



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Tuesday, June 14, 2016, 6:00 PM

Location: Samuel V. Arroyo Center, 30 Pope Park Drive, Hartford

Subject: Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit Working Group #7

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
Tony Cherolis		acherolis@gmail.com
Chris Brown		interstatement@gmail.com
Jared Chase		jared.l.chase@gmail.com
Kevin McKernon		kevin.mckernon@gmail.com
Daniel Haim		outernetd@aol.com
Charmaine Craig		treeladycharmaine@gmail.com
Mary Pelletier		marype@parkwatershed.org
Emily Hultquist	CRCOG	ehultquist@crcog.org
Rich Armstrong	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	richard.Armstrong@ct.gov
Randal Davis	CTDOT	randal.davis@ct.gov
Tim Ryan	TranSystems Corporation (TSC)	
Mike Morehouse	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI)	mmorehouse@fhiplan.com
Michael Coulom	FHI	mcoulom@fhiplan.com
Mitch Glass	Goody Clancy	mitch.glass@goodyclancy.com

1. Meeting Location

The meeting was held in the community room of the Samuel V. Arroyo Center in Pope Park, 30 Pope Park Drive, Hartford.

2. Presentation / Discussion

Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, thanked the group and new members for attending. He said that this session of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Working Group would touch on many topics addressed by the Urban Design Working Group. He said that the goal of this working group session was to hear feedback and comments from those in attendance.

M. Glass said that public and private investments presented opportunities to reconnect the city and create strong streets. He explained that the presentation would address the capped section of highway between Asylum and Broad Streets, the existing rail viaduct over Asylum Street, the elevated greenway, and the character of local streets.

M. Glass next presented a series of graphics outlining existing conditions as opposed to the lowered highway alternative and public improvements. One audience member asked what would happen to the Capitol Avenue ramp for those who worked at the State Capitol. M. Glass said that the extensive existing highway infrastructure in the capitol area would be replaced by a consolidated ramp system that more positively contributes to the life and vitality of the city.

M. Glass said that CT *fastrak* could be lowered in a tunnel below the highway to reconnect to the local road network at the western edge of Bushnell Park. Responding to a question from the audience, Tim Ryan, of TranSystems, said that it may be possible to maintain CT *fastrak*'s alignment parallel to the railroad in order to terminate at the location of a possible Union Station rail annex, but that the area between the highway and Aetna campus would be very constrained.

M. Glass said that the lowered highway alternative would include the construction of a new rail annex and head house allowing access to the underground rail platforms in Asylum Hill. He explained that the new rail facility would be necessary because of the railroad's realignment to the north and west of I-84.

Looking at the area from a broader perspective, M. Glass said that a cap, or cover, over the highway between Asylum and Broad Streets would be a significant public improvement to enhance the surrounding streets, obscure the sight and noise of the highway, and facilitate private investment.

M. Glass explained the possible multi-use elevated greenway in detail. He said that this greenway would serve as a linear park offering north, south, east and westerly connections for cyclists, pedestrians, and recreation. Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, added that this facility should constitute a portion of the East Coast Greenway, a multi-use trail that passes through cities on the eastern seaboard.

Turning to private investment opportunities, M. Glass said that the project presented many possibilities for mixed-use development, transit oriented development (TOD), and new public space. He emphasized that the State and the project team would not be responsible for creating private development, but that the design of the lowered highway alternative could facilitate space and conditions for new private sector investment. He said that the project team envisioned buildings fronting both sides of Asylum Street and one side of Broad Street while crossing over the highway. He said that there would be new opportunities for park-front buildings inclusive of residential property, office space, restaurants and / or retail. He said that the intention of the space around the Asylum / Broad Streets cap would be one of a TOD area.

Tony Cherolis said that taxable property, more residents, and businesses would be preferable to added parkland. M. Glass agreed and said that new open space would be located over the highway cap between Asylum and Broad and could be important as a potential amenity to catalyze private development on adjacent or nearby parcels.

There was a question about the potential of maintaining the railroad in its current alignment. T. Ryan said that the elevated highway (Alternative 2) would maintain the railroad in its current alignment. This Alternative performs poorly from a traffic perspective due to the limited interchange possibilities.

