



REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, June 15, 2016, 1 PM

Location: Parkville Community & Senior Center, Hartford

Subject: Stakeholder Meeting with Parkville Business Association

1. Attendees

Rich Armstrong, Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)

Tim Ryan, TranSystems Corporation

Marcy Miller, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

13 members of Parkville Business Association

2. Welcome / Introductions

Florencio Vargas, of the Parkville Business Association, welcomed everyone and introduced Rich Armstrong, of the Department of Transportation.

3. Presentation

R. Armstrong thanked the Parkville Business Association for inviting the I-84 Hartford Project team to their monthly meeting. He provided an overview of the presentation agenda. The purpose of the presentation was to provide information on the I-84 Hartford Project and potential improvements in the City of Hartford, particularly to the Parkville neighborhood.

R. Armstrong discussed the study area, history of the I-84 corridor in Hartford, and the purpose and need of the project. He discussed community concerns noting that the Department is aware that the highway divided neighborhoods within the city when it was constructed. The upcoming reconstruction is an opportunity to fix some of those past mistakes. He added that there is an opportunity to open up a considerable amount of land for potential future development. R. Armstrong then turned the presentation over to Tim Ryan, of TranSystems Corporation, to discuss the roadway network and traffic under a variety of scenarios.

F. Vargas stated that the closure of the Sisson Avenue ramps could have an impact on the business community. He advised the business association attendees to think about their concerns during the presentation.

T. Ryan began discussing the existing conditions of the Parkville neighborhood road network, noting that there is currently a lack of redundancy in the east-west roadway connections. He described the geometry of the existing Sisson Avenue ramps, noting that this interchange is much larger than a typical urban interchange. T. Ryan also provided information on the four main alternatives. The three build alternatives, (Elevated, Lowered, and Tunnel) vary according to their vertical alignment.

T. Ryan described the western interchange options that were presented at the August 2015 Open Planning Studio at this venue. At that time, there were nine western options presented. Based upon the discussion in August, the project team then added another western ramp

option. R. Armstrong added that one goal of the project is to eliminate the eastbound left-hand off-ramp at Sisson Avenue. It would also be good if the designers can shrink the size of the interchange in future build scenarios.

T. Ryan described Option W7, which would include rebuilding the ramps in a configuration similar to the existing Sisson Avenue interchange. Similar to the existing interchange, the traffic operations on the mainline would be poor, especially in the eastbound direction. T. Ryan explained that this interchange configuration does not provide access to Capitol Avenue, whereas other western interchange options do. Providing access to Capitol Avenue on the western and eastern sides of the project provides drivers with better choices and distributes traffic in a more efficient manner. Option W7 is also more expensive than other western interchange options because of the number of bridges that would be needed to cross the highway and the railroad.

He next described Option W3-3, an interchange option that performs well from a traffic and cost perspective. T. Ryan showed members of the business association the travel paths and distances for the existing interchange versus interchange option W3-3. The distances for each of the I-84 ramps were measured from a common point on I-84 to the intersection of Sisson Avenue and Park Street, which is the geographic center of Parkville. The travel distances for each of the trips using the ramps associated with W3-3 were identical to the existing travel distance, but this alternative could provide added travel choices from redundancy in the network. This option also would improve the pedestrian/bicycle connections and environs.

T. Ryan next presented a graphic that illustrated potential building impacts in the western portion of the corridor. He also showed and described a series of streetscape renderings for the existing and lowered highway alternatives at Capitol Avenue looking east, Park Street looking east, and an aerial view of the Sisson Avenue interchange area.

T. Ryan described a graphic that outlines potential opportunities for development of available parcels on the western portion of the project.

T. Ryan provided background information on the East Coast Greenway. He described a plan view of a possible East Coast Greenway alignment. The proposed facility would be an east-west multiuse trail on an elevated structure or at-grade through the study corridor.

