



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Tuesday, June 14, 2016, 12:30 PM**

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

**Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #12**

### 1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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## 2. Welcome & Meeting Purpose

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 12<sup>th</sup> PAC meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. He provided an overview of the Open Planning Studio activities, stating that the day would follow with working group meetings, and that activities on Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> would be conducted entirely in Spanish. He introduced new Public Advisory Committee (PAC) members Roy Zartarian, Mayor of the Town of Newington, and Marilyn Larsen Risi, of Upper Albany Main Street, Inc. (UAMS).

R. Armstrong said that the project team continues to conduct outreach. He said that after extensive study, the project team is poised to remove Alternative 4, the tunneled highway, and Alternative 2, the elevated highway, from further consideration. He said that the project team expects to have concurrence from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) shortly. He then introduced Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI), to deliver the presentation.

## 3. Presentation

### Introduction

M. Morehouse said that the agenda of this meeting would summarize Open Planning Studio (OPS) Number 9, review the ongoing alternatives analysis, and discuss the upcoming Screening Report, and public outreach activities.

### OPS 9 Recap

M. Morehouse reviewed the last OPS of April 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016. He said that the event introduced the elevated greenway concept and other innovative design ideas. He noted that the OPS also included activities for children and youth. He remarked that with 39 attendees, not including members of the project team, the 11<sup>th</sup> PAC Meeting was the best-attended PAC meeting thus far. He reminded the group that PAC Meeting 11 discussed possibilities for capping over portions of the lowered highway, removing Alternatives 2 and 4 from further consideration, and opportunities for the East Coast Greenway (ECG).

### Stakeholder Meetings

M. Morehouse said that the project team conducted several stakeholder meetings with various neighborhood groups and merchants' associations. He introduced Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), to discuss existing and proposed traffic routing in Parkville.

C. Hardin said that the project team examined recreating the Sisson Avenue ramps as part of the lowered highway alternative in response to the Parkville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone's (NRZ) concerns. He concluded that the reconfiguration of the Sisson Avenue ramps to Capitol Avenue and Laurel Street under Option W3-3 would more effectively distribute traffic on the main line and local road network, create more economic development opportunities, and improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

C. Hardin displayed traffic routing diagrams to and from both Parkville and I-84, and Albany Avenue and I-84. He explained that representatives of UAMS were concerned about the closure of the Trumbull and High Street ramps, as well as job opportunities during and after the construction phase of the project. C. Hardin said that the project team held several meetings with The Hartford, and that the project team is examining the proposed rail station annex adjacent to The Hartford's campus.

### Polling Exercise and Discussion: Capped Highway

M. Morehouse asked the PAC several questions, beginning with each capping alternative.

Adrian Texidor, of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), asked how the PAC could make a decision about the tunnel or capping options without full environmental and economic impact information. M. Morehouse said that the project team is now exploring impacts under the NEPA process and can reevaluate alternatives if necessary. He emphasized the project team's transparency, and said that noise and air impacts are still unknown.

### Question 1: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is this capped segment?

M. Morehouse said that the capped segment between Asylum and Broad Streets would be 950 feet long and cost \$325-400 million. He concluded that it would connect Asylum Hill to Downtown and that it presents the most development opportunities for its size and expense.

1) Very important	-59%
2) Somewhat important	-23%
3) Minimally important	-5%
4) Not important	-14%

### Question 2: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is this capped segment?

M. Morehouse said that the capped segment between Asylum and Flower Streets would be 1,800 feet long and cost \$600-750 million. He said that it could create a pedestrian crossing between Capitol Avenue and the Aetna campus. He said that the land to the west of Broad Street would be suitable for parking, a parking garage, or park land, and would somewhat shield the highway from Capitol Avenue. He said that an elevated greenway could run over the cap and continue westward behind Capitol Avenue.

1) Very important	-36%
2) Somewhat important	-36%
3) Minimally important	-9%
4) Not important	-18%

Jackie McKinney, of the ArtSpace Residents Association, said that it was important to recognize that this cap would mean significant investment without adding developable land. She said that a full cap to Sigourney Street would be even more expensive, and that adjacent development would be very speculative. She said that the market for air rights development does not exist. A. Texidor said that development over the highway could be possible depending on the City and State’s decisions. He emphasized that there is a difference between structural possibility and economic possibility. M. Morehouse said that it was the project team’s opinion that the premium for air rights development would make private development unfeasible.

Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, asked for clarification on the aesthetics of the cap as seen from street level. M. Morehouse said that the cap would not be a flat surface allowing for clear vistas from Capitol Avenue over the highway into Asylum Hill. Robert Painter, of the Hub of Hartford, asked what the lifespan of the cap was. Dave Stahnke, of TSC, said that the cap would essentially be a bridge with a lifespan of 75-100 years.

Question 3: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is this capped segment?

M. Morehouse said that this capped segment between Asylum and Sigourney Streets would be 3,000 feet long and cost \$1,350-1,650 million dollars. He said it could create a seamless east-west link between Sigourney Street and Asylum Street. He noted that it would require relocating the Park River Conduit and impacting many building along Capitol Avenue.

1) Very important	-27%
2) Somewhat important	-14%
3) Minimally important	-18%
4) Not important	-41%

Sandy Fry, of the Greater Hartford Transit District, asked why the cap required moving the Park River Conduit. D. Stahnke said that the structural walls of a cap would require drilling pylons into bedrock and impacting the existing conduit’s footprint.

Question 4: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is this capped segment?

M. Morehouse said that this capped segment between Sigourney Street and Laurel Street would be 900 feet long and cost \$250-300 million. He said that it could block the view of the highway from Frog Hollow, but would offer few new opportunities for neighborhood connectivity.

1) Very important	-15%
2) Somewhat important	-10%
3) Minimally important	-15%
4) Not important	-40%

Question 5: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is this capped segment?

M. Morehouse said that this capped segment between Sigourney Street and Capitol Avenue would be 1,600 feet long and cost \$350-425 million.

1) Very important	-10%
2) Somewhat important	-15%
3) Minimally important	-25%
4) Not important	-50%

S. Fry asked if this cap would meet Capitol Avenue and Laurel Street at elevation. R. Armstrong said that it would. S. Fry asked if this capped portion would create more unusable space. She said this would be important to know when considering economic development opportunities.

M. Morehouse concluded that the cap is less important the further west along the corridor.

#### Polling Exercise and Discussion: Elevated Greenway

M. Morehouse introduced the elevated greenway concept. He said that it would be a linear park between Sisson Avenue and Bushnell Park and constitute a portion of the ECG. He liked it to New York City's High Line Park, although it would accommodate cycling as well as walking.

R. Painter asked how the greenway would be constructed. D. Stahnke said that the linear park could be built on elevated structure alongside and over the highway. He said that a barrier underneath would provide a 20-foot tall noise wall and visual barrier that could be landscaped to shield the neighborhoods from the highway. He said this would not impact the Park River Conduit and would allow the reconnection at Flower Street for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

#### Question 1: How important to the I-84 Hartford project is the east-west greenway concept?

1) Very important	-62%
2) Somewhat important	-24%
3) Minimally important	-0%
4) Not important	-14%

M. Morehouse displayed different cross sections of the ECG / linear park as elevated and at-grade facilities. He said that the at-grade option would include landscaping but would not be high enough to shield the highway from sight or noise.

R. Painter asked A. Gill and A. Texidor to comment on the elevated linear park. A. Gill clarified that he was speaking on behalf of both Frog Hollow and Parkville. He said that an elevated linear park would not be sufficient for these neighborhoods because it would do nothing to mitigate air or noise pollution. A. Texidor said that air pollution would be higher on the elevated linear park because air pollutants rise. M. Morehouse said that the project team does not yet know all of the impacts related to air and noise. He said that the tunnel and capped highways would also include impacts. He said that the elevated linear park could achieve many benefits of the cap at a lower cost. He concluded that it offers exciting connectivity opportunities.

J. Mandyck asked if the elevated linear park would be in lieu of a cap. M. Morehouse said that it would be in lieu of a full cap to Sigourney Street, but could also be achieved with a partial cap between Broad and Asylum Streets, or Flower and Asylum Streets.

T. Gold asked how the ECG would correspond to a cap if one was extended to Sigourney Street. M. Morehouse said that the ECG could utilize the space on top of the cap.

#### Question 2: If a greenway is part of the Project, should it be elevated or at-grade?

Due to a problem with the polling system, a show of hands was taken. A few more than half of respondents favored the elevated option.

