

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Saturday, May 2nd, 2015, 11 AM - 1

PM Location: Christ Church Cathedral Auditorium

Subject: Final Meeting during Open Planning Studio

1. Meeting Schedule and Attendance

The final meeting occurred on Saturday, May 2, 2015 from 11 AM to 1 PM. The meeting began with a 45-minute presentation on the findings during the course of the past week. The presentation was followed by a 45-minute open microphone question and answer period. After this question and answer period concluded, the open house resumed and attendees continued to engage and ask questions and provide feedback to the project engineers.

2. Presentation

Mike Morehouse and Rich Armstrong opened the meeting; they thanked everyone for attending and said they were excited at the outcomes and discussions during the course of the week. This was an important opportunity for communication and conversations.

M. Morehouse introduced what the Project Team learned this week. He noted that this process of communication and dialogue with the public did not exist 50 years ago and because of the strong community engagement, it's really helping to shape the way in which the I-84 Project is progressing. Social media has also given the project a lot of exposure. This project was highlighted on NPR, WPLR Radio, and R. Armstrong and Dave Stanke were also interviewed on the television show "Face the State". This interview was presented to the audience at the end of the presentation.

M. Morehouse presented the findings of what was heard during the Open Planning Studio. He said there was a lot of discussion about the tunnel, mobility through the corridor, bike and pedestrian issues, as well as air quality and noise factors.

Deborah Howes stated that over the course of the week she spent a lot of time looking at and talking about the different options.

M. Morehouse said that people were interested in enhancing urban design and improving connections throughout the city. Regarding the lowered highway options, attendees were interested in the potential changes to the corridor. Computer models really helped viewers envision the changes; it was viewed as a great tool to show what the corridor could look like. Air quality and noise was also a concern; these items will be heavily analyzed in the environmental report.

Many questions came up regarding the Alternative 3 options. Attendees had questions about construction and staging, as well as traffic flow during and after construction. This alternative also presented the opportunity for improved bike, pedestrian, and vehicular crossings.

3B had an aggressive alignment; this flattens out and smooths many curves and interchanges north of Asylum Avenue. This alignment also frees up land around the arterial roads while helping to establish

connections and access between the Central Business District, Downtown, and the new Ballpark. Many attendees saw the value of this option.

One attendee questioned what would happen to the Myrtle Street connection if that was cut off. M. Morehouse answered that they could certainly investigate the possibility of having a bike/pedestrian connection there. He noted that ramps on Asylum Avenue don't seem like a desirable option.

D. Howes commented that the Capitol Records/Mattress Factory building is probably a vulnerable property and that as of now, she has not heard any opposition to losing this property.

R. Armstrong emphasized that this process has enabled the CTDOT to reveal certain challenges involved with this project- finding the proper balance and identifying tradeoffs. The team has to look at all aspects of impacts, for example noise wall barriers could create an aesthetic negative impact while also having a positive impact on noise levels throughout the corridor.

Option 3C was described next. An attendee questioned whether the highway would be built directly on top of where it currently is. The answer was yes- this option would require diverted traffic patterns and would have lots of impacts, but this would avoid taking additional buildings.

Another audience member questioned how traffic will be maintained during construction? Tim Ryan replied that the team is looking at that now. The idea is to provide alternate routes and modes, busing, and possibly temporary rail and bus stations. There is also the possibility of gaining riders even after construction is completed.

M. Morehouse discussed Option 4C, the Tunnel. He stated that this option has received much attention and is still on the table. It will not have any interchanges in the middle and would require the taking of many properties. R. Armstrong said he had a lot of detailed questions about the tunnel and it brought out the most creativity and got people thinking. An audience member questioned how much cost would play into the decision making process. The attendee asked that if this option doubled the cost of the whole project, what other projects would be effected or unable to be built. R. Armstrong replied that this issue really resonated with people, and seeing the costs and impacts involved, many people converted to the lowered highway alternatives.

M. Morehouse said that now, in the alternatives analysis phase, cost is not a factor. The tunnel is twice the cost of the other options, so at some point this will be a factor. For now, cost is being kept in the background.

3. Discussion of new ideas that arose during the Open Design Studio:

M. Morehouse explained that many new ideas were heard during the course of the week. He emphasized his appreciation of these ideas and asked that the public continue to share any ideas they come up with to the project team as some of these will be developed in greater detail to see if they will work.

A slide show of new ideas was presented that included the following options:

- West Boulevard Extension to Hawthorne Street - This was Toni Gold's idea to provide a parallel east-west alternative to Capitol Avenue.
- West Boulevard Extension to Bushnell Park West - This was a parallel east-west route to Capitol Avenue from Parkville and the West End to downtown. This takes a lot of pressure off of local roads. This option also seeks to add redundancy north south and east west.
- Capitol Avenue connection to Park Street - The purpose here was to provide a more direct connection from Parkville to downtown. There are more options for change in the West End, not as many possibilities in the Asylum Hill neighborhood.
- Split diamond at Asylum Hill and Broad Street - This option looks to improve bike and pedestrian travel. Bike/pedestrians do not need to cross on both sides. The rail would be below grade.
- Split WB off ramps at Cogswell Street and Asylum Avenue - The goal here would be to disperse off ramp traffic in the eastern portion of the corridor.
- Flower Street Connection - This option looks at the possibility that Flower Street could be reopened, bicycles, pedestrians, and / or vehicles.
- High Line Path - The purpose of this is to enhance non-motorized travel throughout the corridor.
- I-84 Parkway - The purpose of this is to reconnect the street grid to improve non-motorized travel.

4. Questions and Answers Period:

M. Morehouse concluded by opening the up for questions and comments. These are described below:

- Question - What would happen to the existing rail platform? Answer – T. Ryan answered that Union Station is essentially a hub, there is a lot of opportunity for input to enhance pedestrian connections here and the team really hopes for input from the community.
- Question – What happens to CT**fastrak**? Answer – T. Ryan said that if the station was relocated, they could possibly also relocate the CT**fastrak** stop.
- Question – If option 4C is lowered, could you make a hybrid? Answer – T. Ryan replied that the design is limited by other conduits underground.