

Final Meeting Summary

I-84 Hartford Project Public Scoping

January 21, 2015, 3:00 to 7:30 PM
Hartford Public Library, Hartford, CT

Project Overview

I-84 through Hartford is the busiest section of highway in the state of Connecticut, carrying more than 175,000 vehicles daily (more than three times its original design capacity). The majority of this 50-year-old highway was built on elevated structures, viaducts, which are reaching the end of their useful life and must be replaced.

The I-84 Hartford Project, sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) in collaboration with a team of consultants (Project Team), will assess the needs and condition of the highway between the Flatbush Avenue ramps and the I-91 interchange, develop alternative solutions, and advance a program of improvements throughout the corridor.

The I-84 Hartford Project seeks to examine a variety of options for reconstructing this section of I-84 and/or modifying the design to create a long-term solution which will be embraced by its many stakeholders.

In order to develop a comprehensive transportation solution that best serves the needs of area residents, businesses and travelers, CTDOT has developed a robust public involvement plan to convey information and solicit input. Participation by those who live, work, and travel in and around the I-84 corridor will help ensure that the project addresses these needs while producing a workable and cost-effective solution.

Public Scoping Meeting Summary

A public scoping meeting was held on January 21, 2015, from 3:00 to 7:30 PM, at the Hartford Public Library, located at 500 Main Street, Hartford, CT. Attendance included 109 members of the public, 1 elected official representative, 3 press representatives, and 36 members of the Project Team.

The meeting was advertised in the following publications:

- *Hartford Courant* newspaper
 - Legal ad on December 18, 2014, January 6, 2015, and January 20, 2015
 - Display ad on January 18, 2015
- *La Voz* newspaper on December 18, 2014, January 8, 2015, and January 15, 2015
- State of Connecticut's Council on Environmental Quality Environmental Monitor on December 16, 2014, January 6, 2015, and January 20, 2015.

In addition, a press release was issued by CTDOT on January 16, 2015.

The public meeting venue met ADA compliance regulations and was conveniently located in the city, easily assessable by bus, rail, automobile and pedestrian routes. An American Sign Language interpreter and Spanish translator were available during the duration of the meeting. Two stenographers staffed the meeting, one recorded private public comments and the other recorded the presentation and public comments.

At registration, attendees were asked to sign in and were given an agenda, environmental fact sheet, I-84 Hartford Project newsletter (Issue 5, Fall 2014) and a business card. Project Team members verbally explained the agenda, as well as the various ways to comment.

The meeting began as an Open House, where 20 informational boards were displayed around the room, each staffed by a Project Team member. The public was encouraged to view the boards and ask the Project Team any questions that they may have. Informational boards included:

- Large Display Map of the Area
- Welcome
- What is the Purpose of Today's Meeting?
- About the I-84 Hartford Project
- Why is the Project Needed?
- Bridge Structural Deficiencies
- Traffic and Safety Deficiencies
- Key Corridor Features
- Alternative 1: No Build
- Alternative 2: Elevated Highway
- Alternative 3: Lowered Highway
- Alternative 4: Tunneled Highway
- Preliminary Alternative Profiles
- Where Do We Go From Here?
- What is the Environmental Process?
- What are Environmental Resources?
- Environmental Constraints
- Scoping – NEPA's First Step
- Many Ways to Comment
- Corridor Map

A 3-D video rendering of a flyover of the existing project corridor was projected on a large screen during the Open House portion of the meeting. In addition, during the Open House, several copies of the Needs and Deficiencies Report were available for review and handouts of the Purpose and Need Statement and alternatives boards were distributed.

At 5:30 PM, attendees were asked to be seated for a presentation led by the Project Team. The presentation gave a detailed overview of the project, purpose and need, alternative analysis process, environmental process and public participation opportunities.

Project Introduction

Presenter: Rich Armstrong, CTDOT

The purpose of this meeting was to give a brief overview of the I-84 Hartford Project and obtain input from the public.

