



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 12:30 PM**

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

**Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #14**

### 1. Attendees

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## 2. Welcome & Meeting Purpose

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 14<sup>th</sup> Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. He welcomed new PAC members Julia Rivera, of Trinity College, Adina Giannelli of Bike Walk Connecticut, and alternate Jillian Massey, of the Capital Region Council of Governments.

## 3. Presentation

### Introduction

R. Armstrong reviewed the meeting's agenda items: an alternatives analysis update, environmental documentation, multi-modal station area planning, the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study, and public outreach. He introduced Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), to begin the presentation.

### Alternatives Update

C. Hardin said that the alternatives analysis update would address the ongoing screening process, east-end ramp options, and the potential railroad relocation. He explained the transition from the 2015 scoping process, which identified four alternatives, to the Level 1 screening process. He said that CTDOT has submitted the Level 1 Screening Report to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for review, and recommended that the Elevated and Tunnel Alternatives be eliminated from further consideration. He said that the Project Team is

preparing for the Level 2 screening process, which will examine interchange options and eliminate those that do not meet the project's Purpose and Need. He concluded that the Level 2 screening process would establish a reasonable range of alternatives for full vetting in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), which will recommend a preferred alternative. He noted that the No-Build alternative will be included in the DEIS and used to compare against the remaining build alternatives.

C. Hardin said that continued analysis and screening has identified a critical flaw in east-end interchange option 3B-E2(S). He explained that this option would create a small parcel unsuitable for a future multimodal station. He also noted that placing the ramps directly across from The Hartford's loading dock would create a conflict with their operations. Trucks accessing the loading dock could potentially block the intersection and create safety and operational issues. He concluded that the Project Team is continuing to evaluate several options presented to the PAC in October.

Turning towards a discussion of potential railroad relocation, C. Hardin said that the Federal Railroad Administration recently published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Northeast Corridor Future project, recommending two-track service along the entirety of the New Haven, Hartford, Springfield (NHHS) rail line. This two-track service is currently being built under the NHHS Rail Program. He said that the FEIS stipulated the frequency of Amtrak service, and recommended upgrading the Hartford station to a "hub" or "major hub". He noted that the CTDOT Bureau of Public Transportation asked the Project Team to implement a four-track station instead of three tracks to account for future CTDOT passenger service in addition to the Amtrak service.

C. Hardin presented a diagram exhibiting the three-track station. He said that the track and platforms would be cut into Asylum Hill and supported by retaining walls. He showed another image with a four-track station and explained that the fourth track required an extra 40-50 feet in width. He said that all four tracks could potentially serve passenger trains via two island platforms, while still maintaining a gauntlet track for oversized freight trains on the outermost track. He added that a four-track station would allow commuter trains to reverse direction at the station or stay overnight, which would avoid delaying other through trains.

C. Hardin concluded that the Project Team expects to have more information on east-end options when the PAC next meets in June. He introduced Christine Tiernan, of AECOM, to discuss the project's environmental documentation.

#### Environmental Documentation

C. Tiernan said that the project is progressing through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) processes, and that the DEIS would be available for public review in the summer of 2018, followed by a public comment period and public hearing. She said that much of next year would be devoted to responding to comments regarding the DEIS and preparing the FEIS for the fall of 2019.

C. Tiernan said that the DEIS would be broken up into 24 total chapters, such as the project's purpose and need, the various alternatives and screening process, agency coordination and public outreach, air quality, energy, noise and vibration. She said that the cultural resources technical report, one of many appendices in the DEIS, has already been submitted to CTDOT and FHWA for review. She said that upon receiving comments from these two agencies, the report will be revised and sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review. She explained that the Project Team has identified 80 potentially impacted cultural resources, 15 of which are recommended for national historic register eligibility.

C. Tiernan provided a breakdown of historic impacts resultant from the Elevated, Lowered, and Tunnel Alternatives. She said that the total potential historic impacts for each alternative would include 5 for the elevated alternative, 11 for the lowered alternative, and 15 for the Tunnel Alternative. She concluded that a memorandum of agreement is required between CTDOT, FHWA, and SHPO to define the anticipated mitigation.

#### Multimodal Station Area Planning

Gina Trimarco, of TSC, introduced the multimodal station planning of the project. This 12-month process will identify the function and programming of the station, site alternatives, a preferred site layout, and 15 percent architectural plans of the station. She said that the Project Team has begun collecting data, conducting stakeholder interviews, visioning and programming. She said the Project Team will look at other examples of transit centers and consider the variety of modes and users accessing the station, functional values and priorities, and design restrictions and guidelines. She said the Project Team assumes the facility will be a category one station, featuring platforms of at least 1,000 feet in length and 24 feet wide, raised four feet above the rail.

