



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 7:15 pm

Location: The Marquee, Gershon Fox Ballroom, 960 Main Street, Hartford

Subject: Connecticut Building Congress Panel Discussion

1. Attendees

Bill Clegg, Moderator, Connecticut Building Congress
Rich Armstrong, Connecticut Department of Transportation
Dave Stahnke, TranSystems Corporation
Mitch Glass, Goody Clancy
Marcy Miller, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
80 attendees of Connecticut Building Congress

2. Purpose / Overview

The purpose of the presentation and panel discussion was to provide information and answer questions on the I-84 Hartford Project and potential improvements to the I-84 corridor at the Connecticut Building Congress dinner meeting.

3. Presentation

Rich Armstrong thanked the group for inviting the I-84 Hartford Project team to attend and provide information on the project. The presentation consisted of PowerPoint slides. He began with an overview of the project. He said that the project area extends from just east of the Flatbush Avenue ramps to the existing tunnel in Downtown Hartford. He added that most the highway is constructed on bridges.

R. Armstrong next provided a brief history of the project area. He said that the railroad was first built in the corridor in the 1830s and followed the course of the Hog (Park) River. He said that the idea for an east-west expressway began in the 1940s, and was later built in the 1960s as I-84, prior to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). He noted that the highway was elevated in order to avoid impacting the railroad, which it crosses over in two locations. He concluded that the highway was designed to carry 55,000 vehicles per day, and that today the highway carries over 170,000 vehicles per day.

R. Armstrong continued on to outline the project's Purpose and Need. He said that the first need concerns the bridge structures, which have reached the end of their useful life. He said that the second need concerns the operational and safety deficiencies in the corridor. He noted that the left-hand on and off ramps, exit-only lanes, and poorly designed curves contribute to unsafe conditions and inefficiencies. He concluded that the third need is mobility, emphasizing that the project aims to improve mobility across multiple travel modes.

Outlining the project schedule, R. Armstrong said that the project is currently in the environmental and alternatives analysis phases.

Dave Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation, next described each of the four primary alternatives. He said that the No-build Alternative would maintain the bridge structures through

year 2040. The Elevated Alternative would build new bridge structures over the railroad, adding features to improve traffic operations and safety. He explained that the Lowered Alternative would require relocating the railroad to the north / west of I-84. He concluded by describing the Tunnel Alternative.

D. Stahnke said that there are generally 10 ramp options on the western side of the corridor, and more than 15 on the eastern side of the corridor, with Sigourney Street acting as the dividing line. He described the preliminary highway and local road traffic analysis for each of the alternatives, and the comparative costs for the four alternatives. He also described the possible reconfigurations of CT *fastrak* that would be required if the railroad were relocated, and would likely happen before highway construction to keep the service operating.

D. Stahnke emphasized that this is more than just a highway project. Referring to a version of the Lowered Highway alternative, he highlighted the possible improvements to the local streets and bike lanes as other important elements. He noted these improvements do not come without property impacts, referring to a graphic that showed the potential building impacts with the Lowered Highway alternative.

Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, next spoke more about potential improvements that can be realized if the Lowered Alternative is constructed. He described the opportunity to build a multi-use greenway along the corridor. It can serve as part of the East Coast Greenway. He described how this can minimize the impact of the highway to the surrounding neighborhoods and provide connections that have been severed over the years.

M. Glass next described other opportunities related to urban design in the corridor. He said that the project could free up as many as 40 acres of developable land. He described the general public investments that would likely be made as part of the project, as well as potential opportunities for private investment on both the western and eastern portions of the corridor. He showed visualizations of potential private development in both these areas, noting that the Lowered Highway alternative's eastern ramp configuration and land topography make this area suitable for a capped section over the highway between Asylum and Broad Streets. He added that the area could serve well as a new gateway to the city, and with a new rail station, transit oriented development could be catalyzed.

M. Glass showed a short video that highlighted the Lowered Alternative.

R. Armstrong closed the presentation by stating that the project is expected to create thousands of new jobs in Hartford. He invited the audience to visit the project website at i84hartford.com.

4. Question and Answer Period

Bill Clegg, of Connecticut Building Congress began the question and answer period by asking the project team if a bypass could be an appropriate solution. R. Armstrong said that this would not be an appropriate solution because the majority of the travelers on I-84 get on or off in Hartford. In fact, the team's traffic analysis has shown that a bypass will only pull 10 percent of traffic off the viaduct during rush hours.

B. Clegg asked how the project would be funded. R. Armstrong answered that typically a project like this could be 80-90 percent federally funded. Connecticut, however, has not seen a project as expensive as this and may have to increase its state share. He described Governor Malloy's Let's Go CT program as a possible funding solution to the shortfall.

An attendee questioned whether there will be improvements to the I-84 / I-91 interchange as part of this project. D. Stahnke answered that the project limits end just west of the tunnel, so improvements to the interchange would not be included as part of this project. He added that the Department is just beginning a separate study to assess the feasibility of improving or relocating the interchange.

An attendee questioned whether the Bulkeley Bridge would be widened as part of this project. D. Stahnke answered that the project limits end just west of the tunnel, so improvements to the Bulkeley Bridge would not be included as part of this project. He added that the I-84 / I-91 interchange feasibility study may find opportunities to create a new interchange (and bridge crossing over the river). This could potentially add the needed capacity to the system.

An attendee commented that Aetna will be in a difficult situation if the power plant on their property is acquired. D. Stahnke answered that the project team has been coordinating closely with Aetna and all other affected property owners throughout the planning process. They are aware of this potential and would be compensated accordingly if the plant is taken.

There was a question whether the project team has assessed the economic impacts that will occur during construction. D. Stahnke answered that much of this would be explored in the NEPA process and documents in the coming years. R. Armstrong added that different construction scenarios will be considered and analyzed. CTDOT will discuss the scenarios and analyses with the public and stakeholders, including the business community, before a final decision is made.