



I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

Spring 2016 Newsletter • Issue 11

The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study: Bottleneck City



Traffic at the interchange where I-84 meets I-91 frequently backs up. Tight constraints between the Connecticut River and downtown Hartford development, coupled with fewer lanes in both directions, create major bottlenecks. The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study will explore ideas to improve the traffic flow and safety of this area.

From the beginning of the I-84 Hartford Project, the public has shared concerns about the traffic bottleneck where I-84 crosses the Connecticut River into East Hartford.

Good news! The Connecticut Department of Transportation is listening. We will soon begin a study to assess the issue and suggest solutions.

“The existing I-84/I-91 interchange serves over 275,000 vehicles per day. It’s the busiest interchange in Connecticut!”

The I-84 Hartford Project team remains committed to focusing on I-84 through Hartford. The current project limits do not include the area where I-84 and I-91 meet, also called an *interchange*. The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study, however, will look at both the interchange and the area across the river in East Hartford. The study will explore ideas to improve traffic flow and safety.

Originally constructed in the 1960s and modified in the late 1980s, the existing I-84/I-91 interchange serves over 275,000 vehicles per day. It’s the busiest interchange in Connecticut!

So what causes a bottleneck here? While most of I-84 and I-91 have at least three through lanes in each direction, the highways narrow to two lanes to make room for the interchange ramps.

The high number of vehicles and fewer lanes cause traffic delays, especially during morning and afternoon commutes.

It may be challenging to add lanes to the current interchange and the Bulkeley Bridge. Therefore, the study will consider other options, too. Does it make sense to relocate the interchange and river crossing to the north? To the south? Taking a closer look at the Route 2/I-84 interchange in East Hartford and I-91 will be part of this study as well. See the graphic on page 4, which outlines initial ideas.

(continued on page 4)

In This Issue

- The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study: Bottleneck City 1
- Faces & Places: Keller Historic District 2
- Hiring Locals to Help Improve Transit 3
- Spring and Summer Events 3
- Bottleneck City, continued 4
- The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study, Illustrated 4

¿Habla usted español? Una versión de este boletín está disponible en español a 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!

A Porch-side View of a Changing I-84

The Keller Historic District is a relic of an industrial Hartford, with front row views of a changing city

With relatively few operating factories these days, it's easy to forget that Hartford was once the hotbed of industry.

The Keller Historic District was created in the late 1800s to support a thriving industry in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. Built to house one company's workforce, the charming homes off Capitol Avenue are warmly lit and inhabited by friendly neighbors, even decades after the last factories closed. The I-84 viaduct is visible from their front porches.

In 1878, Colonel Albert Pope began to mass-produce bicycles in Hartford, a revolutionary invention. In its heyday, the Capitol Avenue complex spanned 18 acres. About 4,000 employees produced 50,000 bikes per year.

Colonel Pope needed housing for his workers. He hired architect George Keller, who had recently designed the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch in Bushnell Park. Keller exceeded expectations when he designed the beautiful row houses along Putnam Street, Columbia Street, and Park Terrace for Pope in 1888.

Inspired by British row housing, Keller incorporated a fun interplay of styles. He mixed wood and brick facades. Some homes have high pitched roofs, others have pointed porch arches, and still others have



Architect George Keller incorporated a fun interplay of styles into the row houses. They were developed in 1888 to house Pope Factory workers.

“Many [residents] have family histories deeply rooted in these homes. But, some moved here from the suburbs to satisfy a lifelong desire to live in the city.”

round towers. They all have impressively large front doors. He avoided sameness on the outside but kept an overall cohesiveness. They are considered his most successful residential designs.

Pope gave Keller a home among the factory workers as payment for his services. His generosity also

extended to the City of Hartford, when he donated the 75 acres south of the factory, now known as Pope Park.

Once the bicycle craze of the mid-1890s ended, Pope shifted to the production of cars. He wasn't as successful in the auto industry, and declared bankruptcy in 1907. Many of the factories along Capitol Avenue closed and became office buildings. Luckily, the homes remained.

