

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Wednesday, August 12, 2015, 12 - 8 PM

Location: Parkville Community & Senior Center

Subject: Open Planning Studio #3

1. Meeting Schedule and Attendance

The third Open Planning Studio occurred on Wednesday, August 12, 2015 from 12 to 8 PM. The meeting consisted of an open house where members of the public could obtain information and talk with project staff about the I-84 corridor and study process. There were information boards set up around the rooms and a computer station that allowed participants to see 3D simulation of the corridor with select alternatives. In addition, the project team gave a more formal presentation at 1, 3, and 6 PM. A group of seniors largely attended the 1 PM presentation. The 3 PM presentation targeted local business owners. The 6 PM presentation was given to the neighborhood revitalization zone (NRZ) members, who substituted this presentation for their regular monthly meeting.

Fifty-six (56) members of the public signed in at the meeting. Two Public Advisory Committee (PAC) members attended the meeting.

2. Boards

There were seven boards set up around perimeter of the room. They included:

1. I-84 Hartford Fast Facts (an infographic)
2. Program Overview (a flowchart of the overall project schedule)
3. Potential building impacts
4. Mainline alternatives: vertical alignment
5. Mainline alternatives: horizontal alignment
6. Western options
7. Western options (continued)

There were 12 smaller boards located on the center table that displayed traffic operations of the surrounding roads for the interchange options. Five boards that showed visualizations of select streets were also displayed on the center table.

3. Presentation

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone and introduced himself. He stated that the I-84 Hartford Project Team is conducting a considerable amount of community outreach for the I-84 Hartford Project. He stated that, in addition to the regularly scheduled Open Planning Studios, there are three public meetings scheduled in October 2015. R. Armstrong stated that this Studio will focus on many of the western options. He then turned the presentation over to Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

M. Morehouse provided an overview of the presentation. He discussed the project background and limits (from Flatbush Avenue to I-91 interchange). He stated that the elevated highway was constructed to go up and over the railroad in two locations.

He discussed the Purpose and Need of the project, which is to improve bridge deficiencies, safety, and operations, as well as to enhance mobility. He stated that the State has spent \$60 million on bridge maintenance since 2004, simply to maintain a state of good repair of the bridges. CTDOT expects to spend \$60 million more in the coming years. He discussed the factors that affect the operations of the corridor including the multiple interchanges, weave sections, and left hand ramps. He stated that the team is also looking at ways to enhance mobility. Finally, M. Morehouse provided more information on the Open Planning Studios, including their purpose and details.

Next, Dave Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation, discussed the alternatives and preliminary traffic analyses. He noted that he would cover the material in the presentation quickly, but that the materials presented are all available on the boards. In addition, engineers would be at the Open Planning Studio all day to discuss the details with members of the public.

D. Stahnke first discussed the potential vertical alignments of the mainline. He next provided an overview of the horizontal alignments and discussed how they differ from one another. He discussed the interchange options. He described the different arrangements of how the local roads can connect with various interchanges. He also discussed the Park Street crossing and how that can potentially be improved.

Tim Ryan, of TranSystems Corporation, described the traffic analyses that were done for the western options. He described the traffic analysis maps noting the red, yellow, and green colors that represent good, fair, and poor performing intersections. He highlighted that of all the alternatives, W3-2 performs the best for the mainline and the local road preliminary traffic analysis. One reason for this is the two parallel east-west local roadway through connections.

D. Stahnke next presented renderings of Asylum Avenue, Sigourney Street, Broad Street, and Capital Avenue, noting that the renderings could work with any of the lowered alternatives. He provided an update on the tunnel alternative, reiterating that only Alternative 4c will be further assessed in the traffic analysis. The team will not move forward with Alternatives 4a and 4b at this time because they will have significant property impacts. He told the group that the Sigourney Street interchange is not feasible as part of the tunnel alternative. Because of this, the tunnel alternative does not fare as well in the local road preliminary traffic analysis.

D. Stahnke discussed the cost differences between the four major alternatives. He closed the presentation by describing upcoming planning and outreach activities for the project.

1 PM Presentation Discussion:

There was a request to provide detailed information on each of the western options. T. Ryan responded by covering each option in detail, noting which ones performed the best in the preliminary traffic analysis.

One attendee commented that he thought the Sisson Avenue ramps were supposed to connect to a north-south highway. D. Stahnke stated that the ramps were originally designed to connect to another north-south highway, which was never built. Also, the extension of Route 291 from I-91 into West Hartford was also never built, mainly due to public opposition and significant environmental impact.

There was a question on how the tunnel would be constructed. D. Stahnke noted that the tunnel would be a cut and cover tunnel, rather than bored underground.

There was a question whether all of the options open up the same amount of developable land. T. Ryan answered that some options open up more land than others.

One attendee had specific concerns about the impacts to the Clay Arsenal neighborhood. T. Ryan agreed to discuss these concerns after the meeting.

3 PM Presentation Discussion:

An attendee asked whether roads outside the study limits can affect traffic operations on I-84. D. Stahnke stated that traffic from many roads outside of our study area, which cannot be controlled, affect operations on I-84. One example is the I-91 interchange.

Toni Gold asked about the schedule and how concrete it is. R. Armstrong stated that design and construction are the most likely of all the stages to vary from the dates shown. He stated that the team is working to expedite the environmental planning process so that it is completed by 2017.

