



# THE I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

Summer 2014 Newsletter  
Issue 4

## First Public Meeting a Success!

The I-84 Hartford Project caused quite a buzz at the Hartford Public Library in June.

“Last night I attended the Public Information Meeting. I found the presentation informative and appreciate the opportunity to learn about the project and provide input,” said one person in a written comment. More than 100 people attended the meeting.

The meeting started with an open house where attendees could view many displays and interact with the project team. Each display station addressed a certain aspect of the I-84 Hartford corridor and the planning process, including the history of I-84 in Hartford, the need for the project, what I-84 may look like in the future, things that the project team must consider, and a closer look at the federal and state environmental review processes.

Some of the stations included opportunity for public input.

Twice during the event, team members gave a presentation which expanded upon the information at the stations.



The well-attended public meeting at the Hartford Public Library included opportunities for attendees to interact with the project team, learn about the project, ask questions, and share comments.

The project is expected to cost between \$3–5 billion for any of the non-tunnel options and as much as \$8–10 billion for a full tunnel. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) has already spent \$60 million to repair the highway in the past decade and anticipates spending much more in the coming decades to keep it safe enough for drivers to use until a replacement is complete.

“The bridges are in relatively lousy shape in layman’s terms,” said Morehouse, as quoted by the Hartford Courant. “It’s safe to drive over, but deterioration will continue. As it gets older, every dollar spent doesn’t go as far, the fixes don’t last as long. Repair isn’t something we can do forever in a cost-effective way.”

**“I found the presentation informative, and appreciate the opportunity to learn about the project and provide input.”**

- Meeting Attendee

During a question and answer period, attendees suggested replacing parts of the highway with a tunnel. Others emphasized the need to straighten the highway, reduce the number of interchanges, and eliminate left-hand entrances and exits. Some felt that a bypass or “ring road” would be the answer.

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Richard Armstrong, CTDOT’s principal engineer for the I-84 Hartford Project, chats with a meeting attendee.

★ Learn more about the topics most mentioned by public meeting attendees in articles throughout this newsletter! ★

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### Habla Usted español?

Una versión de este boletín está disponible en español. Visite <http://i84hartford.com>.



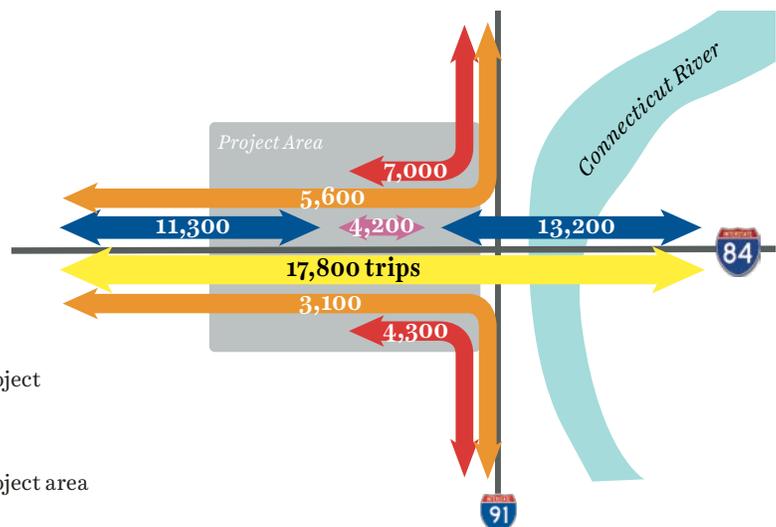
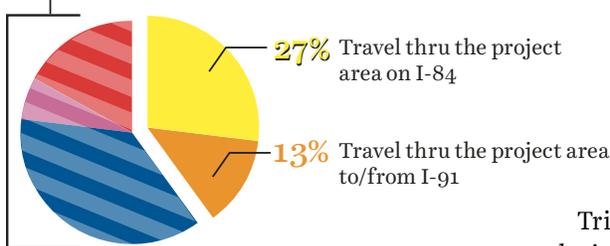
## What Goes Around, Comes Around

**R**ing road? Circumferential highway? Bypass? We have received a number of comments both at our recent public meeting and through our website, asking if a new bypass road is being considered to allow traffic to avoid I-84 through Hartford. CTDOT is not considering this as part of the I-84 Hartford project, and we thought you might be interested in knowing why. There are three main reasons:

- **Construction of a completely new road would have great impact.** I-291 around Hartford was proposed by CTDOT in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of that highway was vigorously opposed by those who would be impacted by the construction of the brand new highway through their communities, as well as by transit and environmental advocates and agencies. The highway was eventually taken off the table. Would there be any less opposition today or would the environmental impacts be any less significant? Probably not.
- **Most of the traffic on I-84 in Hartford is not through-traffic; it either originates from or is bound to the study area.** During our data collection process, we tracked traffic entering, leaving, and traveling through the area on I-84 in Hartford. The illustration shows what we found. During peak travel periods, approximately 60% of the vehicles get on or off the highway in the study area. Of the remainder, it is highly likely that many are shorter trips (e.g., West Hartford to East Hartford) which are not suitable for diversion to other roads. This leaves a relatively small portion of the traffic as potentially “bypassable.” (Not enough to justify the type of impact that would be caused by building a new highway).
- **Most importantly, I-84 needs to be reconstructed due to the poor condition of the bridges.** Even if a ring road were justified by traffic demand and feasible, replacement of the existing highway in some form remains our top funding priority due to the condition of the bridges and escalating costs to maintain them as is. It is our hope (and our vision) to find a solution that decreases the footprint of the highway, lessens its impact on the city, and providing more efficient and safer travel conditions.

For these three reasons, CTDOT has decided to focus our resources on improving I-84 through Hartford, which is why a ring road is not in the list of alternatives.

60% Enter or exit I-84 in project area



Trips on I-84 traveling to, from, or through the project area during the busiest four hours of travel (7:30-9am and 3:30-6pm)



### Who Follows Us?

If you subscribe to our mailing list or follow us via social media, you are in good company! At right is the breakdown of I-84 Hartford Project followers.



- 1,200+ Main Contact List
- 103 Facebook
- 66 Twitter

# A Look at Hartford's Other Viaduct



The rail viaduct, shown here from above and below, used to carry four tracks (two on each side of the Union Station platform). It now carries just one serviceable track.

Concurrently with the I-84 Hartford Project, CTDOT is conducting an Alternatives Analysis (AA) for the future of the aging Hartford rail viaduct. This structure crosses over Asylum Street just south of Union Station and, like the I-84 viaducts, is in need of upgrade or replacement. The Rail AA will review a full array of maintenance, reconstruction, and relocation options for the rail viaduct.

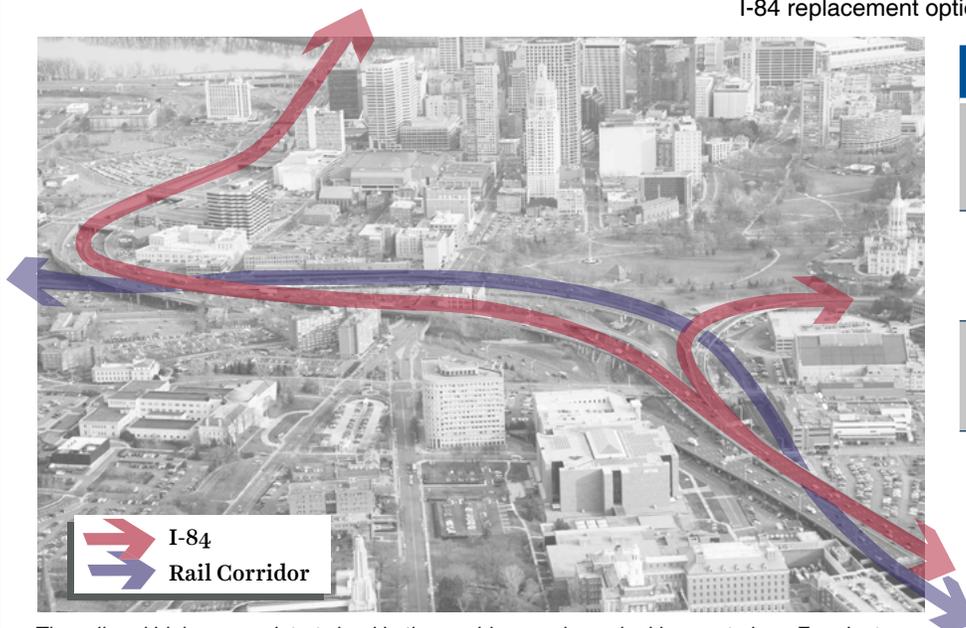
The rail viaduct was constructed over one hundred years ago and continues to serve Amtrak's intercity passenger service as well as freight trains. The rail viaduct is nearing the end of its useful service life and requires frequent and costly repairs to maintain its operations (just like the highway viaduct!). As time goes on, it will become increasingly more expensive to maintain service on the structure.

