



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Thursday, November 16, 2017, 12:30 PM

Location: Training & Conference Center, The Chrysalis Center, 255 Homestead Avenue, Hartford

Subject: Public Advisory Committee Meeting #16

Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
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Tom Jost	WSP	
Bill Kenworthy	HOK	

1. Welcome & Introduction

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 16th Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. He reviewed the meeting's agenda items, which included collaborative planning alongside the City of Hartford's consulting team on station siting and local road network opportunities. He introduced new PAC members Elsa Huertas, of Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, Josye Utick of the Coalition to Strengthen Sheldon - Charter Oak Neighborhood, and Karolina Kwiecinska of Trinity College. He then asked Mike Morehouse, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. to moderate the discussion.

2. Local Road Opportunities

M. Morehouse presented the meeting's objectives, which included providing an update on the collaborative structure between the consulting teams of CTDOT and the City of the Hartford, addressing stakeholder concerns, identifying preferred concepts for the local road network and station siting, and continuing to evaluate environmental impacts. He summarized the June PAC meeting and stated that the group had reached broad consensus on east and west interchange options and reviewed preliminary multimodal station concepts. He said that public working sessions were held in August and October to delve deeper into station siting and local road network opportunities.

Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation (TSC), said the Project Team has now focused today's presentation on Lowered Highway Eastern Interchange Option 3B-E5(S), one of the three eastern interchange options that will be fully evaluated in the DEIS. He said this alternative would shift I-84 approximately 200 feet to the west to address a safety deficiency at the existing sharp horizontal curve near Union Station. He illustrated how eastbound on- and off-ramps would terminate at a new boulevard at the western edge of Bushnell Park connecting Asylum Street and Capitol Avenue, and westbound ramps would terminate at the intersection of a realigned Cogswell Street, Myrtle Street and Edwards Street. He highlighted new connections under this option, including the boulevard along Bushnell Park tentatively called Bushnell Park West, an extension of Spruce Street to South Chapel Street, and improvements to Asylum Avenue and Broad Street.

C. Hardin presented four focus areas for further discussion of Interchange Option 3B-E5(S):

Garden Street Connection

C. Hardin illustrated how under existing conditions Myrtle Street descends sharply from Asylum Hill to intersect with Church Street and Spruce Street. He said that under the Lowered Highway Alternative this connection would no longer be feasible. He explained how the Project Team developed an alternative connection between Asylum Hill and Downtown that would extend Garden Street over the highway parallel to Asylum Avenue and intersect with Spruce Street opposite Union Station. He said that this connection would add redundancy to the network, draw traffic away from the Trident area, and facilitate both east-west and north-south connectivity. He noted that the grade of the Garden Street extension would be steep and similar to Asylum Avenue. He noted that the Project Team is evaluating ways to decrease the grade of Garden Street, including the potential raising of Spruce Street. He said the Project Team would deliver more findings in the new year.

Ashley Street Traffic Mitigation

C. Hardin said the Project Team worked to address concerns from Asylum Hill residents that interchange option 3B-E5(S) would produce negative traffic impacts on residential streets. He illustrated how, under existing conditions, the existing primary east-west route from I-84 to Saint Francis Hospital utilizes Collins Street. He briefly outlined different options the Project Team considered for maintaining this traffic pattern. He said the best solution aligns the eastbound ramps with Myrtle Street rather than Fraser Place, which would improve traffic operations and direct hospital traffic towards Garden Street and Collins Street. He said the new intersection of Fraser Place and Myrtle Street would not require a traffic signal.

The Trident

C. Hardin explained how the existing eastbound highway on-ramp from Broad Street produces a strong volume of north-south movements through the Trident, the intersection of Asylum Avenue, Farmington Avenue, Broad Street and Cogswell Street. He said that relocating the eastbound ramps to Bushnell Park West would reroute traffic and greatly reduce the demand for north-south movements through the Trident. He said the Project Team is examining multiple options for addressing mobility in this area and taking into account the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users and drivers. He explained that the Project Team is evaluating basic fatal flaws for each Trident concept, including whether or not vehicles queue back onto the highway and if a vehicle has to wait longer than two minutes at a traffic signal. He said measures of success include evaluating each concept's degree of multimodal mobility, safety, road footprint size, property impacts and development opportunities. He presented four concepts the Project Team has considered for the Trident area.