Today, the residents of Keller Historic District meet regularly to discuss local matters. Many have family histories deeply rooted in these homes. But, some moved here from the suburbs to satisfy a lifelong desire to live in the city.

Residents enjoy walking to the Bushnell, downtown, and the farmers' market at Billings Forge, another historic industrial building in Frog Hollow.

Whether cleaning up the nearby park, gathering for parties, or pitching in to pay for alleyway snow removal, they cite a collective neighborhood warmth.

No matter the alternative chosen for I-84, these folks will have a front row seat from their quaint lawns.

Hiring Locals to Help Improve Transit



Locals were hired for the Onboard Bus Survey team, gathering information about CTtransit bus ridership and usage.

Building a better I-84 corridor requires studying all travel modes. We've written a lot about the highway, bike facilities, and attractive environments for pedestrians, but what about transit users? The project team has been studying Hartford's bus network behind the scenes for months, and began an onboard bus survey in March.

While these surveys are typically conducted every five years, much has changed in the region since 2011. The economy recovered from a recession. CTfastrak was built. Transit systems and operations were modified.

Considering these changes, bus riders' input is crucial in planning for a rebuilt I-84 in Hartford.

“A team of 38 surveyors climbed aboard CTtransit buses to ask riders about their travels.”

Over two months, a team of 38 surveyors climbed aboard CTtransit buses to ask riders about their travels.

The majority of survey staff live in Hartford. Others are from East Hartford, Newington, Bristol, and nearby towns. Nearly 75% identified as Millennials, or, under the age of 35. The survey position, which was advertised on Craigslist, drew a unique mix of qualified applicants.

One of the surveyors is a University of Hartford student majoring in communications. As a student, long-time Hartford resident, and avid traveler, he knows the regional bus network “inside and out”.

As regular bus riders themselves, many surveying staff understand firsthand the diverse needs of CTtransit riders.

The purpose of the survey is to better understand *who* rides the bus and *how* riders use local transit. By learning about rider demographics and usage, we can project how bus service may be affected by various I-84 alternatives. We can accurately plan for alternate modes and bus routes once construction begins.

Through a combination of service changes and local road improvement projects, bus service will be more effective, reliable, and efficient.

While we appreciated volunteers, only those randomly selected on board the bus were eligible to take the survey. Care to share your thoughts? Visit i84hartford.com/busSurvey to learn more, or to leave a comment.

Spring and Summer Events!

**JUNE
5**

CICD Puerto Rican Day Parade
Bushnell Park, Hartford

PAC Meeting #12 &
Open Planning Studio #9 (OPS)
Arroyo Recreation Center, Hartford

**JUN
14-15**

**JULY
9**

Riverfest
Great River Park, East Hartford

West Indian Parade
Bushnell Park, Hartford

**AUG
13**

Bottleneck City, continued

(continued from page 1)

Several design concepts will be studied. We'll evaluate potential benefits and impacts to travelers and residents. We'll also look at how businesses, neighborhoods, and the environment might be affected. Another consideration is the overall cost.

