

Capitol Region Council of Governments

241 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106

Route 305 Advisory Committee Meeting

Bloomfield Town Hall

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

7:00 PM

Committee Members

Jon Colman
Deborah Davis
Jonathan Thiesse
Thom Hooper
Al LeFebvre
John F. Sheehan
Don Bercowetz
Barry Berson
David Kamins

Organization

Bloomfield Town Council
Bloomfield Economic Development
Bloomfield Engineering
Bloomfield P&Z
Former Council Member
Bloomfield Town Council
Bloomfield Business Owner
TPZ Bloomfield
TPZ Bloomfield

Others

Melanie Zimyeski
Grayson Wright
Tom Maziarz
Robert Berman

ConnDOT
ConnDOT
CRCOG
Bloomfield Town Council

Project Team

Jennifer Carrier
Emily Moos
Rod Bascom
Jeff Parker
Dave Sousa

CRCOG
CRCOG
CHA
CHA
CHA

Public Attendees

Fred Hesketh
Susan Viner

Resident
Windsor Resident

Meeting Purpose: Route 305 Corridor Study – Local Advisory Committee workshop to discuss land use, undeveloped land and traffic generation.

1. Welcome and Progress Update

Jennifer Carrier of CRCOG led introductions and updated the committee on progress since the November 29, 2007 Advisory Committee meeting. The following summarizes Ms. Carrier's update:

- Windsor Advisory Committee meeting held January 9, 2008. At that meeting the following was discussed: future development, Town's efforts to establish development strategies and goals for the Day Hill Corporate area; traffic mitigation strategies.
- Meeting with Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) to discuss potential at-grade rail crossing held on December 18, 2007. A new at-grade crossing will require obtaining the support of the DOT Commissioner and then appealing to the General Assembly. This is clearly spelt out in the state statutes. Overall a crossing in the Peter's Road area would be a tangible construction cost, roughly in the \$1-\$3 million range. As the study advances we can look at potential trade-off crossings of the rail line which could help with buy-in from the state. DOT had suggested looking at Mills Lane. The Committee identified that closing the Mills Lane crossing is not an option that will be pursued due to

emergency and fire response alone. The committee expressed a desire to investigate ConnDOT's opinion about rail activity / service on the existing rail line. Tom Maziarz pointed out the distinction between passenger and freight rail lines and said that the DOT has not seen a large future for passenger rail on this line, but does have an interest in keeping a freight line active.

- Meetings with Bloomfield and Windsor town planners were held to discuss preliminary land use data and future planning
- Major traffic generators in corridor study area were reviewed (map distributed in handouts)
- Resident and commuter surveys were completed and web-based format was closed.
- Team continues to coordinate with town IT departments on project website.
- Existing conditions analysis and technical report being completed.
- Additional Automatic Traffic Record counts are being conducted by the consultant on Woodland Ave.

2. Adoption of Minutes (Meeting on November 29, 2007)

A motion was made by Barry Berson, seconded by Al LeFebvre, to accept the minutes of the November 29, 2007 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Future Development Assumptions

David Sousa of CHA presented the preliminary Land Use Build Out Model which included a discussion of analysis zones, future development and transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. He asked the committee to guide the project team with making assumptions about the growth of certain land uses.

The committee expressed that 20% is a reasonable floor area ratio (FAR), particularly as the maximum coverage requirement in the zoning regulations includes parking lots.

The committee expressed interest in seeing busses and more mixed uses in the area of Route 305, and recognized that this may be the critical turning point to allow for more density. This density could be achieved by changing the town's history of discouraging housing in industrial districts.

Thom Hooper, Bloomfield Town Planner noted that there will be a hearing on the night of January 24th to discuss allowing a multi-family zone into a currently industrial zoned area. The discussion comes up because there is an existing proposal to construct 90-housing units on the southeast corner of Woodland and Blue Hills Ave.

Tom Maziarz reminded the group that the idea of this land use exercise is to gain the information necessary to make informed decisions on the future of Route 305 as a roadway. Mr. Maziarz questioned whether the Town would want to begin a discussion on updating its master plan as a result of this study and suggested that the findings of this study could help facilitate that process.

Tom Maziarz reminded the committee of the Northwest Corridor Transit Study that is currently underway. That study will look at service modifications to transit and land use decisions to ensure future development can be served by transit.

The study team mentioned that allowing for residential uses inside of industrial or office zone creates a reverse peak traffic scenario which is desirable and is along the lines of Traffic Demand Management. One individual recognized the demand in the current market for senior housing and stressed that this use would also mitigate future traffic congestion.

The Committee stressed a lack of network or east-west access. They expressed concern that this lack of network will cause potential for bottlenecks stemming from the development of the Hartford and ING in Windsor.

Related to future diversity of uses – it was suggested that the following splits be used: 5% Residential, 5% Research and Development, 3% Retail, 50% Warehousing and 37% General Office.

The Committee questioned if there were options for transit such as employer incentives or stipends and if a shuttle service would work. Transit options will be studied within the Northwest Corridor Study that CRCOG is managing and generally within this study.

4. Development of Corridor Vision and Goals

The committee stressed the desire to have more transit service and a better mix of uses in the future to serve a potential growing residential population as well as the workers at new industrial developments. One committee member suggested targeting 5% of the commuters for bus transit. Others on the committee noted that this work is already being done and that a transit initiative has begun which involved the State Department of Economic Development.

The committee also noted that while the goals and objectives stress the need to provide for pedestrians, Bloomfield has had issues in the past with implementing sidewalk plans, likely because of the maintenance component.

Concern was raised over what happens when disagreements occur during the process of determining goals and objectives. Jennifer Carrier stated that this process will be aided by the joint steering committee meetings and that reaching consensus will be a back and forth process between the towns. Alternatives that “meet half-way” such as narrower lanes, planted center islands or other treatments may assist when trying to reach consensus.

Ultimately the Committee asked that improved access to Interstate 91 and better east-west connectivity in town be incorporated into the list of study goals and objectives.

5. Public Open House

Jennifer Carrier stated that the time has come to hold the first Public Open House of the study. A potential time frame mentioned was during the month of March or the first week in April. The Open House will be interactive with maps for the public to mark up, a traffic simulation at a key intersection in the corridor and a formal presentation at 6:30 PM which will focus on the overall study and existing conditions.

The committee agreed that the Senior Center would be an appropriate location to hold the Public Meeting and wanted to the study team to take into consideration the large amount of night meetings in Bloomfield during March due to the budget process.

6. Public Comments

One member of the public commented that the parcel identified as 25A is residentially zoned.

7. Next Steps

Jennifer Carrier informed the committee that the consultant will work on completing a draft technical memorandum on existing conditions. CRCOG will work to schedule a joint steering committee meeting to coordinate analysis of future land use and future development. The Project Team will prepare to hold public open houses (in Bloomfield and Windsor) and will begin to analyze future traffic conditions.

Jennifer Carrier called for volunteers to sit on the Joint Steering Committee. Al LeFebvre had volunteered at the November 29th meeting. Jon Coleman and Thom Hooper also volunteered. It was requested that the meetings take place during the workday rather than in the evening.

8. Other Business

The next Bloomfield Advisory Committee meeting was scheduled for April 30, 2008 at 7 PM.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.