

Route 10 Steering Committee Meeting #13
Simsbury Town Hall, Main Meeting Room
Minutes of September 8, 2011 – 7:00 PM

ATTENDEES:	<u>Name</u>	<u>Company*</u>
	Mary Glassman	First Selectman – Town of Simsbury
	Alan Needham	Planning Commission - SC
	Emil Dahlquist	Design Review Board – SC
	Rick Wagner	Representing local business in corridor – SC
	Kirsten Griebel	Resident – SC
	Mike Fish	Representing local business in corridor – SC
	Mark Deming	Economic Development Commission – SC
	Nancy Haase	Board of Selectmen – SC
	Jim Gallagher	Zoning Commission – SC
	Emily Moos	CRCOG – PT
	Hiram Peck	Town of Simsbury - PT
	Sue Bednarcyk	Member of the Public
	Janet Miller	Member of the Public

* SC = Steering Committee
PT = Project Team

Welcome and Business

Mary Glassman welcomed everyone to the meeting. She asked Emily Moos to list the handouts that were distributed to the Steering Committee.

Ms. Glassman stated that the committee did not need to vote tonight, but that a possible approach would be to begin with an explanation of refinements made to the draft report as a result of the public comment period.

Adoption of Minutes

Ms. Moos stated that the committee members had just received copies of minutes from the last three meetings and that it might be best to give them several minutes to look over these copies before asking for a motion to adopt them.

Kirsten Griebel asked if it the committee could table the minutes.

Ms. Glassman stated that the committee would table the minutes until later in the meeting if the committee has a chance to look over them.

Public Comment

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Janet Miller stated that she was surprised at the changes in the report after the public comment period, particularly the change in the South Gateway with regard to the parallel roadway recommendation. She stated that she had concerns about this roadway's connection to Blue Ridge Drive and Latimer lane. Both of these are residential neighborhoods and Latimer Lane also has crosswalks that are regularly used by children who go to school there and by bicycles and pedestrians. She was also concerned about the language in the report regarding the bridge connecting the parallel roadway to Latimer Lane and going across the River. She stated that this concept does not respect Farmington River Watershed comments heard throughout the steering committee meeting process.

Sue Bednarczyk stated that the access roads in both the North and the South Gateways encourage density which is not what the community wants. She stated that the consultant team had commented on these roadways leading to greater density. She stated that creating these roads would lead to ruining the character of Simsbury and that comments had not been heard in favor of these roadways and that she is disappointed in the team and the refinements made. She stated that there would be lawyers involved in opposing these recommendations.

Discussion of Final Draft Report**Summary of Public Comments**

Ms. Glassman asked Ms. Moos to go through the public comments for the committee.

Emil Dahlquist requested that Ms. Moos specify how the public comment period works

Ms. Moos asked if she could frame her comments by addressing the questions related to the public comment process and then use the summary sheet of key refinements to address how comments were incorporated.

Ms. Glassman and the committee stated that this approach makes sense.

Ms. Moos explained that the public comment process followed for the RT 10 Corridor Study was typical of the processes followed in other CRCOG Corridor Studies. She stated that public comments come to the CRCOG project manager, either via email or over the phone. She stated that no comments came via phone for this study. She stated that all comments are saved in a central location in the study files and that they are compiled into a public comment log. Ms. Moos stated that the responses to comments are listed along with who made each comment, when the comment came in and what area of the report the comment referred to.

Mr. Dahlquist asked Ms. Moos to clarify how the responses to the comments are formulated.

Ms. Moos stated that the responses to comments are a coordinated effort led by CRCOG with assistance from the consultant team and input from the steering committee, town staff and stakeholders. She stated that she had weekly phone calls during the public comment period with the consultant team to get gain their technical input. Ms. Moos stated that in this study, an extra step was taken to provide

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the steering committee with weekly updates on comments that had come in during the comment period and responses to those comments as a measure to ensure that the committee could have as much input into the process as possible.

Ms. Moos stated that there were only two differences with the public comment log passed out this evening and the log that was last sent to the committee in mid-August. The differences were that a general response to all comments regarding the Nod Raod/RT 185 intersections was entered and that the refinements made in this area would be discussed this evening. She stated that the last comment appearing on the comment log was also new as it was received on August 25th regarding the fountain as a feature for the new Weatogue Village Green.