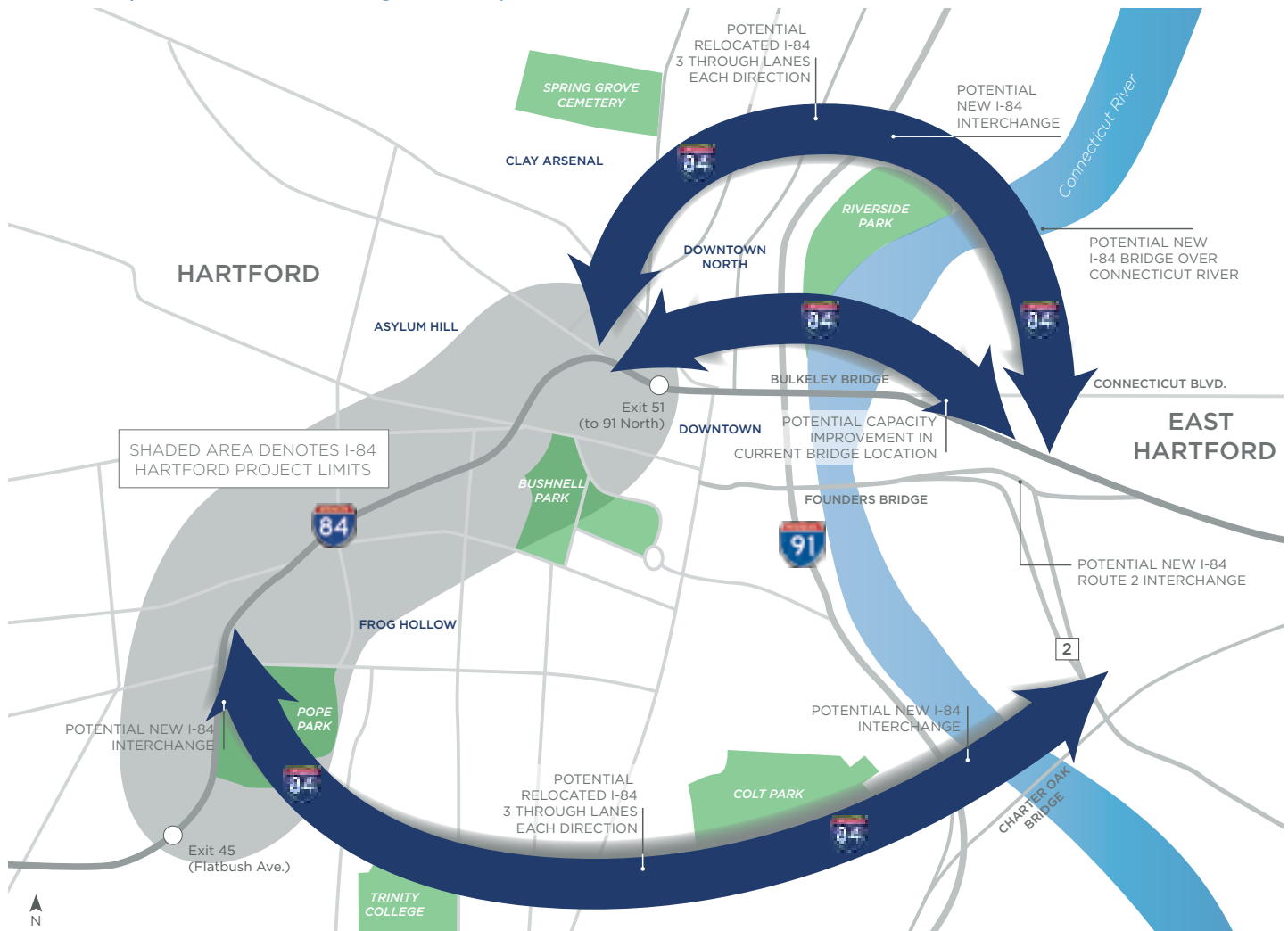
What might the design concepts be? The graphic below shows concepts at this early stage. We will have a clearer picture and more details as our work unfolds.

We will focus on connecting with a variety of stakeholders in the new study area. These include

businesses, community groups, and residents. We want to hear their ideas and concerns. Then we will hold public forums in Hartford and East Hartford. While there are possible benefits to the two communities and to travelers, there will likely be considerable impacts as well. The community's feedback will help guide this study.

Visit the I-84 website or follow us on social media to stay informed on this new planning effort. We want to hear your ideas about these exciting possibilities in the Capitol Region!

The I-84/I-91 Interchange Study, Illustrated



Consider what could happen if I-84 were rerouted to the north or south in Hartford...

While rerouting to ease congestion and create opportunities is worth exploring, building a new highway would be challenging and expensive, to say the least. The study will examine the potential costs and benefits of all options. Much more to come as this feasibility study develops. Let us know what you think, and stay tuned!