

Capitol Region Council of Governments

241 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106

**Route 305 Advisory Committee Meeting
Bloomfield Town Hall
Wednesday, October 22, 2008
7:00 PM**

**Final Endorsed by
Committee on 12/16/2008**

Committee Members

Thom Hooper
Don Bercowetz
Barry Berson
Randy Lavigne
Al LeFebvre
John F. Sheehan
Jonathan Thiesse

Organization

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

Others

Melanie Zimyeski
Grayson Wright

ConnDOT
ConnDOT

Project Team

Jennifer Carrier
Lia Huang
Rod Bascom
Jeff Parker

CRCOG
CRCOG
CHA
CHA

Public Attendees

Scott Blackburn
Fred Hesketh
Nick Lavieri

Kaman Corporation
Bloomfield Journal
Kamatics Corporation

Meeting Purpose: Route 305 Corridor Study –Local Advisory Committee meeting to follow up on last meeting and discuss potential future improvement alternatives.

1. Welcome and Progress Update

Jennifer Carrier led introductions and updated the committee on progress since the May 28, 2008 Advisory Committee meeting. The following summarizes Ms. Carrier's update:

- Future development numbers were finalized and input into CRCOG's regional travel demand model.
- CRCOG input alternative concepts into the regional model and reviewed preliminary data to understand traffic variations. Memorandum of those findings, issued on October 14, 2008, summarizing the preliminary results will be discussed.
- Research completed to answer questions raised in the May 28, 2008 Advisory Committee meeting.
- A meeting was held on October 1, 2008 with the rail operator, the towns of Bloomfield and Windsor, and ConnDOT to discuss the corridor study and existing rail operations along the Griffin Line.

2. Adoption of Minutes (Meeting on May 28, 2008)

A motion was made by Al LeFebvre, seconded by Randy Lavigne, to accept the minutes of the May 28, 2008 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Preliminary Alternative Analysis Findings and Discussion

Jennifer Carrier reviewed the Alternatives Analysis-Traffic Variations Memorandum for the Committee. It was clarified that the traffic impact graphics are based on 2030 growth trends for population, land use, and transportation. It was also noted that the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) estimates include all types of vehicles.

4. Future Conditions (with development) and Anticipated Traffic

Jennifer Carrier reviewed information related to future 2030 traffic growth, with development. The development reflects an extensive effort put forth by the towns and the consultant, accounting for steep slopes, wetlands, open space, and development trends. The 2030 scenario, with development, was compared to the baseline year (2005 which is very similar to 2007) and percentage growth was discussed.

5. Route 305 Potential Alternatives – Follow Up Discussion

A. Railroad Coordination

Jeff Parker led a discussion on the railroad coordination. The key issues being investigated are public safety and rail operations. During the October 1st railroad stakeholder meeting, the railroad and ConnDOT raised concerns related to existing railroad operations at Home Depot and potential for railroad queues onto a new at-grade crossing. CHA further reviewed this concern and prepared some preliminary concepts to address a potential backup. The concepts still need to be discussed with the railroad operator and ConnDOT however, Jeff summarized the concept for the Committee: constructing a new piece of track along the west side of the existing Home Depot building, extending the siding and allowing a run-around operation. The concept would allow sufficient room for an at-grade crossing, clearing the circuits on either side of the new road. The Committee mentioned that obtaining the right-of-way for the rail-extension concept may be challenging.

B. Concept Options: At-Grade

Concept 1 - At-grade crossing by extending Peters Road westerly to Route 189: The Committee agreed that this appears to be a good concept; will need to work with stakeholders such as Nationwide Moving to develop further. A committee member noted that this is the most direct route of all of the presented concepts. Concept 2 – At grade crossing by shifting Peters Road northerly in the vicinity of Highland Park Road to eventually intersect Route 189 north of the Nationwide Moving site. The Committee felt this concept may provide less disruptive to existing business operations however stakeholders will need to be consulted with.

General Discussion

- An at-grade crossing in the vicinity of Peter's Road is preferred to a grade separated crossing since it will be less expensive, more direct, and will require fewer environmental and right of way impacts.
- ConnDOT approval may be more difficult for an at-grade crossing.
- A committee member expressed concern over shifting east/west travel to the north/south roads like Woodland Avenue. The committee member also felt that environmental permits may be very difficult to obtain and that additional meetings with stakeholders will need to be held to review these concepts.

C. Concept Options: Grade Separated

Concept 1 – Grade separated crossing that follows Peters Road to Highland Park Road and crosses the railroad tracks aerially just south of the existing Home Depot building. Grades would be in the 7% range and the structure would be approximately 240 feet long. The cost to construct, for comparative purposes, would be about \$5million (2008 dollars). The Committee felt that the very steep sections are not desirable and noted some commercial impacts.

Concept 2 – Grade separated crossing very similar to Concept 1 however the alignment would cross the tracks aerially further south of the Home Depot building. Grades would be in the 5% range and the structure would be approximately 120 feet long. The Committee felt this was a better concept than Concept 1, because of lesser grade and structure length.

Concept 3 – Grade separated crossing that uses Woodland Avenue and Mucko Road , aerially crossing the railroad tracks south of the Home Depot facility. The Committee did not like the offset “jog” that would be created and it was noted that individuals may also elect to travel Peters Road and Highland Park Road. Wetland and environmental impacts were also highlighted as a disadvantage.

Concept 4 – Grade Separated crossing that travels off-line in the vicinity of West Dudley Town Road to Woodland Avenue and continues north-westerly off-line aerially crossing the railroad south of the Home Depot facility. Variations of this concept were discussed, showing alignment variations in the vicinity of Woodland Avenue. The Committee felt this was the preferred concept, if an at-grade crossing would not work, however the significant environment impacts were noted. This concept, compared to other grade-separate alternatives, provided a more direct route and is expected to have fewer property owner impacts. The project team mentioned that if this concept was to advance, an Environmental Assessment would need to be performed and that in general wetland permits, after design is complete, could take 18 to 24 months to secure.

D. *Curve near East Newberry Road*

Jeff Parker reviewed improvement concepts from the last meeting and presented variations to the concept that include realigning East Newberry Road directly opposite Belden Road. The realigned concept would require coordination with existing property owners. The Committee felt that relocating East Newberry Road opposite Belden Road would improve safety in the area.

E. *Old Iron Ore Road*

The project team conducted additional traffic counts at this location and has begun analyzing the intersection. Preliminary findings include general driver confusion and safety concerns due to the skew of the intersection. Conceptual improvements discussed last time include realigning the intersection. A traffic signal may be warranted in the future. The project team will complete the intersection analysis and meet with area stakeholders regarding traffic circulation through the intersection. It was brought to the Project Team's attention that there is a shift change at 3:30 PM that may cause traffic issues; further investigation is needed.

A phased approach may be best for this intersection: first realign the intersection; if this does not alleviate safety issues and Level of Service then pursue signalization, if warranted.

6. Public Comments

A member of the public questioned whether a second rail line ran parallel to the Griffin Line at one point in time. Discussion among the committee members resolved that the second track was a runaround only and not a complete second line.

7. Next Steps

Jennifer Carrier reviewed the updated schedule provided to Committee members.

- The Project Team will meet with stakeholders to discuss alternatives for this corridor.
- The next Bloomfield Advisory Committee meeting will be held in late November or early December.
- A second Steering Committee meeting to discuss concepts along the entire corridor will also be held within the next few months.
- The next public meeting will be scheduled for early 2009.
- The final report is currently scheduled for May 2009.

8. Other Business - No other business was brought to the attention of the Committee.

9. Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.