Kirsten Griebel noted an inconsistency in the comment on the public comment log regarding the Fountain stating that the commenter had previously mentioned that the Fountain should remain in its current location at the RT 185 and RT 10 intersection and that instead the statue in this area should be moved to the future Weatogue Village Green.

Ms. Moos stated that this was an error on the team's part and that the team would fix the response to this in the language of the report.

Having finished the review of the public comment log and process, Ms. Moos again directed the committee's attention to the handout entitled "Refinements to Draft Final RT 10 Corridor study Report." Starting with the North Gateway, Ms. Moos explained that as a result of the public comment process, particularly comments from stakeholders, the North Gateway section had been refined to address creating "nodes of visual density with small setbacks in certain areas while also preserving a "visual connection to the agrarian history of the area" by establishing larger setbacks between nodes. Ms. Moos stated that there had also been refinement to the language regarding the preservation of the barns to state that any structures that were unsafe or costly to preserve should not be preserved, but that an agrarian feel to the architecture and design of the area might be included in any future plans or building designs to preserve the character of the area. Ms. Moos stated that in this section, language had also been clarified regarding the parallel roadway recommended to connect Hoskins Road and the Ice Rink driveway to state that the final location of this road must be set during site planning with private owners.

There were questions regarding the meaning of nodes of visual density and a statement that this should not encourage strip commercial development.

Hiram Peck stated that this wording is meant to convey village style development nodes rather than strip style development.

Emil Dahlquist stated that some language to use to convey non-strip style development could be, "concentrate, organize and intensify" development. Nancy Haase offered the term "cluster" development. Kirsten Griebel stated that the report could simply state "avoid strip-style development." The committee wanted to note in the report that this concept is consistent with the POCD.

Jim Gallagher raised a question regarding the barns stating that it does not make sense to try to preserve these barns at the expense of being able to develop property.

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Ms. Moos stated that the text now notes that barn preservation should not take precedence in planning and designing the future growth of the north end where it is too costly or where the barns are structurally unsound, but that the text does encourage the preservation of the agrarian character of the area, potentially through the architecture of future buildings, etc.

Hiram Peck cited Stew Leonard's as an example of a building that has the agrarian feel – not necessarily that that scale or type of a building would be built in the northern gateway, but that the feeling of the architecture is similar to what could be achieved.

Jim Gallagher mentioned that the lot coverage that the barns would take up would count against the coverage that any future developer might be able to access through current zoning for this land.

Nancy Haase suggested that the town could incentivize preserving the barns by giving the developer some other allowance on the property.

Rick Wagner questioned why this study was getting into the design of this area seeing as it is primarily a transportation study.

Ms. Moos stated in this type of study there is an increasingly fine line between transportation planning and urban design which defines the “context sensitive” approach that these studies take. She stated that the character of the area and these barns were discussed many times at the charrette and through the public process, so that is why language regarding preservation is showing up in the report.

Alan Needham and Kirsten Griebel both stated that they wished to keep the language regarding the barns in the text of the report in this section.

Kirsten Griebel asked whether the landowners who had opposed the parallel roadway had changed their position on this road.

Hiram Peck stated that they had become more comfortable with this concept once realizing that these improvements would be public/private improvements with questions regarding road configuration decided during the development process with developer input.

Emil Dahlquist stated that connecting properties to limit curb cuts is a great idea and that he would support the parallel road concept.

Sue Benardczyk stated that she is concerned about encouraging intensity of development in this area.

Emil Dahlquist stated that he would not suspect that this is an area of the corridor to worry about development intensity becoming an issue regarding town character.

Rick Wagner stated that as a landowner in the North Gateway, the parallel roadway concept has the potential to relieve congestion from Route 10.

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Alan Needham stated that the parallel roadway recommendation is a relatively benign recommendation to keep RT 10 two lanes in the future.

Another Committee member stated that on the matrix, recommendation #6 should be moved to the appendix according to committee comments at the last steering committee meeting.

Moving on to the Nod Road/RT 185/East Weatogue intersection, Ms. Moos talked through the process that the team went through to come to the recommendation presented in this draft of the plan. She stated that the recommendation reflects the same improvement recommended in the 1998 plan which shifts Nod Road slightly to the east and incorporates a recreational parking lot which could become a model for green infrastructure and low impact development techniques. She stated that this version of the recommendation does not limit left turns out of Nod Road onto RT 185 which alleviates the risk of having additional traffic on East Weatogue Street. She stated that the roundabout concept at East Weatogue Street is designed to improve safety at this intersection as it provides a continuous flow of traffic at 10-15 miles per hour. She stated that the geometry of the roundabout is a smaller geography than the existing teardrop intersection. She stated that in the report there is also an option listed to implement a T-intersection concept at East Weatogue Street and RT 185.