#### Urban Design

Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, presented an overview of the project corridor and a sequence of renderings. He reviewed potential public and private investments as part of the project. He said that public investments would include:



- A lowered highway
- Reconfigured on and off ramps
- A relocated railroad
- A new rail annex and parking
- CT *fastrak* refinements
- Enhanced local streets
- New local streets
- A cap between Asylum and Broad Streets
- An elevated greenway / ECG (inclusive of connection over highway to Flower Street)

He said that private investment opportunities could include:

- Mixed-use development
- A park over the Asylum and Broad Streets cap
- 1-2 story air rights development
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- New public space

M. Glass presented a sequence of aerial views of the Asylum / Broad Streets area and potential development. He noted impacts to the Capitol View Apartments and existing rail viaduct. He then presented a progressive series of renderings around Flower Street. He showed how an elevated greenway could utilize walls, screens, and landscaping to shield the surrounding neighborhood from the highway. He said that the elevated linear park would undulate and curve, and include a ramp up to Flower Street on both sides of the highway.

M. Morehouse showed the PAC a video of the project area to better explain proposed changes.

#### NEPA

Christine Tiernan, of AECOM, discussed the Purpose and Need Update, noting that it included minor revisions and reformatting. She said that the Agency Coordination Plan was also updated and is under cooperating agency review. She said that the sixth Agency Coordination meeting was held on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to review the prior two items. She concluded her portion of the presentation with an overview of the NEPA / CEPA schedule. She said that the Record of Decision would be released in the fourth quarter of 2018.

#### Public Outreach

Michael Coulom, of FHI, discussed recent and upcoming stakeholder meetings. He noted Hartford.Health.Works., the Parkville NRZ, The Hartford, and UAMS as some of these groups. He said that the project team aims to support local businesses, and that lunch for the meeting was provided by Rosita's Restaurant on Park Street.

#### **4. Discussion**

J. Cassidy asked how the proposed connection between West Boulevard and Hawthorne Street would affect the property at the corner of Hawthorne and Forest Streets. C. Hardin said that there were several possible configurations, some of which included maintaining the parcel as is.

J. Cassidy asked for more information about the intersection of Hawthorne and Sigourney Streets under the proposed lowered highway alternative. C. Hardin said that the intersection would be evaluated for traffic impacts.

J. McKinney asked a question about the proposed elevation of Capitol Avenue. C. Hardin said that the existing highway passes above Capitol Avenue, whereas the proposed highway would be routed below Capitol Avenue.

J. McKinney asked how Knox Farms would be impacted. C. Hardin said that Knox Farms would be impacted by an eastbound on-ramp from Laurel Street. He said that there is an option that does not include this ramp and avoids impacting Knox Farms.

Aaron Gill, of the Frog Hollow NRZ, said that the price of the tunnel and extended caps are not extreme when compared to prospective adjacent real estate values. He said that the decision to remove the tunnel from further consideration was made without his concurrence. He concluded that the project team is steering the PAC towards the cheaper option. R. Armstrong said that the decision to remove the tunnel from further consideration was made with feedback from the PAC and the public. He said that the project team is working towards the best option for the people of Hartford and the surrounding region, not merely aiming towards the cheapest option.

Joe Scully, of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association, asked if the Purpose and Need included increasing property values. R. Armstrong said that it does not include increasing property values, but that the project team considers additional factors when making decisions. R. Painter suggested making trucking and commerce more apparent in the Purpose and Need. R. Armstrong concluded that the project team could review the Purpose and Need.

Jennifer Cassidy, of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, said that the cap between Broad and Asylum Streets did not appear strong enough to support development. M. Glass said that it could support one or two story development to prevent large gaps in the streetscape.

J. Mandyck asked if new development and the Bushnell Park West boulevard would take land away from Bushnell Park. M. Glass clarified that the new road would not go through the park, but rather sit at its western edge. He said that the road is envisioned as a comfortable boulevard for people, inclusive of a central median, landscaping, and trees. He said removing the rail viaduct would open up the park to other neighborhoods.

A member of the public expressed disappointment over removing the existing rail viaduct. They suggested reutilizing the rail viaduct as a High Line-like park.

J. Cassidy asked what the linear park would look like from Asylum Hill. M. Glass said that the Asylum and Broad Streets cap would hide the highway from Asylum Hill, but that few members of the public would wander behind the Aetna campus from where the highway would be visible.