



## **REPORT OF MEETING**

**Date and Time: Thursday, February 25, 2016, 10:30 AM - 12 PM**

**Location: The Lyceum, 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford**

**Subject: Tunnel Discussion**

### **1. Meeting Schedule and Attendance**

The meeting took place on Thursday, February 25, 2016 from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM. The meeting consisted of a presentation on the I-84 Hartford Project with specific attention to tunneled highway alternatives. It was followed by a discussion and question and answer period.

Five members of the public and 18 members of the project team attended the discussion.

### **2. Presentation**

Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI), welcomed everyone and introduced himself. He provided background on the I-84 Hartford Project and project updates. He explained the three primary alignments of the tunnel, notably Alternatives 4A, B, and C.

M. Morehouse explained that the project team has spent considerably more time exploring the tunnel than any other alternative. He said that the project team found that the tunnel does not address congestion as well as some of the other alternatives do. In addition, he stated that additional congestion can increase airborne pollutants. From an urban design perspective, he explained that the tunnel, as well as many of the lowered highway alternatives, have opportunities to free up considerable land for development and other uses.

He then introduced and explained the capped highway alternative, which the project team developed in response to PAC and community feedback. The tunneled highway (Alternative 4C) would cost roughly \$2 million per linear foot, whereas the capped highway would cost \$400,000 per linear foot, or 20% of the cost of the tunnel. He explained that there are three options for building the cap. Option 1 would construct a cap between Asylum and Broad Streets at a cost of \$325-400 million and extending a little less than 1000 feet. Option 2 would extend the cap west as far as the Park River Conduit, a total length of 1,800 feet and costing \$600-750 million. Option 3 would extend the cap as far west as Sigourney Street, requiring the relocation of part of the Park River Conduit and impacting some properties along Capitol Avenue.

### **3. Discussion Period**

One person asked how significantly the cap would impact the Park River Conduit. M. Morehouse said that the full cap extending to Sigourney Street would require relocating the conduit.

An audience member asked if the conduit could be lowered in areas where it would otherwise be impacted by the tunnel or cap. David Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), said

lowering the top slab of the conduit would reduce the flow capacity, which is not feasible. He explained that the conduit is built to manage a 500-year storm.

One individual recalled that the project team had discussed the tunnel's total cost at the November 2015 PAC meeting. They asked if a decision has been made on this alternative. Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), said no final decision has been made on the tunnel alternative, but it would be extremely expensive to build. In fact, the funding of any of the alternatives will be a challenge, given all the state-wide needs. The Governor's Transportation Finance Panel is currently investigating ways to finance some of these unmet needs.

Another person asked if it was possible to avoid impacting the Park River Conduit. Tim Ryan, of TSC, responded affirmatively, saying that the lowered highway avoided impacting the conduit.

An audience member said it's important to have an off-street bicycle trail. More people would utilize such a facility if it were off-street, and that it would be a positive asset to the city. M. Morehouse said that the project has an active bicycle, pedestrian, and transit committee. He shared graphics of a potential East Coast Greenway routing and a connected bicycle network.

Another person said that Broad Street is a very dangerous bicycle lane, crossing travel lanes twice. This person said that this corridor has too many distractions. D. Stahnke acknowledged the challenges of bicycling on Broad Street and noted many of the potential alternatives, especially the lowered alternatives, provide opportunities for Broad Street to become much more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. He added that the passage of Statewide Bicycle Laws in 2015 allow for two-way protected bike lanes, which are being discussed on Sigourney as part of another project.

There was an inquiry about what the time savings could be in closing down the highway completely during construction. T. Ryan said closing the highway could have a significant effect on the construction duration. He said this construction option required further investigation before we exactly how time it would save.

One person asked what the difference was between the tunneled option and a capped highway. D. Stahnke said that a tunnel would cost \$2 million per linear foot, whereas the capped highway would cost about \$400,000 per linear foot, or 20% of the tunnel. T. Ryan said the project team still had a lot to learn about both alternatives. He said many issues arise during construction, and that the soil in the area could make construction difficult.

There was a comment expressing desire to hear more about the capped highway in April. R. Armstrong agreed, but said the project team must meet with representatives of the City of Hartford.

An audience member understood that the cap would require lowering the profile of the highway. They asked if the project team would consider lowering the profile to that extent without constructing the cap, in order to further hide the highway. T. Ryan said the project team would consider this. He explained that lowering the profile of the capped highway was necessary to minimize the exposed side walls supporting the cap. Without a lowered profile, he said, the walls of the cap could stand as high as 25 feet above grade. He cautioned that the profile cannot be lowered so far, however, as to impact necessary weaving lengths between the Sigourney Street ramps and the eastern interchange ramps.

One person asked whether a temporary bike route through Hartford will be considered while the project is constructed. T. Ryan said the project team will investigate mass transit and bike route enhancements in an effort to reduce demand on the highway during construction.