- A) Discontinuous Broad Street: C. Hardin said discontinuing Broad Street between Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue would be the least challenging Trident concept. He said removing the Broad Street eastbound on-ramp would significantly reduce demand

for north-south travel within the Trident. He noted that bicyclists and pedestrians would still be able to travel from Broad Street to Cogswell Street under this concept. He said traffic operations perform very well under this concept and that roadways would be smaller. He added that city park land exists on either side of Broad Street, between Farmington and Asylum Avenues, and that discontinuing Broad Street could expand and enhance this park. He recognized that north-south connectivity is important for the city, and that some demand for this movement would still exist. He illustrated how north-south travelers could utilize the Garden Street extension to make this movement and avoid Trident congestion altogether. He concluded that each Trident concept the Project Team is exploring could extend Sumner Street south to Farmington Avenue, which would require additional property impacts. He said the Project Team is quantifying the degree to which extending Sumner Street would improve traffic operations and impact properties.

- B) Western Shift: C. Hardin presented a concept that would shift the intersection of Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue one block west. He said this would simplify the intersection of Asylum Avenue and Broad Street as a four-way traffic signal. He said this would allow for the continuation of Broad Street and replace Asylum Place with a new intersection of Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue. He explained how this would push a significant volume of east-west traffic through the intersection of Asylum Avenue, Broad Street and Cogswell Street. This would likely require a 6-7 lane roadway between the two reconfigured intersections. He noted that extending Sumner Street could reduce the number of lanes necessary for this concept. The Project Team is evaluating the degree to which the concept would impact a 530-space subterranean parking garage, owned and operated by the State Department of Administrative Services (DAS).
- C) Farmington Avenue Extension: C. Hardin said the Project Team and the City of Hartford are evaluating the possible realignment and extension of Farmington Avenue over the highway and terminating at Bushnell Park West. He said this idea was developed in order to improve east-west connectivity and would require shifting the eastbound on- and off-ramps to the south. He said that the CTDOT consultant team identified a fatal flaw with this concept that would queue ramp traffic onto the highway, but that the City consultant team will review these findings as part of their third party review of the project's traffic model. Tom Jost, of WSP and the City of Hartford Capitol Gateway Master Plan, added that an important goal of the Farmington Avenue Extension is expanding access to developable property between Broad Street, Bushnell Park West, Asylum Avenue and Capitol Avenue. C. Hardin noted that other concepts designed to meet this goal would be presented later during the meeting.
- D) Roundabout: C. Hardin said the Project Team listened to considerable feedback from the public about roundabouts, but determined that a roundabout at the Trident would not be practical. He said meeting capacity at the intersection would require a very large roundabout which would be challenging for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. He added that the individual approaches may require signalization. He concluded that the Project Team does not recommend a roundabout in this area, but will explore roundabouts at intersections elsewhere in the project area.

Next Steps

C. Hardin said the Project Team would complete more detailed and quantified analyses of Trident concepts in order to better understand impacts and interaction with station planning concepts. M. Morehouse emphasized that the process hinges on evaluating tradeoffs. He concluded that no single concept meets all of the project's objectives, but some accommodate more goals and objectives than others.

Discussion

Jackie McKinney, of ArtSpace Residents Association, asked how the westbound ramps would differ from the existing Asylum Street ramp, and whether it would impact travel routes to The Hartford and Aetna. C. Hardin illustrated travel paths from the new ramps and changes to the local street network, including Myrtle Street and Garden Street. C. Hardin said these changes would not impact travel to Aetna and would feed into The Hartford's parking lots similar to today's routing.

J. McKinney asked if the Discontinuous Broad Street Concept would impact emergency response services. Marc Petruzzi, of the State Police Office of Administrative Services, said the nearest fire station to the Trident is west of the Trident. C. Hardin said that the concept would primarily affect travel patterns for those coming from Capitol Avenue west of Broad Street. He said emergency vehicles from the Pearl Street fire station and fire houses west of the Trident would not be affected. He said the Project Team will look further into emergency access. M. Morehouse added that this concept would reduce congestion, which is an existing impediment to emergency response.

J. Utick said the Western Shift appears to move the Trident's issues further west. C. Hardin said the new intersection of Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue would be signalized, unlike today. He noted that the new Trident would operate better than the new simplified intersection of Broad Street and Asylum Avenue. Nick Mandler, of TSC, said the concept does not solve all of the Trident's problems, but it does create more storage space between major intersections. C. Hardin said traffic may still queue between the intersections of Farmington / Asylum and Asylum / Broad under this concept, but not to the extent that would constitute a fatal flaw.

Hank Hoffman, of The Hartford, asked how extending Farmington Avenue would impact the potential to cap over the highway. C. Hardin said the extension would not significantly change the cap structure, and that the road would have the same grade as a potential cap.

Toni Gold, of the West End Civic Association, asked if the Farmington Avenue extension could be moved further south in order to intersect with Road B and avoid impacting the eastbound ramps. C. Hardin said doing so would encourage many east-bound motorists from Farmington Avenue to use Asylum Place and create a fatal flaw at that intersection. He said the Project Team would continue to review the traffic models.

