

## Report of Meeting

**Date and Time: Friday, October 3, 2014, 2:00 PM**

**Location: FHI, 416 Asylum Street, Hartford**

**Subject: Traffic and Parking Working Group #1**

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### 1. Introduction

The meeting began and everyone introduced himself / herself. Rich Armstrong provided a brief background on The I-84 Project efforts, including community involvement, PAC efforts, and previous and current Working Group efforts.

### 2. Key Findings from Needs and Deficiencies Report

Michael Morehouse next provided an overview of the agenda. He briefly presented what the project team learned during Needs and Deficiencies study process. He discussed key findings of the report related to traffic and trip distribution in the corridor. He stated that the team discovered that there are actually lower levels of through traffic, especially longer distances through corridor, than was originally expected.

There was discussion of the operational deficiencies of the I-84 corridor in Hartford. Toni Gold stated that there are too many interchanges on I-84 in Hartford. They are simply too close together, allowing people to use the interstate as a local road.

M. Morehouse next discussed the traffic congestion in the corridor, displaying and discussing a graphic on LOS at key local road intersections in the vicinity of the corridor. T. Gold stated that she does not support the use of LOS as criteria, because engineers and the public may falsely believe that LOS A is the ultimate goal that needs to be attained. Tim Ryan noted that LOS D is considered to be acceptable LOS to be attained in urban areas (and this corridor).

M. Morehouse next discussed the Needs and Deficiencies Study findings related to parking. He stated that the utilization was a little more than 50 percent, though this number might be misleading because of parking restrictions. There was additional discussion on parking requirements for state employees, as established in state employee union contracts. Doug Moore said that some, not all, state union contracts require that if parking is available, it must be provided for free.

### **3. Conceptual Planning Work Session**

The group next began an open discussion to identify parking needs. The HUB study did not address parking. It focused on the overall high level concepts for the corridor. T. Gold suggested that the excessive amount of surface parking lots under and around the I-84 viaduct has a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. It would be helpful to understand how other cities / states have addressed this challenge.

M. Morehouse next discussed the off-street parking supply. There are approximately 21,600 off-street spots and 1,200 on-street parking spaces within the studied area. T. Gold stated that it would be useful to know what percentage of state employees are parking in the area. D. Moore responded that CT DAS issues 6,000 permits for about 3,500 spaces. Some of the lots are overbooked by 100 percent, but most actual day-to-day parking needs are being met. Less than half of the employees park in three garages. T. Gold stated that parking policies for state employees should be considered as well as additional transit subsidies.

David Stahnke discussed the parking areas that could potentially be affected by The I-84 Hartford Project alternatives. Lowering of I-84 could impact 3,000 - 4,000 spaces. CT DAS, Aetna, and The Hartford could potentially be impacted by many of the alternatives. Many parking spaces could also be temporarily affected by construction, regardless of the final configuration of I-84.

D. Moore described the state's plans for downtown parking over the next few years. He stated that a state garage on Buckingham Street (not numbered on Off-Street Parking Facilities Map) may soon be demolished and replaced with a new 1,300-space garage. This new garage can absorb the overflow at surface lot #85 on the Off-Street Parking Facilities map. He is not sure what the plans are for the parking at 25 Sigourney Street.

D. Moore stated that the state will need to build a new water boiler / chiller plant in the future. The current system is not efficient and is nearing the end of its useful life. The pipes for the current system are located underneath the I-84 viaducts. (Re)construction of the viaducts, boiler, and pipes will all need to be coordinated with one another. The current plan is to install new boiler/chiller equipment in the existing facility. However, this equipment could be relocated in the future depending on impacts from I-84 construction.

There was a question on project timing. The displacement of parking can begin in the early 2020s.

The conversation returned to strategies of managing parking demand. T. Gold voiced support for reducing demand through state policy.

R. Armstrong said that as parking impacts begin to be quantified for each alternative, several strategies should be assessed, such as: Opportunities to use existing, available parking; creation of substitute parking; and various strategies for managing parking demand, including policy changes.

The group next began a short discussion on traffic needs. M. Morehouse questioned how Working Group members viewed the concept of interchange reduction. T. Gold voiced support for eliminating ramps in the downtown area, suggesting putting one interchange near Laurel Street. There was a comment supporting convenient ramp access to a parking garage, to bring fewer cars onto the local street network.

Aaron Kupec stated that AAA supports a multimodal approach in transportation.

There was a question about **CTfastrak** and whether it could be impacted or expanded as a result of The I-84 Project. Yes, the last 1,000 feet could have to be rebuilt due to I-84 construction. It also could be extended to Main Street, the future Hartford Stadium, and/or other downtown locations if desired and funded.

There was a concern about the future width of I-84 and the impacts near Aetna. T. Ryan answered that the actual footprint will likely be less near Aetna because of the elimination of ramps. It will still be extremely tight, however, because of construction and staging.

There was question on what the optimal capacity ratio is of local vs. interstate roads. T. Ryan stated that there is not necessarily an optimal balance, as long as the interchanges can handle the traffic. There was support assessing moving the rail station north of the highway.

#### **4. Next Steps / Future Meetings**

D. Stahnke said that it is important to get employers' and employees' thoughts on how any I-84 reconstruction could affect parking. There was a suggestion to distribute a survey through employers, perhaps one similar to the stated preference survey for tolling.

FHI will set up and email a Doodle for the next meeting in early November 2014. At the next meeting, the study team will present preliminary interchange modifications to the group. The team will also bring a graphic depicting the node destinations.

FHI will call Eric Boone (Hartford Parking Authority), Mike Marshall, and Mike Riley about the Working Group and their participation at future meetings.