There were questions regarding the configuration of both the Nod RD and RT 185 and the East Weatogue and RT 185 intersections and the number of lanes at and leading up to each.

Jim Gallagher had question relating to how a vehicle would move through the roundabout. Alan Needham stated that the addition of the roundabout information section to the report is very helpful for people to understand roundabouts and how they function.

Alan Needham stated that he had questions regarding how this recommendation solves the bottle-neck of traffic at the RT 185 and Nod Road intersection. He and Kirsten Griebel stated that they wanted some clarification on this concept. Alan Needham stated that he felt that a roundabout is a "classy" entrance to Simsbury off of RT 185.

Ms. Moos stated that she could request some technical information from the consultant team on how the intersection at Nod Road and RT 185 alleviates the bottleneck.

Kirsten Griebel stated that the report should mention considerations for bicyclists throughout the Nod Road, RT 185, East Weatogue street area and particularly through the roundabout intersection. She also stated that it would be good to get the Farmington River Watershed Association's input on the Low Impact Development parking lot and the wetland impacts of this recommendation as a whole.

A committee member stated that they were not in favor of the stop light alternative at the East Weatogue/RT 185 intersection and questioned whether the report could highly recommend the roundabout.

Nancy Haase stated that it would be a nice addition to the report to see some data regarding roundabouts v. traffic signals in terms of speeds through each.

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Ms. Moos stated that she was unsure on whether data exists comparing speeds through each type of intersection, but that there is data regarding the rate at which each type of intersection processes traffic.

Moving on to the Southern Gateway, Ms. Moos explained that the project team wanted to revisit the parallel roadway alternative due to comments heard from the public about access management and safety issues in other areas of the corridor. She stated that the team also felt that a broad look at the corridor led to this effort to balance recommendations throughout the corridor.

Kirsten Griebel stated that she was unsure why the alternative for the river crossing was back in the report as a recommendation when both the steering committee and the Farmington River Watershed Association were opposed to it.

Nancy Haase also stated that these roadway recommendations should be back in the appendix.

Emil Dahlquist stated that this is the least defensible recommendation in the report and that while there are some issues such as the staggered Old Meadow Plain Road and the Chubb entry driveway, this recommendation should not be in the body of the report.

Jim Gallagher stated that the committee should consider the process of the State Traffic Commission on approving curb cuts. He states that this process can take a long time.

Mark Deming stated that considering this process, it would make sense to plan for an access roadway for any potential future development.

Kirsten Griebel stated that the town commissions would be able to regulate what happens with the driveways of future properties.

The committee agreed that this recommendation should be moved back to the non-endorsed recommendations section of the report with an explanation as to why it is there and that the text in the report should state that in this area the town should promote access management by guiding future development to link into existing curb cuts in this area to minimize safety impacts to RT 10 in the form of excessive curb cuts.

Moving on to general comments, Kirsten Griebel stated that the matrix in the report is missing the bike, transit and pedestrian recommendations and that when it gets placed back into the report, they could be placed first to place an emphasis on bike, pedestrian and transit improvements in town. She also stated that the matrix needed to be ordered from south to north.

Nancy Haase requested that the page numbers on the left hand pages of the report be moved to the outside edge to make the report easier to read.

A committee member remarked that the large format of the report is hard to work with.

Mary Glassman asked if the team could post on the website a format that is 8 ½ x 11.

Alan Needham mentioned a type on page 15 of the report.

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Emil Dahlquist stated that he still felt that the recommendation to extend Iron Horse is bad town planning and that extending a town center like this might encourage strip style development.

Ms. Moos stated that this extension roadway had a significant potential to take traffic impacts off of RT 10.

Hiram Peck stated that perhaps the extension roadway could be reduced in scale to more of a service road and could be called something other than Iron Horse Extension.

Alan Needham stated that it is imperative in the South Gateway that something be done at the trail crossing on RT 10 because he recently witnessed another unsafe situation with a bicyclist. He stated that any way to highlight this as a high priority in the report would be desirable.

Next Steps

Ms. Moos stated that committee members could send any final comments to her directly.

Adjourn

Ms. Glassman asked for a motion to adjourn.

Kirsten Griebel made a motion and Alan Needham seconded. The motion passed unanimously.