T. Ryan concluded his portion of the presentation by discussing the possibility of adding an interchange at Park Street. He stated that current highway design guidelines suggest that urban interchanges should be spaced no closer than one mile apart. This allows the highway interchanges to operate independently and, therefore, more efficiently. T. Ryan displayed a graphic that depicted the number of interchanges between Trout Brook (Exit 43) and Sigourney Street (Exit 47). Adding a new interchange at Park Street, if warranted, could potentially increase congestion on the mainline as well as on Park Street. He further discussed the challenges of putting ramps on Park Street, citing the close proximity of the Park Street rail underpass, the Park River, Pope Park, and Pope Park Highway intersection.

R. Armstrong closed by inviting everyone to come over to the Open Planning Studio at Arroyo Recreation Center today, noting that the team will be there until 8 PM.

4. Discussion

There was a question whether a connection between West Boulevard and Hawthorne Street existed before the highway was constructed. T. Ryan answered that he does not think this connection ever existed.

An attendee asked if Capitol Avenue would be over or under the rail line in the W3-3 scenario. T. Ryan answered that it would go over the rail line. Another person questioned if the railroad would be moved in Parkville. T. Ryan answered that it would not.

There was also a question asking where on Capitol Avenue the new ramps will be located in the W3-3 scenario. T. Ryan discussed the details of the new interchange, pointing out where the ramps would be on a graphic. Another person voiced concern about wayfinding and the splitting of the interchange between Capitol Avenue and Laurel Street. T. Ryan answered that signage would be added to give motorists advance notice of the interchange ramp locations. There was also concern that Laurel and Park Streets will not be able to adequately handle the traffic in the W3-3 scenario. T. Ryan said that the new West Boulevard / Hawthorne Street connection would provide some redundancy in the network and allow for a redistribution of traffic. He added the traffic model predicts that the traffic on the existing streets will be less congested in this scenario than it is today.

There was a question whether the Flatbush Avenue interchange would be affected. T. Ryan answered that it will not change as part of this project.

There was a question regarding the amount of available land for potential development. T. Ryan reviewed the aerial highlighting the land that could be available for future development. He said that he expected small scale development to be a strong possibility on the new West Boulevard/Hawthorne Street connection. There was also a question about the amount of developable land on the south side of Capitol Avenue. T. Ryan answered that he suspected there would not be a lot of land available here because of grade and its location between the highway and the rail line.

There was a question whether the public park identified near the Park Towers was actually on privately owned land. T. Ryan answered yes, and that this graphic is meant to for discussion and to explore new opportunities.

There was a question whether the greenway would connect all the way to Parkville, instead of dropping off at Laurel Street. T. Ryan answered that the exact terminus had not been established, but carrying it all the way to Parkville would not likely be part of this project. Other projects could create connections to the greenway throughout the City. Marcy Miller, of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., added that the team is also looking to improve the on-street bicycle facilities of the roads that are affected by the project.

There was a question on how the project is funded. R. Armstrong answered that the current work is 85 percent federally funded and 15 percent state funded. He went on to discuss the costs of the project, which are not yet funded. He stated that even with the project eligible for federal funding, the federal dollars are limited, and the state will have a very hard time financing a \$5 billion project. He added that Governor Malloy has proposed a program to increase the state funding levels, largely because of his belief that investing in transportation will be good for the overall economy of the State.

There was a question about the project schedule. R. Armstrong stated that a decision will be made to select a preferred alternative in 2018. Construction will likely begin in 2021-2022.

There was a comment that the Park Street underpass graphic is bland. It should be made more interesting and exciting to represent the local flavor of the neighborhood. T. Ryan answered that this is great feedback. When the team gets to later stages of design, we will meet with the community to gather their input on design.

There was a question on whether it is feasible to relocate I-84 underneath Park Street. T. Ryan answered that the team has looked at this and there are challenges. These design challenges include the North Branch of the Park River Conduit and the high water table. T. Ryan added that there could be an opportunity to lengthen the overpass spans and open up area in between the eastbound and westbound travel lanes to let sunlight in. This could alleviate some of the discomfort people experience walking under the Park Street bridge.

An attendee expressed appreciation for the project team's presentation and emphasis on walkability. R. Armstrong acknowledged that other Hartford residents expressed similar concerns.

Attendees appeared to understand the limitations of rebuilding the western interchange at Sisson Avenue. These attendees had positive reactions when they were shown and described the potential benefits of the W3-3 interchange.