G. Trimarco said the Project Team will carefully consider linkages to the surrounding neighborhood and historic Union Station. She said extensive public and stakeholder outreach would help determine how best to orient the station to encourage economic development. She said this would include a collaborative approach between the City, PAC, a transit-technical committee (TTC) made up of representatives of transit providers, the general public, and the City of Hartford's Capital Gateway consulting team. She asked Sean Fitzpatrick, of the City of Hartford, to introduce the City's Capital Gateway project.

S. Fitzpatrick said he was very happy to introduce the consultant team of HOK and WSP | PB to prepare a master plan for the multimodal station area. He said the team jointly developed a master plan for the Washington, D.C. Union Station and that each consultant has experience working in Hartford. He recognized the planning process as an opportunity to reimagine the western gateway to the city. He thanked CTDOT and the Project Team for their ongoing efforts and strong spirit of collaboration.

G. Trimarco stated that, as part of the station area planning process, the Project Team conducted stakeholder meetings in February and March and will hold a public meeting in April.

#### I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study

R. Armstrong reviewed the progress to date of the I-84 Hartford Project. He emphasized that the Project's mission is to resolve the issues of the crumbling I-84 viaduct between the vicinities of Park Street and the downtown Hartford tunnel, shy of the I-84 / I-91 interchange. He said that extensive traffic analysis has concluded that although the I-84 Hartford Project would address safety and some congestion in the corridor, it would not address the primary source of congestion at the I-84 / I-91 interchange. He stated that the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study will examine the feasibility of improving interchange capacity along the existing highway alignment and interchange location, as well as more dramatic alternatives rerouting I-84 along northern or southern alignments.

R. Armstrong said that the 18-month I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study will identify four preliminary alternatives and aim to advance two alternatives to conceptual design. He concluded that the Study Team had nearly finished collecting data and begun the processes of identifying needs and deficiencies and preliminary alternative screening. He introduced Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, to continue the presentation.

M. Glass recognized the continued public discussion of highway tunneling in Hartford. He said that the Study Team seeks to examine such ideas through the context of the I-84 / I-91

Interchange Study. He presented a series of slides outlining high-level work by the Study Team aiming to rethink the regional transportation system. He said that strategic visions for Hartford and East Hartford could help achieve City and regional goals of spurring economic development, reconnecting Hartford and East Hartford, and supporting the development of new public transit and space.

M. Glass acknowledged today's infrastructure challenges that divide various districts, inhibit river access, and take up large amounts of land. Turning to possible solutions, he noted the unimplemented I-291 bypass concept and its challenges and shortcomings. He said that the Study Team is examining an I-84 southern alignment with a tunnel between Flatbush Avenue and the west bank of the Connecticut River. This alignment would reconnect to the existing highway network at a new interchange with I-91 and Route 15 at the Charter Oak Bridge. A northern alignment alternative would reroute I-84 from Union Station to a new interchange with I-91 north of downtown, and over a new Connecticut River crossing into East Hartford. He noted that both alternatives could reconfigure the Bulkeley Bridge as a boulevard reconnecting Hartford and East Hartford. These alternatives could also include potential capping of I-91 between the North and South Meadows. He clarified that this is a very high-level study and no decisions or conclusions have been made.

M. Glass explained how rethinking the transportation system could open up the opportunity for a new world-class interconnected public park. He presented renderings and a diagram of the west bank of the Connecticut River with I-91 capped. He noted that reconfiguring the existing I-84 alignment through downtown into an urban boulevard could better connect downtown to ongoing development in Downtown North. He said that 150 acres of newly developable land could be available in Hartford and East Hartford. He concluded that public transit would be an important component of new development, particularly along expanded east-west CT *fastrak* service and potential north-south mass transit service.

C. Hardin concluded the discussion by reminding the PAC of the existing capacity constraints at the interchange and the ongoing needs and deficiency analysis. He said the interchange is the busiest in the state and is routinely identified as one of the biggest traffic bottlenecks in the region. He noted that AM peak travel results in major delays as motorists attempt to navigate through the interchange to the central business district (CBD). He said PM peak travel sees congestion as motorists attempt to leave the CBD and cross back through the interchange.

