



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Thursday, June 23, 2016, 9:30 AM

Location: Capitol Region Education Council, 147 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford

Subject: Stakeholder Meeting with Capitol Region Education Council / Regional School Choice Office

1. Attendees

Brian Natwick, Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)

Tim Ryan, TranSystems Corporation (TSC)

Pat Padlo, TSC

Marcy Miller, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

10 members of Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) / Regional School Choice Office (RSCO)

2. Welcome / Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the presentation was to provide information on the I-84 Hartford Project and potential improvements, particularly in the area of transportation, at the CREC / RSCO transportation meeting. The project team distributed folders with English and Spanish language project information in them. The folders included a fact sheet, the latest newsletter, a brochure, and a business card with the website and social media addresses.

3. Presentation

Tim Ryan, of TSC, thanked the CREC / RSCO staff for inviting the I-84 Hartford Project team to their meeting. He began by discussing the study area, history of the I-84 corridor in Hartford, and the purpose and need of the project. He discussed the project schedule as well as the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

T. Ryan next provided information on the four main alternatives. There is the No-build Alternative as well as three build alternatives, (Elevated, Lowered, and Tunnel), which vary according to their vertical alignment. He stated that there are multiple eastern and western ramp options that can be combined together to form over 150 different alternatives. He provided a comparison of the traffic analysis for the highway and local road networks for the No-build and three build alternatives. T. Ryan also stated the potential range of costs for each of the alternatives.

T. Ryan provided additional detail on the Lowered Alternative. This alternative currently best meets the purpose and need of the project. He added that it is more than just a highway project, as there are opportunities for local traffic, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements as well as economic development. He discussed the public investments and private investment opportunities for this alternative. He showed and described potential development opportunities for the area over the cap.

T. Ryan provided information on potential on-street bicycle routes, CT*fastrak* modifications, and a multiuse greenway in the corridor. He described renderings of the proposed greenway including one that displayed an east-west multiuse trail on an elevated structure through the study corridor.

T. Ryan next presented a graphic that illustrated potential building impacts associated with the Lowered Alternative.

T. Ryan next discussed construction considerations. He explained that because the I-84 corridor is very confined, a new highway cannot simply be built adjacent to the existing one. The highway construction would typically need to be staged to maintain traffic during construction. He noted that this conventional, staged construction would likely take 5-7 years depending upon the alternative selected. He also described the process of accelerated construction, noting that this could have a shorter construction duration because of major sections or a complete highway closure. He added that the Project Team does not yet know if this is even possible, but will consider it. Other urban highways, including I-40 in Knoxville, Tennessee have been successfully reconstructed using an accelerated construction schedule.

T. Ryan introduced the I-84 / I-91 Interchange Study. He explained that both eastbound and westbound highways shift from three to two through lanes while traveling through the interchange, making the area a major bottleneck. He said that the project team plans to take a very broad look at the feasibility of expanding the highway to provide three through lanes across the Connecticut River. The study will consider rerouting the highway through the city. He presented a diagram of I-84 routed to the north, which would allow the Bulkeley Bridge to be repurposed as a local boulevard between Hartford and East Hartford.

T. Ryan closed the presentation by directing the attendees to the project website for more information.

4. Discussion

There was a question whether the I-84 Hartford improvements include the existing tunnel. T. Ryan answered that the reconstruction would stop just short of the tunnel.

There was a comment about cost of Tunnel Alternative, stating that if it does not solve the traffic problem, it should be easy to eliminate. T. Ryan answered that the Tunnel Alternative will likely soon be eliminated from further consideration because of its extremely high cost. Soon thereafter, the Elevated Alternative will likely be eliminated from further consideration because of its inability to meet the purpose and need.

There was a question about exact location of the new Bushnell Park West roadway. T. Ryan answered that the new would intersection Capitol Avenue and Asylum Avenue in the same locations as the current ramps.

There was a comment that this topic is very important to this group because now is the time to advocate for an alternative. Each alternative will impact the CREC / RSCO programs and their buses that travel through the City every weekday.

An attendee questioned how large the cap will be. T. Ryan answered that the cap could be built between Broad Street and Asylum Avenue, and would be about 750 feet in length. This attendee voiced support for the cap.

Another attendee asked if the state legislature will ultimately approve the funding for the project. T. Ryan answered that the federal funding will need to be approved by the Federal Highway Administration. He also said that access to the Legislative Office Building and the Capitol would be very similar under the lowered highway alternatives. There was a follow up question on how the project will be funded. B. Natwick answered that the current planning study is 80 percent federally funded and 20 percent state funded. He went on to discuss the costs of the project construction, which is not yet funded. He stated that with \$500 million available yearly in federal highway and bridge funding, the state will have a very hard time financing a \$4-6 billion project. The state legislature will likely become involved to approve bonding for the state portion of the project.

There was a comment that, during construction, the I-84 Hartford Project team should consider traffic going through the region to other parts of New England. T. Ryan answered that currently 60 percent of rush hour traffic is going to/from Downtown. For other travelers, the state would plan for and sign for detours, such as I-691 to I-91 to the Charter Oak Bridge. He added that the team is currently building a model to look at transit options and improvements prior to construction.

An attendee questions the magnitude of property impacts for the I-84 / I-91 interchange relocation. Would a lot of homes be taken? T. Ryan said we are still very early in the planning process, but it looks like there would be minimal impacts to residential properties. The alignment in Hartford could follow the existing rail right of way and in East Hartford, much of the alignment would be on undeveloped land.

There was a question about the project schedule. T. Ryan stated that a decision will be made on an alternative in 2018. Construction will likely begin in 2021-2022.