



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Tuesday, September 13, 2016, 2 pm**

**Location: Immanuel Congregational, 10 Woodland Street**

**Subject: Urban Design Working Group #6**

### 1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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**2. Discussion**

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, welcomed everyone and said that today’s meeting would be a working session and everyone is welcome to speak throughout the session. He then introduced Mitch Glass of Goody Clancy. M. Glass stated that the project team has been working on new concepts that can minimize the visual impact of the highway.

M. Glass acknowledged the challenges of integrating the highway into the city, including neighborhood discontinuity, mitigating the visual and noise impacts, creating quality local streets for pedestrians and bicyclists, and creating attractive places. He said that this can be accomplished a number of different ways, including a cap on the highway, new buildings and streets over the highway, expanded decking for bridges, landscaping and raised planters, topography, and screen walls. He turned the presentation over to Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation, to provide a review of the various capping scenarios. C. Hardin described the different potential caps from Asylum to Broad Street, Broad to Sigourney Streets, and Sigourney to Park Streets. There was discussion on the different design features, elevations, and costs of the different cap sections.

C. Hardin summarized the benefits and challenges of each of the cap sections. He stated that the project team does not see a tremendous opportunity for development over the Broad to Sigourney Streets cap. It would provide a wider east-west connection, but not enhance north-south connectivity over the highway, railroad and busway corridors. There are challenges related to topography (cap would be above the ground and it would essentially act as a wall, between Sigourney Street and Capitol Avenue).

There was a question on how the cost of potential caps would be financed. In particular, would tolling be used to pay for capping even though a cap would not reduce congestion? R. Armstrong acknowledged that while the Lowered Alternative is the least expensive of all the build alternatives, it still is expensive. He added that the innovative financing language on the project website does not mean to imply that tolling would be used to finance the cap or the project.

An attendee asked how many lanes would exist in each direction after the highway is reconstructed. Tim Ryan, of TranSystems Corporation, answered that after construction there would be three continuous lanes in each direction up to the I-91 interchange. The better design and consolidation of ramps would have a positive impact on congestion and safety.

Bernie Michel of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association asked what the current volumes are on the highway. T. Ryan answered that the highway carries about 170,000 vehicles per day. Nick Mandler, of TranSystems Corporation, added that the peak volumes have been the same for decades. Mike Riley stated that increasing the throughput on the highway is important and should be considered an improvement.

An attendee asked if the power plant would be impacted. Rich Armstrong, of Connecticut Department of Transportation, stated that that power plant would likely be impacted no matter what alternative is chosen.

M. Glass next described the general public investments that could potentially be made as part of the project, as well as potential opportunities for private investment. He walked the audience through a series of four areas that could be reconfigured in the corridor, in terms of basic improvements and enhanced improvements. He reminded the group that the project could free up as many as 40 acres of developable land. He showed oblique and street visualizations of potential public improvements and private development in the four areas.

There was a question about who would be on the receiving end of the potentially available land. TSC explained the process by which excess land could be obtained. Land is offered to (in order): CTDOT, other State agencies, the municipality, and public auction. If the parcel is non-conforming it could be made available to adjacent land owners. CTDOT and FHWA do not undertake economic development. As the project moves forward, guidance from the City will be needed to progress urban design concepts.

Jennifer Cassidy, of Business for Downtown Hartford, asked about the process for replacing impacted housing. R. Armstrong answered that the property owners are compensated and relocation assistance is provided to residents. The Department does not build replacement housing.

An attendee asked about the drawing of the conceptual parking garage located over a lowered highway north of Asylum Street in the presentation. M. Glass replied that this concept was intended to 1) be parking for a multi-modal hub that would allow centralized parking and internal circulation to the new rail annex and existing Union Station, 2) free up other solid-ground land parcels for more commercial or residential development without the burden of having to include parking, and 3) create a positive street edge along Asylum Street with a small building attached to the front of the garage. An attendee pointed out that reduced parking requirements for development were part of Hartford's new zoning code. M. Glass indicated that the urban design of this area will be further studied in the next steps of the project.

An attendee asked when the rail line would be moved. T. Ryan answered that the rail relocation would be included in the first phase of project work.

An attendee questioned how the grade difference between the rail station and the park will be accommodated. T. Ryan answered that Asylum Avenue would keep the same grade as it currently has.

An attendee questioned whether any consideration has been given to public transportation. Dave Stahnke, of TranSystems Corporation answered that the project team will definitely review public transit service closely. CT *fastrak* and the Hartford Line are both looking to expand service in the project area, and the team will also recommend improvements to the bus

system. There was a comment that there are certain cross town connections that are not currently served by buses and that in general, the City needs greater cross town bus connectivity. D. Stahnke suggested writing this detailed comment down and submitting it online.

M. Riley asked how delivery vehicles are expected to make temporary stops where the lanes are narrower and on-street parking is eliminated. D. Stahnke answered that parking and delivery services are critical and the team will assess these further.

M. Glass stated that the project team's next steps are to continue the development of enhancement strategies, concepts, and diagrams.

Toni Gold questioned who will be responsible for maintenance of new facilities. R. Armstrong answered that the Department will maintain the structure of the bridges over the highway, and the City would maintain what is on top of those structures.

There was discussion about the ability to shorten the duration of construction by closing down portions of the highway. R. Armstrong answered that the team was uncertain if this is possible, but planned to assess this in detail (probably in 2017). Another attendee asked if there could be cost savings as a result of accelerated construction. R. Armstrong said that it is possible to save money this way, because throw-away construction can be avoided.

An attendee questioned when construction will begin. R. Armstrong answered that construction could start in the early 2020s.