



## Narrowing Alternatives to a Manageable Number



October public meetings held in Manchester, West Hartford, and Hartford presented the initial results of the alternatives analysis.

The I-84 Hartford Project is approaching a fork in the road. After analyzing a large number of alternatives, we are working to identify a smaller set that best meet project goals. The most viable options will advance to the next phase of evaluation.

*“The measure of success is how well each alternative meets the project’s screening criteria.”*

Not only must an alternative meet the three main needs of the project to advance, they ideally must meet other project goals, such as lessening impact to neighborhoods, improving connections, and providing economic development opportunities.

Furthermore, public input is critical. We’re relying on our analysis but we need and want public input, if not consensus, before narrowing down the alternatives.

Those following the project know that we’ve developed many alternatives for this two-mile stretch of urban highway. Some of these creative ideas originated from the public.

Creating a solution that works best for most users, and for the neighborhoods through which I-84 passes, requires evaluating and testing many options. What makes an alternative a star performer? The measure of success is how well each alternative meets the project’s **three primary needs**:

- Fixing the bridge structures. If an alternative does not meet this criteria, it cannot advance.
- Improving traffic operations and safety, and decreasing congestion. Does the alternative improve the operations and safety and reduce congestion by adding shoulders, eliminating poor weave sections, and preventing ramp backups?
- Increasing mobility for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Is there enhanced network connectivity? Are there opportunities for improving streetscapes?

How do we determine which alternatives perform best? We conduct this analysis by building and running a series of traffic models. See inset on page 3.

Alternatives are generated when options are combined. With over 10 western and 15 eastern options, we’ve created 150+ alternatives. The project team is working to reduce them to a more manageable number.

*(continued on page 3)*

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¿Habla Usted español? Una versión de este boletín está disponible en español a [i84hartford.com](http://i84hartford.com).

## — 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!

### Congestion Affects More Than Just Drivers

The president and chief executive officer for the Urban League of Greater Hartford discusses the importance of timely transportation

Three thousand local residents, many from within the I-84 study area, travel to the Urban League of Greater Hartford on Woodland Street each year to learn new skills. The organization is critical to the success of these Hartford-area residents, and Adrienne Cochrane is eager to see her customers served well.

Many who want to gain skills find it challenging when traffic conditions in the I-84 corridor affect their commutes.

“People get frustrated when it’s too congested, roads and highways have not been cleared timely [in winter conditions], it’s unsafe,” said Cochrane, the Urban League of Greater Hartford’s president and chief executive officer.

With Cochrane at its helm, the local non-profit organization offers programs and classes such as GED preparation; English as a second language; first-time home-buyer and foreclosure prevention classes; youth development programs, such as digital literacy and college preparatory programs, as well as job training classes and health and wellness programs for low-income, pregnant women.

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*“Clearly, the League has a vested interest in customers having comfortable access to our location.”*

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Hartford’s Urban League has been in the city for more than 50 years and is an affiliate of the National Urban League, a civil rights organization founded in 1910 that is dedicated to providing economic empowerment services to historically under-served people in urban communities.

Many of the Urban League’s clients depend on public transportation, which they report can sometimes be unreliable.

“I hear a lot of complaints about missing connections because some buses don’t arrive and/or depart on schedule,” she said.



*Adrienne Cochrane, president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Greater Hartford, hopes that all I-84 alternatives accommodate public transit well.*

Sometimes clients must leave classes early, so that they can get home before the buses stop running for the night.

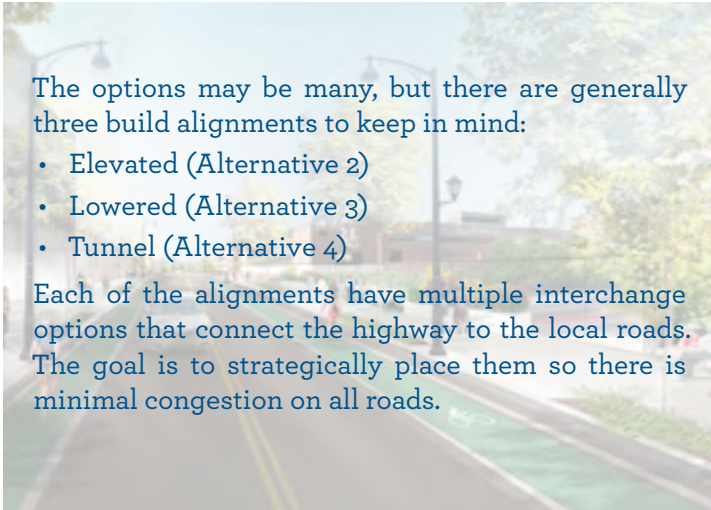
The buses have to be reliable, especially for travelers who use more than one mode of transportation to travel to the Urban League, like catching a ride to the bus stop or transferring from bus to train, Cochrane said.

“Clearly, the League has a vested interest in our customers having comfortable access to our location,” Cochrane said.

