



## **REPORT OF MEETING**

**Date and Time: Monday, August 1, 2016, 6:15 PM**

**Location: Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 814 Asylum Avenue, Hartford**

**Subject: Stakeholder Meeting with Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association**

### **1. Attendees**

Rich Armstrong, Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)  
Kevin Burnham, CTDOT  
Tim Ryan, TranSystems Corporation (TSC)  
Marcy Miller, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.  
Yvonne Mathews, Frog Hollow NRZ  
22 members of Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) and guests

### **2. Purpose / Overview**

Members of the I-84 Hartford Project team provided a brief project update to members of the AHNA at their monthly meeting. The slide presentation and discussion lasted about 45 minutes.

### **3. Presentation**

Rich Armstrong, of CTDOT, thanked AHNA for having the I-84 Hartford Project team at their meeting. He offered a brief description of the project area. He said that construction limits would extend from just south of the Sisson Avenue ramps to just west of the existing tunnel in Downtown Hartford. He explained that the highway was built on 30 acres of bridge structure in order to pass over the railroad in two locations. He pointed out that the highway was designed and built prior to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), when impacts were not examined in detail and public disclosure of those impacts was not required. He added that the highway was planned to carry 55,000 vehicles per day but now carries more than 170,000 vehicles, the highest traffic volume in the state.

R. Armstrong explained that after 50 years the bridge structures are deteriorating and in need of replacement or extensive maintenance. In addition to deterioration, he cited operational deficiencies, poor traffic operations, unsafe conditions, and poor mobility as key reasons for a wholesale redesign of the corridor.

R. Armstrong said that the project is currently in the environmental phase, during which time the project team evaluates alternatives. He noted that a formal Record of Decision will likely be issued in 2018. He concluded that construction will likely begin in the early 2020s and take several years.

Tim Ryan, of TranSystems Corporation, next explained each of the four 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. He said that this

alternative was generally unpopular in the community. He explained that the Lowered Alternative would require relocating the railroad to the north / west of I-84. He added that the Tunneler Alternative would be roughly three quarters of a mile, and it would require extensive property impacts and cost \$10-12 billion.

T. Ryan continued on to state that the Lowered Alternatives presents the best opportunities for highway and local street operations. He said ramps at Trumbull and High Street would likely be closed.

He discussed the Lowered Alternative in greater detail, noting that it is more than just a highway improvement project. He discussed the bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements that would accompany the highway improvements. T. Ryan provided information on potential on-street bicycle routes in the corridor. He provided background information on the East Coast Greenway, noting that the team has envisioned a new linear park through the corridor. He stated that team envisions this to be similar to New York High Line. He showed renderings of the proposed greenway including one that displayed an east-west multiuse trail on an elevated structure through the study corridor. T. Ryan presented a graphic that illustrated potential building impacts associated with the Lowered Alternative.

R. Armstrong reviewed public improvements included in the project and potential private investments. He said that the lowered highway alternative would free up 40-45 acres of developable land. He noted that the alternative would include the construction of a new rail station annex, the extension of West Boulevard to Hawthorne Street, a new local road between Capitol Avenue and Asylum Street, highway construction, the reconfiguration of access ramps, and the suggested construction of a platform over the highway between Asylum and Broad Streets. He said that this would make the Asylum and Broad Streets area ripe for transit oriented development. He noted that this option would likely require building impacts such as to the Capitol View Apartments and properties on Spring Street. He concluded that the alternative includes many transportation improvements in addition to the highway, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, a multi-use trail, the Hartford Line rail service, and CT *fastrak*.

T. Ryan then showed a flyover video of the Lowered Alternative and opportunities for improvements.

#### 4. Discussion

An attendee questioned who would own the land that could potentially be available for development. R. Armstrong answered that the land release process would likely return the available land to the City of Hartford, and it would be their decision when and how to develop it.

Another attendee questioned whether the new road on the west side of Bushnell Park would impact the park. R. Armstrong answered that the road would not infringe upon the park. Bushnell Park may actually expand slightly in this area.

An attendee asked what changes can be expected to the local traffic from the Lowered Alternative. R. Armstrong answered that the project team expects that, with the Lowered Alternative, traffic can be redistributed so that there is less congestion than there is today.

There was a question whether the project team is coordinating with large employers in the corridor. R. Armstrong answered that the team is coordinating with many of the area's large employers. For example, The Hartford, Aetna, Travelers, St. Francis Hospital, Hartford Courant,

and Hartford Hospital all have representatives on the Public Advisory Committee. The team has also met individually with some of these organizations to discuss their concerns and ideas.

There was a question whether Flower Street could be reconnected if there is a cap built over the Lowered Highway Alternative. R. Armstrong answered that a bicycle and pedestrian connection is feasible with the cap.

An attendee asked if some of the amenities, such as the cap and linear park, could be trimmed out if there is a budget shortfall. R. Armstrong answered that NEPA requires that all items included in the Record of Decision to remain part of the project. If the project team needs or wants to take them out, they will have to revisit NEPA.

One participant voiced concern about street flooding in the Lowered Alternative. R. Armstrong answered that the project team will be required to create a drainage plan to identify how all stormwater will be collected, conveyed, and treated for the Preferred Alternative.

Someone questioned the timeframe for construction. R. Armstrong answered that the funding plan will need to be in place to go into final design, probably by 2019. Construction is could start in 2022.

An attendee asked where the I-84 Hartford Project ranked on that statewide priority list. R. Armstrong answered that it ranked at or near the top.

There was a question whether the Flower Street renderings are available from the north (viewing south). R. Armstrong answered that the team is working on these renderings.

There was a question on the projected noise levels of the Lowered Alternative. T. Ryan answered that the team is working on this, and the baseline conditions have been established. He added that the noise from the trucks going over the existing viaduct's bridge joints will disappear.

An attendee voiced concern about the safety of the raised greenway for children. T. Ryan discussed the safety features and barriers to prevent falling.