bushnell Park West may further space out intersections and provide more network redundancy. He said that this could improve development potential along Bushnell Park. He noted that this option would require moving the eastbound highway ramps further south, which may not be feasible.

Roundabout: T. Jost said this concept was developed in response to public feedback. C. Hardin said roundabouts can function as successful gateways, improve safety, and reduce speeds. He said a one-lane roundabout at the Trident would not successfully manage traffic. He presented a diagram of the kind of roundabout capable of managing traffic in the Trident area, explaining that it would be extremely complex and difficult for drivers and challenging for pedestrians, while also impacting adjacent and cultural resources. He concluded that the Project Team will evaluate other intersections for roundabouts.

Western Shift: T. Jost illustrated how this concept would shift the intersection of Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue to the west, while retaining the intersection of Asylum Avenue with Cogswell Street and a continuous Broad Street in its current location. He said this would impact a 500-space subterranean parking garage used by the Department of Administrative Services and increase the number of lanes required on Asylum Avenue. C. Hardin said the crossing distance at the intersection of Broad Street and Asylum Avenue would be long under this configuration. He said space may exist for a pedestrian mall along Asylum Avenue to mitigate conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians. He concluded that extending Sumner Street south from Asylum Avenue to Farmington Avenue may slightly reduce the number of lanes necessary along Asylum Avenue. C. Hardin said the Western Shift would allow a continuous Broad Street but may worsen traffic operations. T. Jost said there may be ways to mitigate for the impacts of automobile traffic to make Asylum Avenue a great urban boulevard.

d) Asylum South-Bushnell West

T. Jost said the area south of Asylum Avenue, west of Bushnell Park, north of the Armory and east of Broad Street holds lots of potential for economic development. He said the City hopes to take advantage of the connectivity provided by Bushnell Park West and CT **fastrak**, while thoughtfully integrating the eastbound on and off ramps and exploring additional connections between Broad Street and Bushnell Park West.

Local Roads Discussion

There were discussions about the Discontinued Broad Street concept. Nick Mandler, of TSC, said 80% of traffic at the Trident would make east-west movements along Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue under the Lowered Highway Alternative. He said Broad Street would

potentially be the only continuous vehicular route lost under the Lowered Highway Alternative, but the addition of multiple new and improved routes may mitigate for this loss. He said the Project Team is accounting for about five hours of peak traffic every week day, such that cars don't back up onto the freeway and create safety concerns. Tony Cherolis, of the Center for Latino Progress and Transport Hartford, noted that new roadway connections like Bushnell Park West and Garden Street could make up for the discontinuity of Broad Street. C. Hardin said that extending Garden Street could provide an alternative route for people to travel between Frog Hollow and Asylum Hill.

An attendee said they liked the Farmington Avenue Extension because it would offer more travel options, and asked how much it would cost. C. Hardin said that the Project Team has not developed a cost estimate yet. Others asked if the concept would impact ArtSpace or the YWCA. He said shifting Farmington Avenue south such that it would impact the YWCA would still not satisfy queueing issues enough to justify taking the building. T. Jost said the ArtSpace building would not be impacted but adjacent development may occur.

There was a question about the design of roundabouts and rotaries. N. Mandler explained the difference between high-speed rotaries, traffic circles, and roundabouts. He said rotaries and traffic circles often do not work in cities, whereas modern roundabouts work in urban settings to steady traffic. He concluded that although the volumes at many intersections in the project area are too high for roundabouts, the Project Team is considering their installation wherever possible.

There were discussions about the Western Shift concept. C. Hardin said Flower Street would move south and Asylum Place would be replaced by the intersection of Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue. He said Asylum Avenue would then be seven lanes as opposed to the four under other concepts. T. Cherolis said a 6-7 lane roadway under the Western Shift concept would not be compatible with the objectives of a multi-modal station. Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, asked if a roundabout could function at the intersection of Broad Street and Asylum Avenue under the Western Shift concept. N. Mandler said traffic volumes would still be too high for a single-lane roundabout. One person said they liked the Western Shift, especially if it included extending Sumner Street south to Farmington Avenue. C. Hardin said the Sumner Street extension could be added to any scenario.

Bruce Donald, of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, asked if speeds on Asylum Avenue would increase under the Western Shift. Jackie McKinney, of the ArtSpace Residents Association, said speeds on Asylum Avenue would be highest under the Western Shift around 1:30 am, when Downtown nightlife closes. C. Hardin said speeds were not likely to increase during the peak hours, but they may increase during off-peak periods.

