



Interchange Study Reveals Many Complexities



View north of downtown Hartford and East Hartford reveals the Bulkeley Bridge with reduced traffic and congestion, as well as a lowered and capped I-91 along the Connecticut River. As illustrated here in Concept 4, I-84 is relocated slightly north. Read the full description of all concepts starting on page two.

In our Spring 2016 newsletter, we announced the launch of the I-84/I-91 Interchange Study. While the I-84 Hartford Project does not include the I-91 interchange, many people requested that the interchange be studied.

We have been busy doing that!

Like the I-84 viaduct, the I-84/I-91 interchange was designed in the 1950s and built in the 1960s. It is one of the most congested in Connecticut and the second biggest bottleneck in New England, causing impacts to the I-84 Hartford Project area.

The interchange was configured to fit between downtown Hartford, the Connecticut River, and the railroad. Despite some modifications 30 years ago, the interchange still has undesirable features, such as narrow shoulders, left-hand ramps, and design speeds as low as 25 mph.

These features contribute to the congestion and higher-than-average crash rates. Also, the congestion is exacerbated by fewer lanes in the interchange area than the highways approaching it.

This I-84/I-91 Interchange Study is a preliminary assessment of possibilities. Six concepts, including a No-Build, are being assessed to improve the interchange. Any improvement should address:

1. Congestion relief
2. Operations and safety
3. Enhanced mobility for people and goods

"No matter what happens with the interchange study, plans to improve the I-84 corridor through Hartford will continue."

While the final analysis is not yet completed, pages two through five reveal an early comparison of concepts.

The team will soon publish findings to formally conclude the process. If funding is available, this could be further assessed and carried into the environmental (National Environmental Policy Act) evaluation phase.

And how will all this affect the I-84 Hartford Project? Regardless of the next steps for the interchange study, the structural condition and deficiencies of the I-84 viaduct means that the viaduct project must continue as planned. No matter what happens with the interchange study, plans to improve the current corridor through Hartford will continue.

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Stacking Up The Interchange Concepts: A Comparison of Objectives and Costs

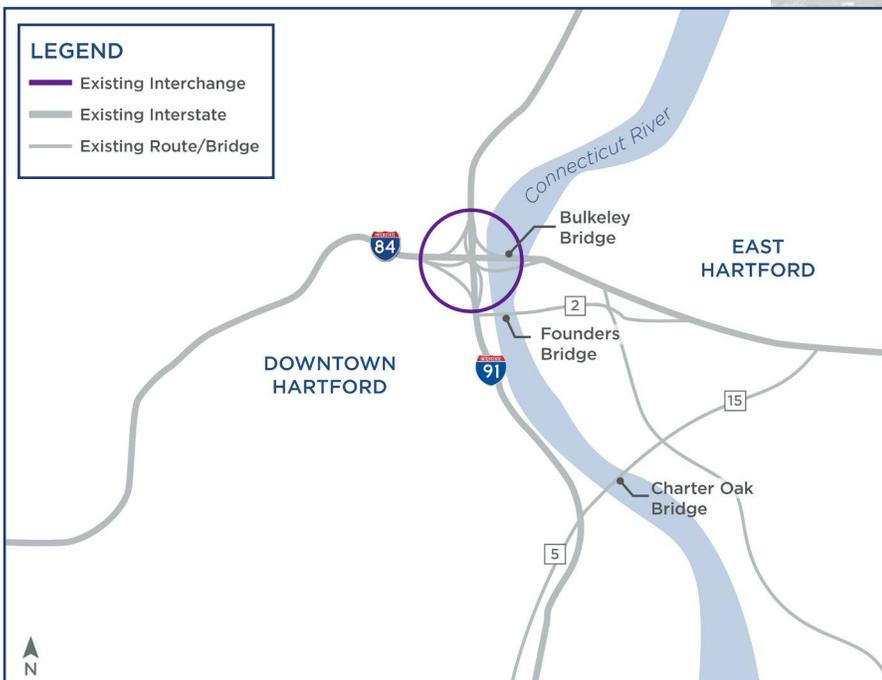
Just east of the I-84 Hartford Project is the I-84/I-91 interchange. As part of a separate study, the I-84 Hartford Project team is exploring the feasibility of improving this interchange. **The objectives of the study are: 1) congestion relief, 2) operations and safety, and 3) improved mobility.** Learn more about each concept below and see how it meets these objectives.