Mary Pelletier commented that Hartford parkland has tremendous value and that there is an ongoing movement to connect the parks within the city. She questioned access to the park space over the cap because it is surrounded by private development. She expressed concern about the proposed Bushnell Park West boulevard and its impacts on a tranquil section of Bushnell Park. She suggested that removing the rail viaduct and building a new boulevard would expose this section of park to the Legislative Office Building (LOB) and new

development. T. Cherolis said that development is very desirable along Central Park in New York City.

A member of the public said that Bushnell Park is historic, and that the proposed ramp configuration would deposit vehicles directly into the most peaceful portion of the park. She suggested the design team come up with a more imaginative way to avoid impacting the park. Another attendee suggested maintaining the existing rail viaduct and historic trestle over Asylum Street and adapting it into a High Line-like park and bicycle trail. M. Glass said that no decision has yet been made regarding the rail viaduct. He said that the proposed Bushnell Park West boulevard would be to the west of the existing viaduct, meaning the viaduct would not necessarily be impacted. M. Glass answered that the boulevard is envisioned as a facility for people as well as vehicles, inclusive of trees and a median in order to provide access to communities on either side of the park.

M. Glass showed a series of graphics depicting potential building impacts and public improvements. He said that the ArtSpace building would be preserved, whereas the Capitol View Apartments and some properties along Spring Street would be impacted by the lowered highway alternative.

M. Glass transitioned his presentation to the possible elevated greenway. He presented a series of renderings of Flower Street under the proposed lowered highway alternative inclusive of an elevated greenway. He said that the greenway would undulate over and adjacent to the highway. He noted that a barrier below the greenway would act as a visual and noise screen from surrounding neighborhoods. He said that this barrier could be landscaped and made visually attractive.

T. Cherolis asked why the greenway was elevated. M. Glass said that there is an at-grade option as well. He cautioned, however, that the at-grade option does not present the same connectivity opportunities as the elevated option, like a connection over the highway at Flower Street. T. Cherolis said that the at-grade option may be beneficial because it is not possible to predict what connections may be necessary or possible in the future, and that it may be more difficult to add connections to an elevated facility.

An attendee suggested that the elevated greenway was a potential expense that could get value-engineered out of the project. She suggested keeping the trail off of an expensive structure to avoid being removed from the project at a later date. T. Cherolis added that an elevated structure would be more difficult to maintain during the winter.

T. Ryan advised that an at-grade facility would be tightly constrained between CT *fastrak*, the highway, and adjacent development. He asked the group if they saw value in the connections at Broad and Sigourney Streets, because it would be difficult to make these connections to an at-grade greenway, because the connecting ramps would have to be very long. T. Cherolis said that the connection to Broad Street would not be as necessary because that is a very inhospitable road for cyclists and pedestrians.

A member from the public said that the area could use less parking. Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., said that the project would impact some 5,000 parking spaces. T. Cherolis said that Chicago built lots of underground parking below capped portions of one of its highways. M. Glass said this would not be possible in the I-84 Hartford project area because

the proposed cap would sit directly above the highway. He said that underground parking could be possible as part of adjacent private development, however.

Randal Davis, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), asked for further clarification on the nature of Broad Street under the proposed lowered highway alternative. T. Ryan said that the removal of the highway ramp at Broad Street would make it a much improved north-south cyclist and pedestrian route.

An attendee stated that she had concerns that the traffic on the new Bushnell Park West Road will be too heavy. Nick Mandler, of TSC, stated that the road is projected to operate at an acceptable level of service and noted that the reconfigured ramps at Sisson Avenue will relieve some of the traffic in the eastern portion of the corridor. This is because I-84 eastbound traffic destined for Capitol Avenue will now also have the Laurel Street off-ramp as a convenient option. He said that the proposed highway created multiple redundancies in both the mainline and local road networks.

A member from the public asked if the project team had compared commuter travel paths to local resident travel paths. M. Morehouse said that the traffic demand model accounts for more than just commuter traffic. R. Armstrong said that many of the streets adjacent to the highway will be constructed as complete streets with enhanced bicycle and pedestrian amenities. He said that Broad Street would be vastly improved and that Capitol Avenue would be maintained as an important bicycle corridor. He said that the currently proposed Sigourney Street cycle track would be preserved or reconfigured.