In addition, the rail viaduct will soon experience an increase in service with the initiation of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield

Rail Program in 2016. Rail usage is projected to grow to 25 new round-trip trains daily by 2030. Originally served by four tracks, today the rail viaduct supports service on only one. Thus, more capacity is needed to efficiently handle demand. The improvements in the table below are necessary to accommodate future service.

Through replacement or relocation of the rail viaduct, CTDOT hopes to increase regional mobility, improve local connectivity, and create a gateway that spurs economic development. These are wide-ranging themes that address larger community goals and go beyond simply building a piece of transportation infrastructure.

These themes are consistent with many of the needs for rehabilitation or replacement of I-84 in the same corridor. The concurrent projects provide an opportunity to plan for each in a coordinated fashion, since any rail relocation options will impact I-84 replacement options and vice versa.



Program	Need
Number of tracks	Minimum of two tracks with a possible third track through the station area
Platform length	1050' platform length to accommodate 12-car trains (current platform is less than 700')
Station location	Possible new station building if the track is relocated (with reuse of the existing facilities)
Intercity and local bus connections	Development of a transportation hub for both local buses and large intercity buses

The rail and highway are intertwined in the corridor, as shown looking east along Farmington and Asylum Avenues as they converge near downtown Hartford. Changes to the highway alignment will affect the railroad and changes to the rail alignment will affect the highway. Therefore, the two studies are being very closely coordinated.

# Tunnel Vision



One question we hear often: “Will a tunnel be considered for a portion of I-84 in Hartford?” The answer is “yes” there will be a tunnel option. The project team will be conducting engineering and environmental screening to determine

tunnel feasibility, cost, and impacts/benefits, just as they will be doing for **all** the alternatives to ascertain which feasible options can move forward into more detailed analysis.

Replacing the viaduct with a tunnel could create opportunities for new development, improve street connections in Hartford, reconnect parts of the city, and enhance urban character while maintaining highway function.

While a full or partial tunnel could bring great benefits to Hartford, it would also come at a great expense, most likely (according to early estimates) 2–3 times what other alternatives would cost. A tunnel could also have the potential for considerable property impacts.

Will the benefits justify the cost and impacts? We don’t know yet, but, as with all the alternatives, this will become more clear as the project advances. We hope you will stay informed and involved!

## Questions?! We Love Questions



We love hearing from you and responding to your questions. Visit the [FAQ section](#) of our website to see if your question has been answered there. If not, please fire away – visit our project website to submit a comment or question.

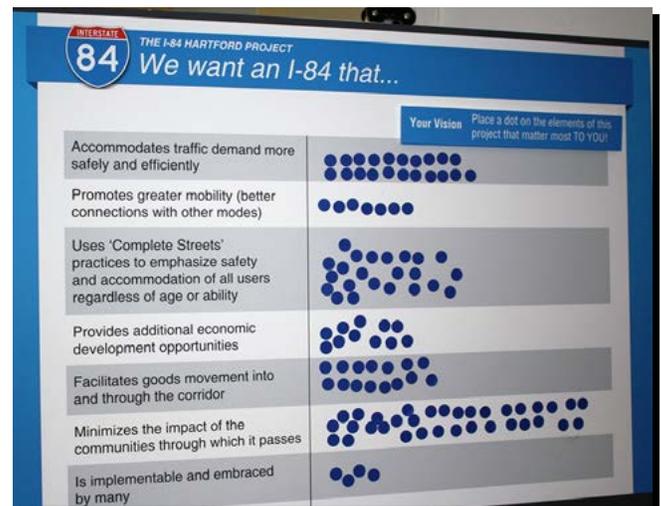
## Public Meeting, cont. from Page 1

All of these comments will be taken into consideration during project planning, which could take at least three years.

Interested members of the public can get involved by attending future public meetings (we anticipate another meeting late this year) and submitting comments via the project website or Twitter and Facebook feeds. The project team is eager for the public to share ideas and concerns early in this process to help shape the project outcome. “It will be anywhere from 10 to 15 years before we get to drive on a new I-84,” said Morehouse, “but the next two to three years will be critical – a lot of decisions will be made in that timeframe.”

**“The next two to three years will be critical – a lot of decisions will be made in that timeframe.”**

- Meeting Facilitator Mike Morehouse



At one display, attendees were given dots to indicate which elements of the project vision are most meaningful to them. Minimizing impact was the single biggest response.