This is important to the organization now, as it will be during the rebuilding of I-84, and once the highway is reconstructed.

# Narrowing Alternatives, continued

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The options may be many, but there are generally three build alignments to keep in mind:

- Elevated (Alternative 2)
- Lowered (Alternative 3)
- Tunnel (Alternative 4)

Each of the alignments have multiple interchange options that connect the highway to the local roads. The goal is to strategically place them so there is minimal congestion on all roads.

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Based on analysis results, we've graded important characteristics of each option as good, moderate, poor, or critically flawed relative to meeting the three main needs of the project. We presented these early results at public meetings in October to solicit feedback.

What do initial analyses indicate? See the *Key Traffic Findings* article on page 4.

Identifying the best possible solution for I-84 through Hartford is no small feat. As mentioned before, we have a unique opportunity to rebuild this corridor, and we want to get it right.

The project team continues to gather your feedback, which is incredibly valuable to this process. We want to make sure we hear from everyone before eliminating any alternatives. Please visit the website to explore the options in more detail, watch coverage of recent public meetings, read media articles and opinions, and **tell us which options you feel should move forward in the analysis.**

## *Traffic Modeling: A Short Course for Those Who Don't Do This for a Living*

To evaluate alternatives for movement of traffic as well as bicycles and pedestrians (otherwise known as 'mobility'), the project team developed a series of models to test each option and answer the following performance questions:

- How well does each alternative handle traffic flow on the mainline?
- How well does traffic flow on local streets near highway interchanges?
- How well can each option accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic on local streets?

Using software called *Vissim* for the mainline and *Synchro* for intersections near interchanges, the team gathered output from both models, then compared them to assess how local traffic affects the mainline, and vice versa.

The results were compiled and summarized to paint a picture of the traffic flow viability of each option. This information was presented at the October public meetings and can be found on the project website under Meeting Materials.



*Want to analyze the alternatives in detail?*

*Visit the [Interactive Alternatives Analysis](#) page of our website.*

*Leave a comment, share your thoughts at a 2016 Open Planning Studio, or even impress your friends at holiday parties!*

<http://i84hartford.com/i84alternatives/index.html>



# Key Traffic Findings Coming Into Focus

After months conducting preliminary analyses, some key findings have come into focus. The findings confirm earlier assumptions, but also present new information. These analyses help us define critical corridor features, and identify the options that perform well.

The following broad issues are evident from our highway traffic analysis:

- **There are too many ramps in this stretch of highway.** Removing some of these ramps, such as those at Trumbull and High Streets, will improve highway operations.
- **Traffic congestion on local roads causes traffic congestion on the highway and vice versa.** Commuters are well aware of the traffic that backs up onto the highway at Asylum and Sigourney Street ramps, and congestion on local roads when vehicles queue to enter at Broad Street and Capitol Avenue.

The following are key findings from our local road analysis:

- **Existing ramps at Asylum and Broad Streets**, two critical bicyclist and pedestrian corridors, **should be relocated** to provide a better balance between vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- **Sigourney Street ramps carry a heavy amount of traffic** and should be maintained in some fashion.
- **Creating new local road connections** provides valuable redundancy in the network by giving motorists more choices.
- **Improving the I-84 mainline will improve the local road network.**

## Options That Perform Well

All options have pros and cons. Yet, when evaluated against the three core needs of the project, the lowered highway alignment generally stands out.

Seven options associated with the lowered alignment (Alternative 3) perform quite well; this includes three western and four eastern interchange options. Traffic distribution is favorable, and opportunities to accommodate ALL users — not just vehicles — abound.

## Options That Do Not Perform As Well

Relatively speaking, the elevated options (the No Build and Alternative 2) do not perform well from a traffic perspective.



*An original 10 options west of and 15 options east of Sigourney Street were assessed. Western and eastern options can be mixed and matched to create various alternatives.*

The tunneled highway (Alternative 4) presents many challenges, including traffic operations. However, this alternative has many public supporters, and we continue to explore a viable solution. This alternative, like any other, would require significant property impacts north and south of the tunnel, due to the Park River Conduit and railroad relocations.

Overcoming these challenges may be difficult, however, creating a smaller capped section over the lowered highway to emulate a tunnel may be more feasible.

## Other Important Factors

As we move into 2016, we continue to assess other important factors, including bicyclist and pedestrian connections, preliminary property impacts, and costs associated with each option.

## Summary

In summary, the lowered options perform best against the primary project goals, while the elevated and tunneled options do not meet criteria as well. Still, more in depth analysis is ahead as the project progresses into environmental documentation.

We're striving for a balance that meets project needs, satisfies the public's wishes, and addresses the realities of rebuilding a busy urban highway. We are confident that we can develop a solution that improves conditions for all travelers while decreasing the negative effects of the highway on local neighborhoods.

As always, we welcome your comments and look forward to collaborating in the New Year!