#### Public Outreach

Marcy Miller, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., provided an update on public involvement. She said the PAC last met in October and two Open Planning Studios were held in November. She said the Project Team provides monthly updates to the Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ), the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, and other groups by request. She reminded the PAC that the Project Team keeps an open door policy to stakeholder and NRZ meeting requests.

M. Miller said that the Project Team expects to host a PAC meeting in the spring and two in the fall of 2017. She noted that the Project Team will host two public meetings in the spring and two in the fall at key milestones, likely focusing on the I-84 Hartford Project viaduct work, the multimodal station area planning process, and the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. She concluded that working groups would meet on an as-needed basis.

M. Miller told the PAC that the Project Team will soon launch an updated and more accessible website. She said the Project Team will repurpose the CT *fastrak* kiosk for I-84 Hartford Project outreach. She said that a short questionnaire about outreach techniques will launch soon.

#### 4. Discussion

Dave Nardone, of FHWA, asked about ongoing and forthcoming viaduct repair projects. Derick Lessard, of CTDOT, said various construction projects on the viaduct would begin April 3 to repair steel, highway medians, and paint. R. Armstrong said ongoing maintenance and repair is necessary before the I-84 Hartford Project begins construction. He reminded the PAC that the no-build alternative would still require an investment of \$2-3 billion.

T. Gold asked how much of Congressman John Larson's tunnel proposal was included in the PAC presentation. R. Armstrong said that the congressman's overall vision for the regional transportation system is in line with that of the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study and that the Project Team has met with the congressman several times to discuss ideas and possibilities.

Bob Painter, of the Hub of Hartford, said that PAC members are regularly asked questions about Congressman Larson's proposal. He asked if the PAC and Project Team would consider the congressman's idea while moving forward with the current I-84 Hartford Project. R. Armstrong said that the I-84 Hartford Project is closer at hand, and that any realignments to the highway would be dramatic and expensive. He said there is an immediate need to take down the viaduct in one way or another.

Joe Sculley, of the Connecticut Motor Transport Association, said that he appreciated the graphics depicting the capacity crunch at the I-84 / I-91 interchange. He said this is the most congested interchange in all of New England for freight traffic, and that the PAC should consider the freight community. R. Armstrong said that capacity is a critical issue.

Mike Riley asked why the I-84 Hartford Project and the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study were separate efforts. R. Armstrong said that the I-84 Hartford Project has been ongoing for five years and that combining the two efforts may risk ignoring the immediate needs of the viaduct.

Jackie McKinney, of the ArtSpace Residents Association, said that the group should seriously consider impacts to traffic on local streets as well as the highway. R. Armstrong said the Project Team is carefully studying and modelling traffic data and designing for traffic volumes in the year 2040. S. Fitzpatrick said that the City's consulting team would likewise study this.

Jennifer Cassidy, of Business for Downtown Hartford, asked how many Asylum Hill residents would be temporarily or permanently displaced by the Project. C. Tiernan said that the Project Team currently estimates that roughly 300 units could be impacted, primarily in the Capital View Apartments. She said the DEIS would identify a potential relocation plan and land use. She said new residential development in the area has not yet been planned but is possible.

Adrian Texidor, of SINA, thanked CTDOT and the City for their efforts to rethink the transportation network.

M. Riley asked how the railroad and station area could be expanded within the constrained corridor. R. Armstrong said that expanding the railroad station would further constrain the corridor and that the Project Team is considering all potential impacts.

T. Gold said the new multimodal station should be well-integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods. R. Armstrong agreed and said the Project Team would meet with the TTC to discuss such matters. G. Trimarco said that identifying the station's key functions would include studying its integration to Union Station and surrounding areas. R. Armstrong advised the PAC to attend the public meetings in April.

M. Riley said public outreach activities seem very city-centric and asked if there has been any outreach to commuters. M. Miller said that the Project Team has met with hundreds of staff members from Aetna and Travelers, and is willing to meet with additional employers. She noted the driver preference survey and the possibility of hosting an additional freight roundtable. Dave Stahnke, of TSC, said the Project Team has hosted public meetings in East Hartford and West Hartford. R. Armstrong said the Project Team has worked with AAA. Amy Parmenter, of AAA, said her organization could assist in further outreach, if desired.

There was a conversation about funding. R. Armstrong said the project will be very challenging to fund. He said the primary funding sources would be the federal and state governments. He concluded that the governor has suggested investing more in transportation, and that the state legislature is currently debating various funding scenarios.