At this early stage of analysis, the focus is on whether any of these concepts are possible and practical. Environmental, property, and cultural impacts have not yet been examined in detail.

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*For more information, view materials, including a video, from the September 2018 PAC meeting:
<http://bit.ly/Sep18PAC>*

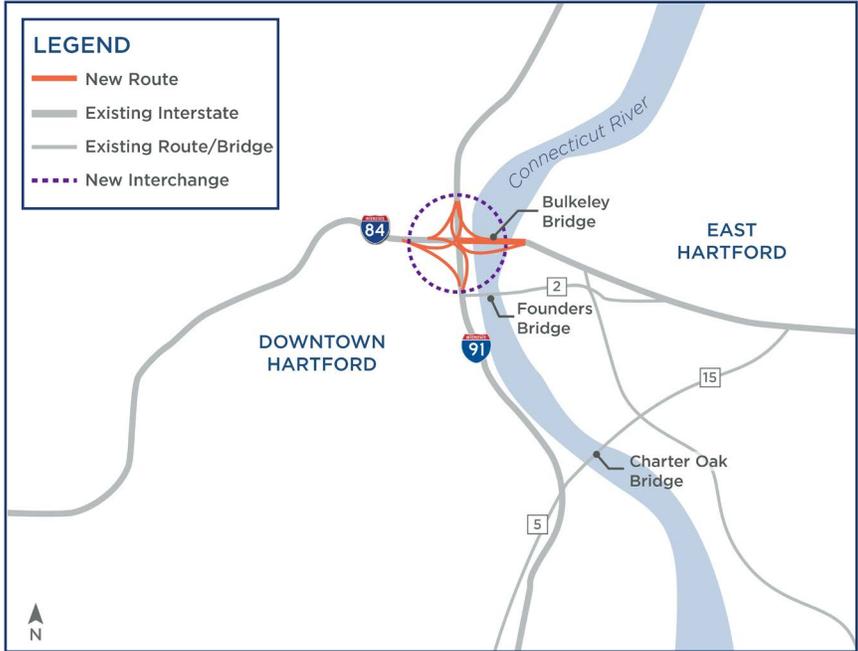
Concept 1: No-Build



The No-Build concept would simply continue regular maintenance on the existing interchange. The interchange would remain in its current location. This concept would not provide any congestion, operations and safety, or mobility benefits.

See next steps of the interchange study on page 5

Concept 2: Existing Corridor



Concept 2, the Existing Corridor, would modernize the interchange in its current location. As part of the modernization, the left-hand ramps would be rebuilt as right-hand ramps, requiring their own bridges adjacent to the Bulkeley Bridge. The Bulkeley Bridge would also be widened to provide additional capacity. This would be a challenge to accomplish as it is constrained by downtown Hartford and the Connecticut River.

There would be property impacts to make room for the larger interchange, as well as impacts to the historic character of the Bulkeley Bridge.

This concept would alleviate motor vehicle congestion and improve operations and safety. It would not provide any mobility benefits for pedestrians or bicyclists