There was a discussion about grades, the Garden Street extension, and a preference for more north-south connections. J. McKinney said steep grades are an important issue to consider in the winter. She said buses are sometimes unable to drive up Asylum Avenue, and asked why the Project Team would consider building a new street of similar grade. C. Hardin said the Garden Street extension would be comparable in slope to Asylum Avenue. He said Spruce Street could be raised to further reduce the grade on Garden Street. He added that north-south routes along Laurel Street and Sisson Avenue could be greatly improved under the Lowered Highway Alternative.

C. Hardin said the designs are not final, and that the Project Team is exploring different scenarios. He explained how reducing the grade of Garden Street would require further raising Spruce Street.

J. McKinney asked where most vehicles traveling east on Asylum Avenue and turning right onto Broad Street southbound go. N. Mandler said most of that traffic is destined for I-84 eastbound during the peak hours under existing conditions. He said that local traffic that would be impacted by a discontinuous Broad Street could use Asylum Place or Bushnell Park West to get from Broad Street to Cogswell Street.

T. Cherolis asked about the design speed standards for local roads under the I-84 Hartford Project. C. Hardin said roadway curvature is being designed for speeds of 30 miles per hour. Tim Ryan, of TSC, explained that design must allow for vehicles, particularly trucks and buses, to traverse the lanes safely. N. Mandler said traffic signals could be timed to encourage travel speeds of 25 miles per hour. M. Morehouse said the Project Team is designing a multi-modal network that is considering separating bicycle and pedestrian facilities on roadways with higher traffic volumes or speeds.

T. Cherolis asked if the Aetna driveway parallel to I-84 was private and if it could be incorporated into the network. C. Hardin said it was private.

T. Gold said that the station site should determine surrounding land use. She said an iconic station should go south of Asylum Avenue to take advantage of high ground. T. Jost agreed that it is important to site the station before determining land use, but that it is also important to consider growing the local road network.

There were discussions about how to access the reconfigured highway ramps from different points in Hartford and West Hartford. C. Hardin and N. Mandler illustrated various routing options on plan diagrams and the three-dimensional model. One person said they didn't like how the westbound ramps might impact Bushnell Park and favored shifting the ramps south.

3) Multi-Modal Station Planning Presentation and Discussion

Gina Trimarco, of TSC, introduced the multi-modal station planning process. She was joined by David Spillane, of Goody Clancy and the CTDOT I-84 Hartford Project consulting team, and Bill Kenworthy, of the City of Hartford Capital Gateway Master Plan consulting team.

G. Trimarco reviewed the past work and station concepts considered during the multi-modal station planning effort. She said the station concepts were revised from public feedback and resulted in three concepts for station sites north of Asylum Avenue, and two south of Asylum Avenue. Handouts with simplified diagrams of the five total station concepts were distributed to those in attendance. G. Trimarco explained that many concepts require a phased construction approach, meaning the rail station would be built 3-7 years before the lowered highway is completed. She said this was important to consider for overbuild stations, which may not be completed until after highway construction finishes. She said a temporary solution for buses and parking would be required for phased construction and overbuild concepts.

G. Trimarco explained the evaluation criteria for the station concepts. She introduced the first station concept, Asylum Plaza, developed in collaboration with the City. She said this concept would set the station back from Asylum Avenue, fronted by a public plaza and built on the cap. Bus facilities would be in a separate facility on the other side of Garden Street, potentially connected by an underground concourse. D. Spillane said this concept merited a conversation about the number of transfers between rail and bus; he said other concepts that site rail and bus services in one facility are more efficient. He said the plaza in front of the station did not need to be as big as depicted in the diagrams. He concluded that station concepts that are built on cap free up land on solid ground for transit-oriented development (TOD).

The Garden Street Access concept combines bus and rail services in one facility on Asylum Avenue over the cap. Vehicular access to the station would be on Garden Street. B. Kenworthy said this station would free up more land on solid ground for TOD. There was a discussion about the potential to reorient the bus and parking facilities to further minimize use of solid ground for station facilities.

The No Overbuild concept would build the rail station on solid ground west of the railroad tracks. A bus facility could sit on solid ground adjacent to Spruce Street, or be built later on a cap north of Garden Street. G. Trimarco noted that these facilities would be separate and take a less multi-modal approach.

The Capitol View Transitway concept would require overbuild and phased construction, and may offer better access to CT *fastrak*. G. Trimarco said the station would be accessed via Broad Street. D. Spillane noted that the concept combines bus and rail facilities, and would be heavily influenced by the Trident solution selected. He encouraged the group to consider how concentrating bus facilities on Broad Street may pose a challenge to the road's development. B. Kenworthy said the concept would connect viewsheds between the Capitol and The Hartford, but expressed concern over the function and nature of the station's central drive.