There was discussion about the Park Street underpass to I-84. It was noted that the current elevation of Park Street is a fixed condition due to the location of residential and business properties. The embankment that carries I-84 is a barrier to getting in and out of the community. Members at the meeting stated that they are interested in looking at options to improve this area, but would like to have some detail provided. T. Ryan stated that the team has looked at possibilities to put I-84 under Park Street. He stated that it could be feasible, but there would be engineering challenges because of the Park River Conduit and the Park River. He stated that such benefits include views to Pope Park and better connections to Frog Hollow. David Morin stated that lowering I-84 here would allow the median on Park Street to be more noticeable, making conditions safer. Currently, this area sees a high number of crashes.

An attendee asked if the project team knows what is underground in this area. T. Ryan stated that the team has not looked at this yet. They generally have only looked at the geometry, but acknowledged that subsurface investigation will need to be performed once the alternatives are narrowed down a bit.

6 PM Presentation Discussion:

An attendee asked if the team is considering ramps to/from Forest Street or Hawthorne Street. T. Ryan answered that ramps have not been considered at these streets.

Another person asked if the Sisson Avenue ramps will be maintained in Option W7. T. Ryan answered that the access points would remain the same, but the left hand exits and entrances on I-84 would be removed in this option.

D. Morin asked how the western local road travelers would get on I-84 eastbound in many of the options. T. Ryan answered that in many of the options, travelers from Parkville will need to get on I-84 eastbound at Sigourney Street. There was some discussion on entering I-84 eastbound at Sigourney Street. Someone questioned how commuters that already use the Sigourney Street ramps will be affected by the Parkville traffic now using these ramps. T. Ryan stated that the model factors in all traffic going to the ramps, from all directions, at the peak times.

An attendee questioned whether the model factors in CT *fastrak*. T. Ryan answered that it does. Another attendee questioned whether the model factors in traffic from the stadium. T. Ryan stated that we have reviewed the traffic and model results for the stadium (performed by another consultant), and we may also perform our own assessment on this area once alternatives get narrowed down. D. Stahnke stated that the traffic is projected for year 2040.

An attendee questioned whether a bypass has been considered. T. Ryan stated that this was reviewed and modeled extensively. It is not feasible because a bypass would not take enough traffic off the road; Sixty percent of the traffic gets on or off the highway in the study area. In addition, the bridges still need to be replaced because they have reached the end of their useful life.

An attendee asked what the current design life of new bridges is. T. Ryan answered that it is approximately 75 years.

There was a question on the impacts of Alternative W3-2 on Parkville. T. Ryan described the phases of the schedule noting that local and community impacts are going to be assessed in detail in the coming phase of work. R. Armstrong suggested that attendees let the project team know which factors are most important to them.

An attendee cited that he is concerned that I-84 divides neighborhoods. Connections between neighborhoods need to be reestablished.

R. Armstrong stated that there are a lot of strategies that we can use to better connect neighborhoods. If we can lower the highway, we can reconstruct the local street network to serve the local population better with wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, fewer vehicular lanes (if appropriate), etc.

There was a question on each of the alternatives' impacts to impervious surfaces. D. Stahnke stated that both the elevated and lowered highway could reduce impervious surface area because the footprint of the highway will likely be narrower when completed.

There was question on where stormwater goes on the current highway. D. Stahnke stated it is collected into pipe and transported away.

D. Morin stated that the *elimination* of the Sisson Avenue ramps is not really an elimination. It is a relocation of the ramps further east. There was discussion and interest in learning how a potential relocation would affect Parkville travel times with relocated ramps onto I-84.

There was a request to consider safety and eliminate the traffic weaves. R. Armstrong said that the weaves are a safety concern, and the team is looking to improve, and in some cases eliminate, these weaves. In addition, the team also is looking to eliminate some of the ramps in the eastern portion of the project area.

There were concerns with Forest Street. Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, discussed neighborhood connections. Particularly, he discussed what kind of land and economic opportunities could be available in each of the options.

An attendee asked if the costs include maintenance costs. R. Armstrong said they did not. He also stated that the lowered highway would likely have the lowest maintenance cost.

There was a question about the cap on Asylum Avenue, and whether this is a tunnel. D. Stahnke answered that this is not necessarily a tunnel. He said the decking is not currently factored into the cost. Whether it is funded as part of the project may depend on whether the space is publicly or privately used.

Someone questioned when the team would have a reasonable range of alternatives. D. Stahnke reviewed the schedule and stated that we can expect this within the next year.

Someone questioned how viable a new viaduct is. T. Ryan stated this it is still an option (Alternative 2), and it has not been eliminated.

D. Morin thanked the project team for coming out and stated that they would be invited back soon.

4. **Written Comments Received at the Open Planning Studio**

- I don't want the Sisson Avenue exit / entrance closed.
- Advertise on variable message signs.
- Walk signals shouldn't be by the highway. That should be taken out. It is too dangerous for the people crossing over. Maybe, have a bridge over the highway for the people (optional). Also, a city bus should cross through for the disabled and handicapped.
- Question on signs on the highways, to bring people travelling to or from other towns. We have many restaurants (included Burger King, Wendy's). We have many businesses of arts, movies (cinema), library, senior center, **CTfastrak** stops (2). Leaders inform that we have the best organized community that meets very often and have concerts and activities.
- Question: Who are the project team members and the respective skills? Answer: The project team has civil engineers (highway engineers, structural engineers, and traffic engineers), environmental planners, transportation planners, urban designers / landscape architects, and public outreach specialists.