Concept 3: Southern Corridor

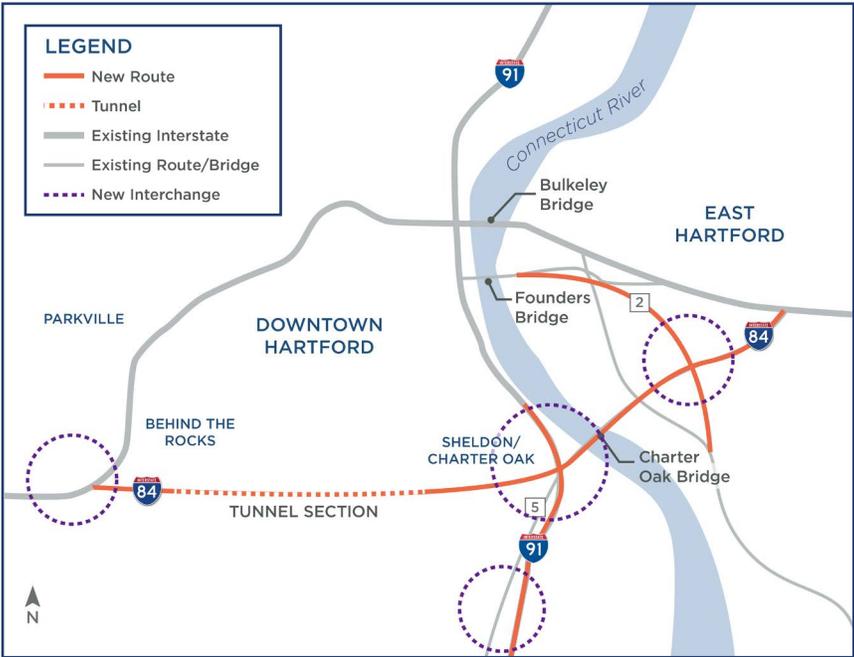
Concept 3, the Southern Corridor, would move I-84 and the I-84/I-91 interchange about a mile to the south. This would involve tunneling under the southern part of Hartford, with the beginning and end locations of the tunnel (called portals) in the Behind the Rocks and Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhoods.

A large interchange would be located east of the Sheldon/Charter Oak portal, near Coltsville National Park. I-84 would cross the Connecticut River on a widened Charter Oak Bridge, shifting Route 2 to the east, to where East Hartford’s Main Street is today.

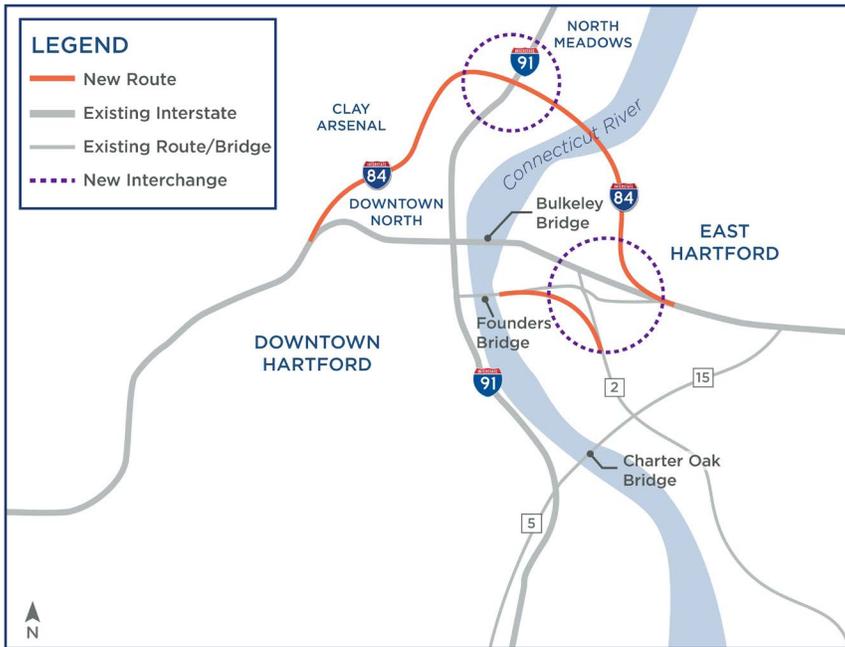
The old alignment of I-84 between Parkville and Roberts Street in East Hartford would continue to carry a considerable amount of traffic traveling to and from downtown Hartford. The roadway would either be converted to a wide multi-lane boulevard or remain a freeway.

Due to tunnel capacity limitations, this concept would have poor traffic operations and would not relieve congestion. Limited tunnel access would prohibit emergency responders from responding quickly to crashes. Vehicular crashes (of any scale) would worsen congestion, as the narrow tunnel shoulders prevent disabled vehicles from relocating completely out of the travel lanes.

This concept would partially address congestion, not address operations and safety, and partially address mobility.



Concept 4: Northern Corridor



Concept 4, the Northern Corridor, would shift a portion of I-84 and the I-84/I-91 Interchange about 3/4 of a mile to the north. The new route would align with the existing rail corridor. It would pass underneath the Main Street and Albany Avenue intersection in a tunnel and continue to the I-84/I-91 interchange in the North Meadows neighborhood. I-84 would then cross the Connecticut River on a new bridge and connect to the Governor Street ramps in East Hartford.