Mike Riley asked if Asylum Avenue near Woodland Street still operates as a one-way facility at certain times of day. C. Hardin said Asylum Avenue always operates as a bi-directional road.

M. Riley asked if the Project Team is accounting for the turning radii of 53-foot trucks. C. Hardin said the Project Team is considering horizontal curvature and tracking for larger vehicles, which is one of the reasons why they eliminated a concept for an S-shaped curve at Myrtle Street.

M. Petruzzi emphasized that if Broad Street is discontinued, the Garden Street extension must be included to add network redundancy and allow emergency vehicles to exit the highway and quickly reverse directions. C. Hardin said emergency vehicles would not need to traverse Broad Street to change highway directions because the eastbound ramps would be reconfigured to Bushnell Park West. M. Morehouse asked if removable bollards could be placed on the section of Broad Street between Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue so that emergency vehicles could pass. M. Petruzzi said the bollards would not be removed quickly enough.

J. McKinney said the Farmington Avenue Extension may be an attractive concept because it would avoid the steep grade of Asylum Avenue and may present a safer access point to

ArtSpace. C. Hardin said the grade of Farmington Avenue extension would only be somewhat less than Asylum Avenue – 5% as opposed to 7%. He said this was at the high end of the scale for pedestrian mobility.

J. Utick inquired about the project's hierarchy of needs between highway interchange operations and local roads. She also asked if the Farmington Avenue Extension would create more development opportunities. C. Hardin clarified that the concerns regarding the eastbound ramps under the Farmington Avenue Extension is that traffic could queue back onto the highway during the morning peak. He said it would be dishonest to suggest that there is not some hierarchy of needs between different roadways, but that the Project Team is considering safety and remaining cognizant of all modes. He noted that because this concept would maintain a continuous Broad Street the local roadways would be very wide. He said one segment of Broad Street could be eight lanes wide. He said the Project Team envisions holding another working session to explore refined Trident concepts in more detail.

T. Gold said she is not satisfied with any of the Trident concepts. She said the fundamental problem in the area is the merging of Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue, and suggested shifting Farmington Avenue or altering traffic patterns further west of the Trident in order to reduce traffic volumes on Asylum Avenue. She concluded that the Project Team should first select a station site and then develop the local road network around it. N. Mandler agreed that Asylum Avenue is a constrained corridor and that addressing traffic conditions further west may address capacity issues. He said the Project Team will continue to evaluate options for realigning Farmington Avenue such that it does not impact the eastbound ramps, and will also evaluate an extension of Sumner Street in order to ease congestion. M. Morehouse said the City is reviewing the Project Team's findings and exploring them in collaboration with station siting.

3. Multimodal Station Planning

M. Morehouse reviewed where the PAC left off in June, including discussions of urban design considerations, bus and rail integration, and construction phasing. He introduced Gina Trimarco, of TSC, T. Jost, of WSP and Bill Kenworthy, of HOK.

G. Trimarco presented five simplified station concepts discussed at the October 30th public working sessions. She reminded the PAC that the Lowered Highway Alternative requires shifting the railroad tracks 1000 feet to the west of their current alignment and constructing a new train station. She said the Project Team is also evaluating the location and integration of local and intercity bus services. She concluded that the PAC, Transit Technical Committee (TTC), and members of the public expressed preference for a single multimodal facility combining bus and rail services.

Asylum Plaza: G. Trimarco said this concept would be located north of Asylum Avenue and east of Broad Street. She said it would be accessible from a public plaza fronting Asylum Avenue, and that rail platforms would be below street-level. She said bus facilities could be built on a cap north of the station or on solid ground to the northeast. Transfer passengers could make the connection between bus and rail services by crossing over Garden Street or via a subterranean mezzanine level. She concluded that this station would require capping over Asylum Avenue and the depressed highway, and phased construction with a temporary facility that could be expanded once the highway is complete.

Garden Street Access: G. Trimarco said this concept would combine bus and rail facilities over the highway north of Asylum avenue. She said buses and other vehicles could access the station via Garden Street. She said this concept would provide better integration between bus and rail than Asylum Plaza, but also require phased construction, capping, and temporary facilities.

No Overbuild: G. Trimarco said the Project Team is considering concepts that do not require building station facilities over the highway. She said the Project Team is still in conversations with the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and other state and federal agencies regarding the safety and security considerations of building a multimodal transportation facility on top of both rail and highway. She said the No Overbuild concept would split bus and rail facilities; the rail facility would be west of the new tracks on solid ground, and the bus facility would be east of the tracks on solid ground near Spruce Street. She said these facilities would be cheaper to build and minimize security concerns, but would not have multimodal connectivity. She noted that the transfer distance between bus and rail facilities would be over 1000 feet.

