

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Monday, April 27, 2015, 12:00 PM

Location: 45 Church Street, Hartford

Subject: Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Working Group #3

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Presentation

Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, and Francisco Gomes, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., welcomed the participants to the 3rd Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Working Group Meeting.

M. Glass first provided an overview of the urban design challenges in the I-84 corridor. He noted that I-84 consumes considerable urban land and that the team is exploring ways to reduce the footprint of the highway in the potential alternatives under consideration. Tony Cherolis stated that much of the land around the highway is vacant land and could be better utilized. M. Glass responded that that Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is exploring concepts to remove the raised viaduct and improve the land around it.

M. Glass discussed the potential elevated and lowered highway options (Alternative 2 and 3a, 3b, 3c) and described the diagrams. Tim Ryan described the lowered alternatives and naming convention in more detail.

T. Cherolis noted that the streets that have I-84 ramps on them generally are subject to higher traffic volumes and speeds. T. Ryan agreed with T. Cherolis and stated that team is looking to create a balance by reduced the number of city streets impacted by the highway ramps. This can be done by reducing the number of interchanges and ramps in the corridor. Those roads that no longer have ramps can be made narrower and more pedestrian and bicyclist friendly. T. Cherolis stated that even though painted bicycle lanes have been added to Broad Street, some cyclists still ride on the sidewalk. T. Ryan responded that the team is looking at some alternatives that remove all ramps from Broad Street and Asylum Street.

Chris Brown commented that he will often try to avoid riding on Asylum Avenue in the Asylum Hill area because of topography and traffic. Nick Mandler questioned whether cyclists would ride this route more often if there were less traffic. C. Brown stated that cyclists might prefer a parallel connection through Asylum Hill on Myrtle Street. Sandy Fry stated that there is a hill on Myrtle that cyclists would have to climb as well.

M. Glass next discussed the tunnel alternatives (Alternatives 4a, 4b, and 4c). S. Fry asked about the potential entrances and exits to the tunnel. There was discussion of how to build the tunnel, how underpinning works, and whether it is possible to underpin buildings.

T. Cherolis voiced concerns about bringing the highway down to grade. His primary concern if the highway is lowered to grade is whether the air pollution and noise will be moved down to the ground / residential level. There was additional discussion about air quality and the impact of the highway on the surrounding residential buildings.

There were questions related to the traffic analyses and whether the team has looked at how motorists will reroute themselves once the ramps are removed. T. Ryan stated that, while it has not been completed yet, the local traffic will be assessed for each of the mainline and ramp alternatives. He noted that it will be feasible to build two interchanges with tunnel alternatives, one interchange on the west near the Sisson Avenue ramps and one interchange on the east near Church Street. This could tax the local roadwork, including Farmington Avenue and Capital Avenue. T. Ryan also stated that a number of the parking lots will be impacted.

T. Cherolis questioned whether the traffic analyses will account for the construction impacts and delay and what role transit can have on absorbing the traffic during construction. T. Ryan stated that all of these factors will be considered in the travel demand model. S. Fry suggested that the removal of parking will likely have the biggest impact on this area.

M. Glass discussed the three west options, near the Sisson Avenue ramps, for interchange reconstruction. S. Fry stated that she prefers the intersections (e.g. Capital Avenue) to be at-grade instead of going under the highway. She does not particularly like the third option on the West Options graphics.

M. Glass discussed renderings of Asylum Avenue, Sigourney Street, and Capital Avenue. There were questions regarding which alternatives are represented in the renderings. M. Glass responded that the renderings could work with any of the lowered alternatives. The Broad Street rendering would only be possible if the ramps are relocated.

Additional Discussion

T. Cherolis questioned why the group finds it undesirable to be under the highway. He acknowledged that it looks undesirable, but that is because the current design is bad. He cautioned against lowering the highway simply because the current design of an elevated highway is bad.

CTDOT recommended that the design of pedestrian and bicycle enhancements be made to accommodate an 8-year old girl, as well as an elderly person. The East Coast Greenway and its potential access will attract more than just the hard core users. K. Rattan noted that the block sizes on the graphics are really large, and she would like to see smaller blocks and a grid system to support bicycle and pedestrian use.

T. Cherolis reminded the participants about the success of the new urban skate / graffiti art park over I-84. He likes that the East Coast Greenway is considered in the graphics. K. Rattan requested that a separate East Coast Greenway facility be planned, parallel to this corridor. Others agreed and suggested that the Greenway connect to Pope Park. S. Fry likes the representation of the Capital Avenue / Russ Street intersection, as well as the local street network in the tunnel alternative (Alternative 4C). There was a suggestion to open up the Park Terrace cul-de-sac to the Park River.

There was a question about the coordination with the rail study. Brett Wallace discussed the high level Rail Alternatives Analysis, a broad-level, early planning study that PB is completing. He noted that the two corridors are highly intertwined, and the alternatives for rail will need to be looked at more closely as this study moved forward.

F. Gomes closed the formal portion of the meeting by asking the participants to visit the boards around the room and ask questions to the Project Team.