Since I-84 would not move too far, it would continue to serve existing travel patterns. The old I-84 alignment could be converted to an urban boulevard. With the I-84/I-91 interchange out of downtown Hartford, both I-91 and the railroad could be lowered and capped, improving riverfront access.

Like all concepts, there would be impacts to consider and mitigate for. To prevent the formation of a new barrier between Clay

Arsenal and Downtown North, this I-84 stretch would be underground. Building a new bridge across the river and its adjacent wetlands would require additional environmental analysis, permits, and mitigation.

The new bridge would relieve congestion as it would provide additional capacity across the river without creating a bottleneck elsewhere. From an operations and safety perspective, the interchanges would have good spacing and full shoulders. The Bulkeley Bridge would be restored to its historic state, able to carry CTfastrak across the river on exclusive lanes and reconnect the cores of Hartford and East Hartford for bicyclists and pedestrians.

This concept would address all congestion, operations and safety, and mobility deficiencies.

Concept 5: Eastern Corridor

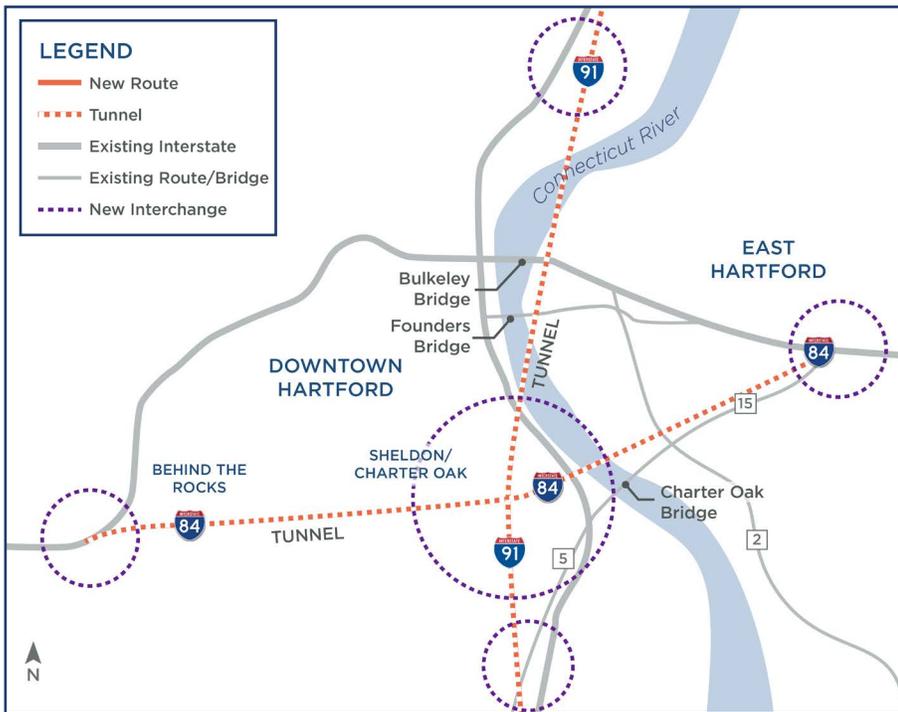
Concept 5, the Eastern Corridor, would move I-91 into East Hartford. I-91 would cross a widened Charter Oak Bridge into East Hartford, follow the existing Route 2 corridor, and then cross the river back into Hartford on a new bridge near Jennings Road.

The current I-91 corridor in downtown Hartford would be converted into a multi-lane boulevard or remain a freeway, as it would continue to carry a large volume of traffic. I-84 would remain where it is today, including crossing the Bulkeley Bridge. Volumes on the Bulkeley Bridge would increase somewhat due to the relocation of I-91 to East Hartford.

In East Hartford, a new interchange would provide full access between I-84, I-91, Route 2, and Route 15. However, impacts to East Hartford would be considerable. This concept would not improve congestion or operations and safety, and would partially address mobility.