Capitol View Transitway: G. Trimarco said this concept was developed and imagined by members of the public and would provide a continuous viewshed from The Hartford to the State Capitol. She said it would be south of Asylum Avenue and require significant overbuild and phased construction.

Broad Street Station: G. Trimarco said this station concept would be accessible from Farmington Avenue and build the bus facility over the highway. She said vehicular access would be via Broad Street. She noted that rail station facilities could be completed during phase one of construction and open as soon as the tracks were relocated.

M. Morehouse introduced the City of Hartford's Capitol Gateway Master Plan consultant team to present refined concepts and integration of transit-oriented development (TOD). T. Jost said the Plan's goals are to enhance and improve connectivity, develop a strong sense of place, and to bring together Asylum Hill and Downtown into one interconnected zone. He said the team is also considering economic development potential, open space, cost and feasibility of the central transit hub. He presented three station concepts that aimed to minimize rail station structure over the highway while also achieving Plan design goals.

North Station: T. Jost said this station concept closely integrates rail and bus facilities by constructing the bus station over the footprint of the existing highway and orienting the rail facility to encourage bookend development on the east and west ends of Asylum Avenue. He said it is important to consider how the area south of Asylum Avenue could be developed and activated. B. Kenworthy said the team is exploring bending a new road from Broad Street south towards Capitol Avenue in order to develop more land south of Asylum Avenue and enhance connections to Bushnell Park. He said this concept more than others would have the most capped area, but also the most developable land. T. Jost noted that the challenge of this concept is making it feel like one connected district, and designing Garden Street in such a way as to make it a comfortable connection between bus and rail facilities.

South Station: T. Jost said the team is exploring curving Bushnell Park West in order to expand the park and extend open space over the cap towards Asylum Hill. B. Kenworthy said these concepts were paired with the Western Shift Trident concept in order to eliminate a portion of Farmington Avenue and open up more land for the station's footprint at a topographical highpoint. He said bus facilities would be proximate to rail under southern concept. T. Jost noted that land over the cap would likely be used for open space or transit. He said they are exploring concepts to extend the cap further over the eastbound ramps to create a stronger connection between Bushnell Park and cap open spaces, and to encourage development.

T. Jost presented a second southern station concept that would build a new road connecting Broad Street to Asylum Avenue. He said this road would sit at a higher elevation than Bushnell Park West and encourage integrated development between public and private land usages. He presented examples of integrated transit districts from Boulder Junction, Colorado and San Francisco's Transbay.

Discussion

H. Hoffman asked if the Project Team had data supporting the importance of bus and rail integration. T. Jost said the teams recognize the importance to Downtown of multimodal transportation services. He said connecting bus and rail facilities is important for those who do not have access to a car, and that transfers between bus and rail will increase when the CT *rail* Hartford Line service begins. He said the teams do not currently have data on the number of transfers between facilities. Jim Rice, of TSC, said both Greyhound and Amtrak have said interconnected facilities increase ridership across both modes, and that the Project Team can request data from those agencies at comparable multimodal facilities. G. Trimarco added that it is important to energize the station with as many passengers as possible, which will also improve retail opportunities. She concluded that many members of the public and the TTC expressed preference for an integrated multimodal facility. Aaron Gill, of Frog Hollow Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, said strong bus and rail connections will make travel easier, encourage transit use, reduce total travel times, and expand job access for many people in his neighborhood as many do not have access to an automobile. He said it is impractical to separate facilities.

T. Gold requested topographical information to inform station siting considerations. She asked where the highpoint was in the area, and suggested siting the station there. She said development along Bushnell Park should not obscure station views and questioned the need to extend greenspace from the park over the cap. She advised the teams not to prioritize maximizing private development over identifying the best station site. B. Kenworthy said the highpoint is at the corner of Broad Street and Asylum Avenue. T. Jost said development could be joined and shared with the station. M. Morehouse said the Project Team could insert station concepts into the three-dimensional model.

4. Interchange Study

R. Armstrong provided a brief update on the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. He said the Project Team is close to announcing the results of their preliminary analysis on the feasibility of improving capacity at the I-84 / I-91 Interchange. He said the Project Team hopes to hold public forums in East Hartford and Hartford in early 2018.

5. Next Steps

M. Morehouse said the Project Team will review the PAC's feedback. He said the Project Team will consider PAC members' interest in the Farmington Avenue Extension, and that the City will review that concept's feasibility. He said the Project Team will have a finer set of concepts and ideas in early 2018 and encouraged the PAC to attend future public forums.