In the Broad Street Station concept, the station would be accessed via Broad Street and would position bus and rail facilities as close together as possible. B. Kenworthy said it would free up land for TOD near Bushnell Park. D. Spillane noted that this concept could result in a longer walk from the bus station to Farmington Avenue, and may not be a comfortable pedestrian environment. He said it was less central than other options.

B. Kenworthy concluded that the northern station concepts align themselves well for a compact central station footprint with surrounding TOD. D. Spillane said he favored the Garden Street Access concept. He said future discussion should address what is meant by an iconic station, and how to achieve that.

M. Morehouse said the consulting teams would incorporate public feedback into design work and present to the Public Advisory Committee on November 16th.

Multi-Modal Station Discussion

One person said they support the Garden Street Access concept because it is close to Downtown and would maximize land on solid ground for TOD. J. McKinney said this concept made the most sense, because it would remove traffic from the Trident.

One person asked if congestion on Garden Street would be an issue between bus and kiss-n-ride operations. B. Kenworthy said the station could be fronted by a 35-foot wide sidewalk with two rows of trees instead of a large plaza. N. Mandler said Garden Street would carry roughly 400-500 cars an hour, like today's Myrtle Street, and be a useful shortcut for Asylum Hill residents

T. Gold said she preferred the southern concepts, potentially Broad Street Station. She said the station site should be high and overlook the park, resulting in an iconic building. She and Bill Mocarsky expressed concern that the No Overbuild concept would obscure views of the station from Asylum Avenue. B. Kenworthy said surrounding development would likely be around eight stories tall, although horizontal sightlines could be designed to create station view sheds. D. Spillane said an iconic station could be designed north of and fronting Asylum Avenue. Whereas the No Overbuild concept avoids phased construction, he said it would take up two valuable parcels that could otherwise be used for TOD. He noted that federal agencies have not yet determined if the station can be built on air rights.

There was a discussion about access to and the footprint of the Capitol View Transitway station. B. Kenworthy said the Project Team is exploring the impact of moving the highway ramps south to bring Farmington Avenue through the station area. D. Spillane said introducing another road between Bushnell Park West and Broad Street may make the Trident less functional. G. Trimarco said the station footprint was designed to complement the street while also accommodating a curved bus facility. Jim Rice, of TSC, said the station footprint could be reduced depending on tenant space needs, and then be built entirely on solid ground.

There was a question about how the southern station concepts would address the challenging traffic operations of the YWCA and Aetna driveways on Broad Street. N. Mandler said Broad Street will be much less busy under Alternative 3B-E5(S), and that the project may present an opportunity to consolidate Broad Street driveways or include a traffic signal.

There were discussions about parking facilities. B. Kenworthy said parking needs may lessen in the future due to emerging technologies. T. Jost said building parking on solid ground would discourage TOD. G. Trimarco said an estimated 500-600 structured parking spaces are needed. She said the parking structure's height would depend on the footprint of the bus facility and whether it was shared with surrounding TODs. One person asked the Project Team to consider bicycle infrastructure in the multi-modal station design. They said people would ideally access the station via bus or active transportation to reduce gridlock and smog.

There was a discussion about station access for people with disabilities. Attendees said bus pull-outs on the steep grade of Asylum Avenue and separated bus and rail facilities would be challenging for disabled people. G. Trimarco said the pull-outs could be relocated.

One person asked if the Project Team had data on the anticipated mode share that people would use to access the station. G. Trimarco said although the Project Team does have data regarding station access, it does not extend to the degree that they can determine suitable siting north or south of Asylum Avenue.

T. Gold asked if a temporary station could be built on solid ground, with a permanent station later built over the cap. G. Trimarco said this was a necessary scenario for many overbuild station concepts.

Sandy Fry, of the City of Hartford, asked how CT *fastrak* would access the station. G. Trimarco said the Project Team is evaluating multiple options for CT *fastrak* to access the station depending on its chosen site.

J. McKinney said the station's number one goal should be to support economic development.

J. Cassidy was concerned about the location and number of kiss-n-ride facilities. She said it would be easier for drivers to drop off and pick up passengers on Asylum Avenue rather than Garden Street. G. Trimarco said the station would have an estimated 30 kiss-n-ride spaces and discourage drop-offs on Asylum Avenue to improve traffic operations.

One person asked why there would be a delay under phased construction. C. Hardin said the railroad would be relocated before the highway to avoid disruptions to rail service during highway construction. He said highway construction would begin following completion of the railroad.