

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Thursday, December 18, 2014, 1:00 PM

Location: FHI, 416 Asylum Street, Hartford

Subject: Traffic and Parking Working Group #2

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
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1. Welcome / Introductions

The meeting began and everyone introduced himself / herself. Rich Armstrong noted that this was the second meeting of the Traffic and Parking Working Group and thanked everyone for coming. He provided a brief background on the I-84 Project and current Working Group efforts.

2. Presentation / Discussion

Mike Morehouse began the presentation by asking the attendees to define mobility and accessibility, and what their relationship is to one another. It was suggested that we need to consider where the transitions / access points should be on the roadway network, in particular, where they should be on I-84.

M. Morehouse presented commuter traffic volumes on I-84. Specifically, he noted where I-84 commuters live and are traveling from. He stated that a parking lot is typically their destination in Hartford. There are approximately 23,000 parking spaces in the I-84 Project area and another 29,000 parking spaces in downtown Hartford.

M. Morehouse next displayed the parking facilities that could potentially be impacted by the highway reconstruction. There was discussion of the potential impact to parking under the viaduct from both the highway construction and from the lowered highway alternative. Currently, CTDOT leases some lots underneath the viaduct to Aetna for commuter parking. Before any construction to I-84 could take place, the current contracts would be terminated. Mike Marshall noted that Aetna has a surplus of parking spaces at other lots, which they currently lease to DAS and others. Aetna, however, has the expectation that if CTDOT discontinues their lease for the lots under the viaduct, they will terminate their leases with DAS and others so the Aetna employees continue to have a place to park. In addition, DAS would lose an additional 450 off-street parking spaces near Sisson Avenue.

There is a 50-55% utilization of available parking during peak demand. It was discussed that there are 13,000 underutilized off-street parking spaces in the downtown area. Half of the on-street metered spaces are underutilized, though this could be because they have a time limit during working hours. The City is trying to figure out where capacity is and how to best address it on any day. They are currently looking into developing a mobile application with a heat map to tell people where there is available parking.

Toni Gold suggested that a policy solution for parking is needed. She suggested tolling, metered parking, and improved mass transit. She voiced her support for roundabouts. Rich Armstrong stated said that CTDOT will consider roundabouts. In addition, she questioned whether the City of Hartford would consider diagonal parking. Eric Boone noted that not all streets have adequate width for this. There was a suggestion to consider creating centralized parking locations. Improved walking environments would be required for this strategy to be successful.

Members of the Working Group discussed how the price of parking affects commuters. There are generally four types of people when it comes to parking:

1. Those who will park wherever it is the least expensive, even if they have to walk some distance to their final destination,
2. Those who will pay a premium to park close to their final destination,
3. Those who balance the cost with the distance to their final destination, and
4. Those who park for free and are unaffected by pricing policies (typically State employees).

Regarding policy changes for free parking for state employees, Doug Moore noted that when renegotiating the state union contracts, their assurance for free parking will be difficult or impossible for DAS to change. He also stated that the shuttle service for state employees for remote parking is very expensive.

M. Morehouse suggested that people could be willing to walk farther if they better understood how parking works in Hartford and if they had a more comfortable walking environment. He compared the distance that people will typically walk to get to their employment in Hartford (much less) to the distance that people will walk to get to a store at the mall (much more).

There was further discussion of the lowered highway alternative. R. Armstrong suggested that, in this alternative, the new overpasses could be built using context sensitive solutions to better integrate the local neighborhoods.

M. Marshall stated that he is less concerned with whether the highway ultimately ends up raised or lowered. He is primarily concerned that Aetna employees are able to easily get into and out of the Aetna campus. There are some state employees that use the Sigourney Street exit. Many St. Francis employees also use the Sigourney Street exit. There was discussion on the benefits of dedicated, or efficiently placed, ramps to minimize these employees traveling on the local road.

R. Armstrong suggested that the project team model a variety of ramp placements and assess the effects of the ramps to both I-84 and the local road networks.

M. Marshall also suggested looking at the power plant site and future parking opportunities there.

There was discussion that the tunnel will likely have the most impacts. When constructing a tunnel, much of the land above the tunnel would need to be cleared.

Mike Riley reminded all that businesses will continue to need trucks to move goods, into, out of, and through the City. He also raised concerns about the number of lane drops in the westbound direction.

Aaron Kupec provided results of short survey that AAA recently conducted. He stated that half of all participants would consider mass transit if viable options existed.