Rich Armstrong, CTDOT, opened by thanking everyone for taking time to attend this important meeting and providing an agenda of topics that would be covered during the presentation. He introduced the topic of “scoping” and presented key scoping milestones for the project. He gave a brief history of the I-84 corridor and described previous studies of the study area. He identified the study area to be from the Flatbush Avenue ramps to I-91. The project corridor extends from Hamilton Street to I-91.

So far, the Project Team has completed identifying the needs and deficiencies, data collection, and analysis and reporting. Currently the project is in the process of alternative development and environmental review. Once a preferred alternative and funding has been identified, the project will proceed into design and construction phases.

Purpose & Need

Presenter: Michael Morehouse, FHI

Michael Morehouse, FHI, continued the presentation by identifying why the project is needed. The I-84 Hartford Project is intended to solve bridge structure, traffic and safety, and mobility deficiencies within the project corridor.

The project’s goals and objectives include:

- Ensure better integration of the interstate with the urban environment
- Maximize public investment in corridor
- Ensure long-term serviceability of corridor

Alternative Analysis Process

Presenter: David Stahnke, TranSystems

The presentation was turned over to David Stahnke, TranSystems, to discuss the alternative analysis process. He walked through the key corridor features and constraints. He emphasized the fact that the preliminary proposed alternatives are subject to refinement, will include sub-options, and will consider related studies and projects.

Alternative 1: No Build

- Is not a “Do Nothing” scenario
- Major rehabilitation of bridges
- No changes in width, alignment, geometry, operational improvements or to local streets
- Baseline alternative, required by NEPA and CEPA
- Estimated cost \$1.9 - 2.3 billion

Alternative 2: Elevated Highway

- Existing railroad alignment and busway
- I-84 elevated from Sigourney to High Street
- Wider shoulders
- Increased vertical clearance
- Fewer interchanges
- Reduced width of mainline
- Estimated cost \$4.3 – 5.4 billion

Alternative 3: Lowered Highway

- Railroad and busway relocated
 - I-84 at ground level or below grade from Park to Trumbull Street
 - Wider shoulders
 - Fewer interchanges
 - Reduced width of mainline
 - Estimated cost \$3.8 - 4.6 billion
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Alternative 4: Tunneled Highway

- Relocated railroad and busway, north
- I-84 in tunnel from Myrtle to Laurel Street
- Bridges over railroad for all local street crossings
- Fewer interchanges
- Reduced width of mainline
- Estimated cost \$8.3 – 10.4 billion

A bypass alternative was eliminated during evaluation due to significant environmental impact and minimal congestion relief.

Overview of Environmental Resources

Presenter: Christine Tiernan, AECOM

Christine Tiernan, AECOM, discussed the alternatives screening process, as well as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) processes. She reviewed the built and natural environmental resources that may affect the I-84 Hartford Project alternatives. A map of key constraints identified the many resources within the study area that must be investigated further as part of the environmental review process, such as historic buildings, environmental justice communities, and water resources.

Your Role

Presenter: Christine Tiernan, AECOM

Ms. Tiernan described the many ways available for the public to comment, both at the meeting and afterwards, throughout the scoping period. Ground rules for providing oral comments immediately following the presentation were provided.

Following the presentation, members of the public were invited to provide oral comments on the project and the proposed alternatives for improvement. A total of six (6) members of the public spoke before the audience and provided comments and nine (9) provided private comments to the stenographer. A copy of the transcript of the presentation along with the comments of members of the public, and another transcript of the nine (9) members of the public who provided comments privately to the stenographer, are included as Appendices to this meeting summary.

In addition, attendees were directed to comment cards which they could fill out and return at the meeting, or send via USPS. Attendees were also informed that comments can be submitted via the Contact Us page on the project website (www.I84Hartford.com), as cited in outreach materials.

After the conclusion of the presentation and public comment, Project Team members remained available to answer additional questions until the meeting closed at 7:30 PM.

For comments to be considered as part of the scoping process, they must be submitted and/or postmarked on or before February 20, 2015. All comments will be weighed equally no matter what format they were provided. Once all comments have been received and evaluated, a synthesis of the comments received will be included in the Scoping Summary Report, which will help provide direction for further study and analysis.