An attendee said that many of those from the outer ring suburbs are unable to get Downtown in the evenings because of traffic. M. Morehouse said that the best cities have strong road networks to disperse automobile traffic, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. He said that the project team aims to add new links to the existing network and create redundancy.

A member from the public questioned the proposed exit at Laurel Street and potential delays. The person said that motorists should be able to easily exit the highway into the local road network. T. Cherolis said that this would be poor for cyclists and pedestrians. He said that motorists need visual signals that they are entering a different environment and need to behave differently.

Tim Courtney (no mention of his employer unless he's representing the company) said that he had an idea for a roundabout in the area that included bypasses to more quickly exit and enter the highway. M. Morehouse said that N. Mandler is considering bypasses, but is wary of multilane roundabouts because of their impacts on bicycle and pedestrian conditions.

T. Cherolis asked if it would be possible to create a new connection from Park Terrace through an existing parking lot to meet the proposed Laurel Street ramps. N. Mandler said that the project team had examined this link, but found that it would impact a portion of Pope Park.

C. Brown asked if the project team had investigated traffic modeling under a reduced Aetna presence. M. Morehouse said that the project team aims to encourage Aetna to stay in Hartford. R. Armstrong said that the existing Aetna property would likely be reused by another entity in the event of a reduced Aetna presence.

M. Morehouse transitioned the conversation to a discussion of complete streets. He said that reconfiguring the Sisson Avenue ramps would allow for the creation of a new local complete street connection between West Boulevard and Hawthorne Street, as well as new options for exiting the highway and accessing the West End or Parkville. Addressing the bicycle and pedestrian network, M. Morehouse said that nearly all roads adjacent to the highway would be reconstructed to include bicycle facilities, whether buffered, cycle tracks, or off-road paths. He said that the type of facility constructed would be context sensitive to each road and segment. Detailing the proposed West Boulevard extension to Hawthorne Street, he said that the new road would be four lanes with a buffered bike lane, median, and trees.

M. Morehouse asked the group for their opinions on the best way to protect cyclists at intersections. He said that the project team is considering bike boxes, slip roads, staged crossings, and bike-actuated buttons. T. Courtney said that wide sidewalks should be built, and proposed constructing bike lanes at an elevation one brick above that of the road network. Another attendee disagreed and questioned if parents would be comfortable letting their children cycle to school via an on-road bicycle lane. M. Morehouse said that the project team aims to create a network that accommodates all users regardless of age or ability.

T. Cherolis asked if the unnamed park behind Hartford Public High School would be developable and accessible from the proposed West Boulevard extension. He asked if driveways could be built on this proposed road. M. Morehouse said that the unused park land would be developable and that driveways could be constructed.

3. Mapping Exercise

M. Morehouse referred the group to large printed graphics of the proposed West Boulevard extension and surrounding area. He asked the group to consider curb extensions, on street parking, and residential development opportunities. Others mentioned the group should also consider parking lane buffers, parking protected bike lanes, traffic calming, speed tables, and midblock crossings.

A member from the public cautioned adding on street parking, which would reduce efficiency. M. Morehouse said that the project aims to balance efficient automobile traffic with alternative travel modes. He said that although the project team does not want to create gridlock on local roads, roads that are widened will be done so sensitively.

T. Cherolis asked if bumpouts might be better than existing bus stop configurations. He also suggested adding them and midblock crossings to slow traffic and improve pedestrian safety. R. Armstrong asked if the discussed topics complied with new City design codes. C. Brown said that the ongoing Capitol Avenue streetscape project includes bumpouts.

T. Cherolis commented that the City does not have an extensive budget for maintaining bike lanes. He cautioned adding protected bollards as opposed to cheaper alternatives, like paint. R. Armstrong concluded that the project team must design facilities that the City can maintain. T. Cherolis said that a bike lane wider than five feet would be preferable in order to allow a door zone buffer. M. Morehouse added that this space could double as snow storage in winter.