



I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

Spring 2015 Newsletter • Issue 7

Thank You for a Successful Open Planning Studio

It was a bright April morning. The coffee was brewed. Chalk stencils and signs were placed outside the Christ Church Cathedral. Staff put the finishing touches on digital displays. And greeters stood ready to welcome the public.

As the doors opened to the I-84 Open Planning Studio, we wondered if the cost and effort of this large endeavor would be considered a success. We hoped you'd see why we opened for a whole week. We hoped you would join us.

Over the past few months, the Project Team had developed a wide range of design alternatives. Given the many corridor variations, we wanted to present the information in a comprehensible way to our Public Advisory Committee (PAC), working groups, and the public.

The extended format of the Open Planning Studio would allow people ample time to talk with the team, digest the options, and possibly return with comments as the week progressed. Many of you did just that!

We also wanted to attract new stakeholders, especially those who don't typically attend public meetings. Doors were open and the team was available all day, into the evenings, and on Saturday.



The Open Planning Studio was a busy six days of interactive programming, targeted stakeholder meetings, working sessions, and an ongoing open house.



Raising awareness of the studio was critical to the event's success. In addition to e-blasts and media announcements, direct mailings were delivered to nearby residents, followed by a knock and flyer at their front door. Project website visits were the highest ever in April, spiking during this period.

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¿Habla Usted español?

Una versión de este boletín está disponible en español a i84hartford.com.

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— Faces & Places of the Corridor —

Welcome to Faces & Places of the Corridor, profiles of people who live, work, run businesses, or lead groups within the I-84 study area. Know someone who we should feature? Send us your ideas!

Jackie McKinney: Growing Up With I-84



Jackie McKinney lives so close to I-84 that dust from the highway collects in her apartment, even if the windows are closed. She doesn't blame her apartment complex, and says it's just one of the effects of highway wear and tear.

Jackie McKinney rubbed soot between her index finger and thumb as she gazed at I-84 from her Asylum Avenue apartment window. “The black dust collecting on my windowsill comes from wear and tear on the highway,” she said.

The highway is in a constant state of repair. Many nights, a blue construction light shines into McKinney’s apartment as workers fix bridge structures. “That makes me nervous,” she said. “I know the steel is failing.”

Born and raised in Hartford, McKinney said I-84 has had a significant impact on most of her life.

She shares her personal experiences and recommendations for improving the highway as a member of the project’s Public Advisory Committee. She is also a member of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association and co-chair for Hartford 2000, a coalition of 14 neighborhood groups and the City of Hartford, collaborating to improve the city.

McKinney’s involvement with I-84 began as a member of the HUB of Hartford Steering Committee, a grassroots group of about a dozen residents commissioned in 2006 to study possible I-84 reconstruction options with CTDOT.

When the highway was first constructed, McKinney

was in high school and did not pay much attention to the buzz. It wasn’t until the 1960s and 1970s that she had her own experiences with I-84.

“I-84 became a nuisance to me,” she said.

As a working professional, she had to take a circuitous route on I-84, I-91, and city streets to commute to Bloomfield. “Engineers designed the highway in this manner because downtown people did not want traffic in their area,” she said.