Concept 6: Tunnel Corridor



Concept 6, the Tunnel Corridor, would put I-84 and I-91 in tunnels mostly bypassing Hartford and East Hartford. There would be an underground interchange where the two interstates meet, which would not offer connections to surface streets. Those traveling between I-84 or I-91 and Hartford would use one of the four portal interchanges where the highways go underground.

Like Concept 3, the shoulders in the tunnel would be narrow. It would be challenging for crashes to move completely out of travel lanes and for emergency responders to reach those sites.

The portal interchanges would be large and have high speeds. During current peak hours, two-thirds of the freeway traffic is starting in or destined for Hartford or East Hartford. This future traffic would not be served by the

tunnels. As a result, the roads replacing the freeways would have many lanes.

This concept would not provide any congestion, operations and safety, or mobility benefits.

Interchange Study Next Steps

1. Complete I-84/I-91 Interchange Study
2. Add to CRCOG Long-Range Transportation Plan (see sidebar)
3. Secure funding to initiate environmental evaluation (National Environmental Policy Act)

WHAT IS CRCOG'S LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN?

Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) regularly updates a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for its region, which consists of 38 municipalities in Central Connecticut.

The LRTP outlines a vision for the region's transportation system over the next 25 years. It identifies key goals, policies, priorities, and funding mechanisms to meet access and mobility needs.

All major, federally funded studies and projects, such as an I-84/I-91 Interchange environmental study, would need to be included in the LRTP.

Faces & Places of the Corridor

Welcome to Faces & Places of the Corridor, profiles of notable people and places within the I-84 study area.

Know Thy Neighbor in Clay Arsenal

With guest writer Kathleen Maldonado, we explore this local organization's push for community-driven change.



Kathleen Maldonado, left, connects with community members at a Know Thy Neighbor event in Clay Arsenal.

When built, the I-84 Viaduct separated Clay Arsenal from downtown and much of the city. At the same time white and middle class populations were fleeing from urban areas across the country. Shopping destinations and employment spread to suburban malls and office parks.

As a result of the distribution of resources away from the city, economic development steadily decreased through the 1990s. Among other factors, lack of local investment meant fewer job opportunities, and other challenges for businesses and residents in Hartford's neighborhoods.

Fast forward to 2012. Wanting to make a difference, Police Chief James Rovella introduced the mission of bringing together Hartford residents and stakeholders to produce positive, community-driven change.

The Chief, along with Eli Mercado and leaders of Hartford's Public Safety team, created Know Thy Neighbor. The organization's two branches serve the Frog Hollow and Clay Arsenal neighborhoods. This profile will focus on the mission within Clay Arsenal.

In the North End, Know Thy Neighbor canvasses the neighborhoods with surveys, speaks with residents, and asks probing questions. Common concerns include litter, drugs, and violence. Residents have

identified challenges related to food, school supplies, job placement assistance, and transportation. Each year, the leadership team determines priority initiatives.

Know Thy Neighbor has organized a community cleanup and family resource fair, fed 100 families, and hosted a youth summer block party. Partnering with the New Life Worship Center Church, the group assists with annual back-to-school events, turkey giveaways, and Christmas wish list delivery.

While serving basic needs is a critical mission, the group also strives to bring neighbors positivity and kindness during the holiday seasons. Many businesses and organizations support their efforts.

It has been 50 years since the highway's construction. As I-84 is being redesigned, residents of Hartford's northern neighborhoods are hoping for opportunities, development, and connections.

Consider their transportation needs. Based on the 2016 U.S. Census Community Survey Data, about 50% of neighborhood households do not have access to a motor vehicle. In addition, the area had an average annual household income of \$20,000.

Thus, many residents walk, bicycle, and take the bus. They travel to Downtown Hartford for jobs or transfers to workplaces outside the city. It is not uncommon for residents to work more than one job.

"Our neighbors are concerned about getting to work on time, which impacts their ability to keep their jobs and pay the bills," says volunteer Kathleen Maldonado. "Traffic management and efforts to reduce delays and congestion will be important."

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For more information about Clay Arsenal Know Thy Neighbor, please email Kathleen Maldonado at ktnclayarsenal@gmail.com or visit [facebook.com/knowthyneighbor/](https://www.facebook.com/knowthyneighbor/).