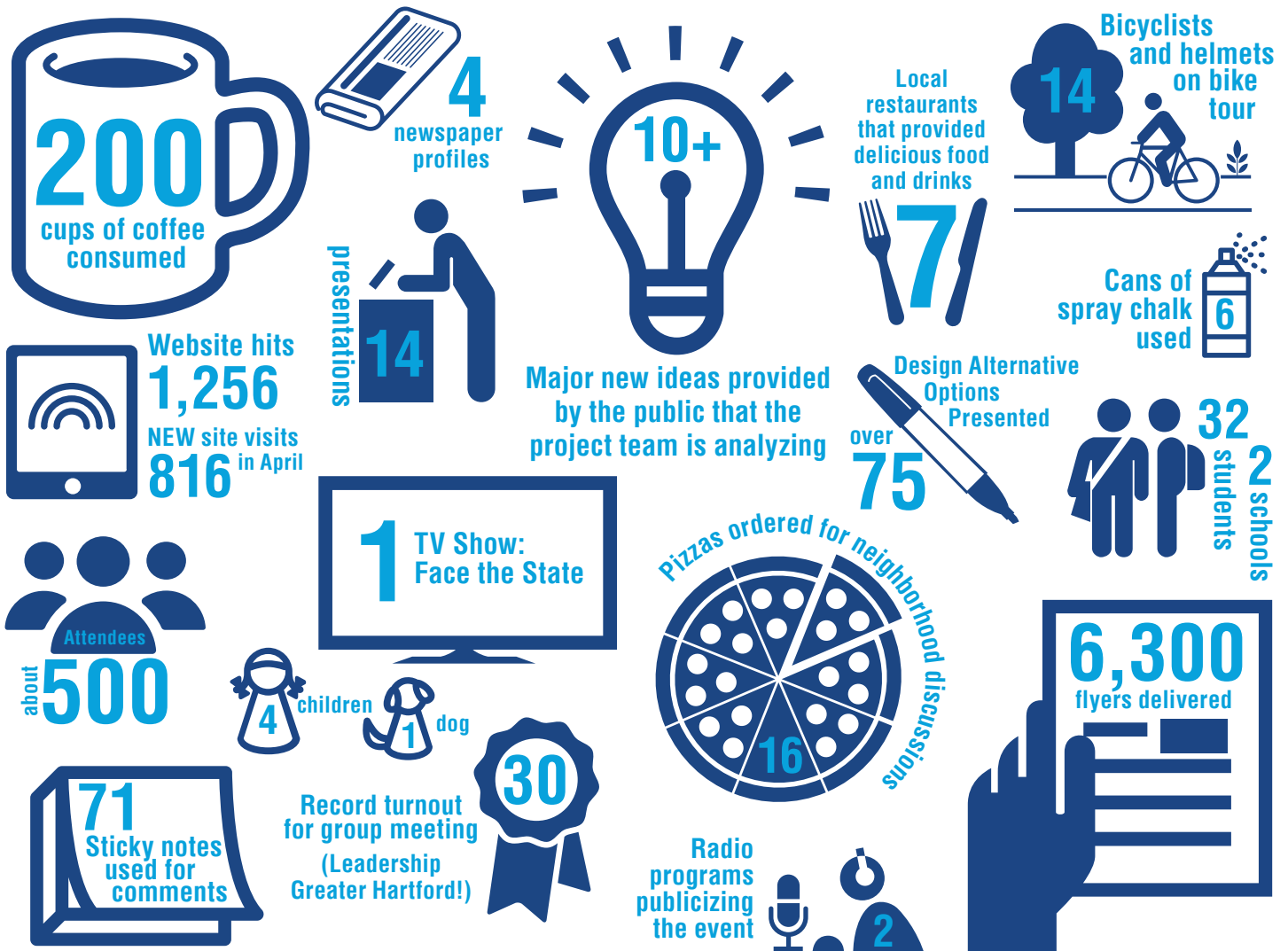
“It’s a 20 year project,” McKinney says. “You learn patience.”

Looking ahead, McKinney believes lowering the highway is the most practical solution. This would reconnect the city, free up many acres of land in Hartford and provide economic development opportunities, she said.

Many people want to see the highway buried in a tunnel, but she suspects it would take a long time to construct and be extremely expensive.

Although McKinney got involved with the study early on, she wonders if she will be alive to see it completed. “It’s a 20 year project,” she said. “You learn patience.”

Open Planning Studio by the Numbers



Shape the I-84 Corridor With Your Phone!

Do you have one minute to help shape the future of the I-84 corridor through Hartford? Share your thoughts using your smart phone! To engage a text-savvy audience, we've partnered with Textizen to develop a survey. Answering a few quick questions will allow us to better understand your priorities for the future corridor, design preferences, and thoughts on the state of I-84 today.

Text "OK" to 973-607-2547

Standard text message rates apply. Your privacy is important to Textizen. Your phone number will not be shared or sold.



Credit: Adam Fagen/Flickr

Thank You, continued

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We also reached out to local schools and were rewarded with participation by student groups.

Many attendees noted being initially overwhelmed. However, upon talking with the team, seeing the corridor from a bike seat, or viewing the 3-D model, they grasped the information and articulated their thoughts. This feedback is invaluable!

We've since sifted through comments, responded to tweets, and removed the spray chalk from the sidewalks. We're inspired by your creative suggestions and poignant questions. See 'What We Heard' inset.

Most importantly, we want to **thank** those who helped us pull this together: to Christ Church Cathedral for graciously letting us occupy their space; to CRDA who supplied the parking passes; to our Project Advisors, the City of Hartford, and Hartford Business Improvement District staff who offered suggestions, contacts, and resources to make our event better; to all those who publicized our event; and to members of the community who have just begun to and continue to tirelessly participate in our process.

This project is a great challenge and a great opportunity. As engineers and planners (and stakeholders as well), we are dedicated to building you a better I-84. Thank you!

Your I-84 Hartford Project Team



“Looking around the room and seeing all those people made me really proud. I thought, Wow, this is so cool. This project team really wants to do this right, and genuinely cares about the I-84 Hartford Project. I think the audience gets that, and it’s just great stuff...so glad to be a part of it.”

- Team Member Christine Tiernan, AECOM

What We Heard

- **Lower may be better:** Many prefer the lowered or tunneled alternatives.
- **Personally impacted:** Impacts to neighborhoods and travel patterns often drive preferences.
- **The details matter:** Understanding the specifics of how design alternatives may alter the fabric of the city is critical to the decision-making process.
- **Passions and priorities are diverse:** Economic opportunity, more green space, less congestion, safer travel, improved urban ambiance, pedestrian and bicycle access, and connectivity all matter.
- **Great ideas abound:** Stakeholders shared specific, excellent suggestions for revising or tweaking elements of each alternative. This is exactly what we wanted!



A budding engineer creatively explores bridge design.

Open Planning Studio visitors discuss design alternatives.



The 3-D model provided dynamic perspectives of the alternatives.



Group bike tour riders viewed opportunities and constraints from the ground.