

10. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The primary changes to the Capitol Region Transportation Plan that occur with the adoption of this 2007 edition of the Plan are: an update of the status of projects recommended in earlier plans, the re-affirmation of policies adopted in earlier plans, incorporation of recommendations from a technical study that was completed since the adoption of the previous Plan, and some reorganization to better highlight issues required by new federal transportation legislation. Two new items of significance, however, were addressed in this plan: the determination of consistency between this Plan and State and Regional Plans of Conservation and Development and the change in status of the proposal to construct a new Route 6 from a project of "statewide significance" to an "unfunded need."



Public involvement activities were conducted specifically for this Plan update, as well as for certain components. Efforts that were undertaken for components new to this Plan are described below. A summary of modifications to reflect public input is included at the end of this chapter. ¹

Meetings with Special Focus

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE LAND USE PLANS.

CRCOG staff met with State land use planning officials on December 27, 2006. Representatives from the CT Department of Environmental Protection included the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Quality and staff from the Air Management, Planning & Program Development, Environmental Review departments. Representatives from the CT Office of Policy and Management included staff from the Office of Responsible Growth, and Energy and Transportation departments. CRCOG staff represented both the Transportation department and the Community Development department.

Consistent with State Plans:

The RTP considered consistent state land use plans.

Issues of mutual interest:

New Britain Busway & TOD.

A complete discussion of the outcome of this meeting is described in Chapter 1: Linking Land Use and Transportation, but the conclusion of the meeting participants was that there were no concerns about the consistency of RTP recommendations with state plans and policies and that there were issues of mutual interest that all parties agreed that continued collaboration was important. The issues of mutual interest were the support for the implementation of the New Britain Busway, and a need to promote Transit Oriented Development along the New Britain Busway and elsewhere in the Region.

CONSISTENCY WITH REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

CRCOG transportation staff attended the January 18, 2007 regular meeting the Regional Planning Commission. A presentation on the earlier Plan and some potential changes that might be included in the 2007 Plan was given. A complete discussion of the outcome of this meeting is described in *Chapter 1: Linking Land Use and Transportation*, but the conclusion was that there were no concerns about consistency between the Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Plan for Conservation and Development.

Consistent with Regional Plan:

The RTP considered consistent with regional land use plan.

Suggestions incorporated:

updated and continued emphasis on land use issues incorporated into the 2007 Plan.

¹ See earlier Plans for descriptions of outreach efforts taken for components incorporated into the Plan prior to 2007.

The comments made by the regional planning commissioners and the CROCOG community development staff included recommendations to update the Plan incorporating new smart growth principals such as “complete streets,” to add an expanded discussion of Transit Oriented Design, and to continue to provide coordination and consistency between the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development and the Regional Transportation Plan. These suggestions were incorporated in this Plan.

CHANGE IN STATUS OF ROUTE 6

The change in the status of the Route 6 relocation proposal was one of the most significant issues to be addressed in the update of the Regional Transportation Plan. Due to the importance of the issue, CROCOG staff prepared a briefing paper to review the project history and explain the environmental permitting issue and its current status. The briefing paper was provided to Transportation Committee members. More importantly, it was shared with the towns of Andover and Bolton. Additionally, CROCOG staff met with town officials in Bolton (December 8, 2006) and Andover (January 8, 2007) to discuss the pending change in status for the Route 6 relocation proposal.

After the meetings, officials of both towns informed CROCOG that they recognized that the environmental issues affecting Route 6 will be not resolved in the foreseeable future. They also understood the need to remove the project from the financially constrained portion of the Plan. However, they wanted the project to be retained as an unfunded need. They also asked for assistance in developing a new strategy managing economic development, traffic growth, traffic safety, and access management in the existing Route 6 corridor.

The Route 6 relocation is included in this Plan as an unfunded need. The Plan also includes a recommendation for a Route 6 corridor study.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

CROCOG staff met with a representative of the Capitol Regional Environmental Justice on February 21, 2007 to briefly review the expected changes to the new Plan, and to determine a convenient time and place for a meeting of the full EJ Advisory Board.

The full EJAB met on April 3, 2007 to discuss the Plan. A presentation was made by CROCOG staff on the whole of the new Plan, with special emphasis on the proposed changes. The Environmental Justice Chapter was reviewed in detail. Following an in-depth discussion, the Board recommended two changes to the Plan:

1. There should be strong support for using technology to enhance transit service for bus riders.
2. The recommendation for clean diesel buses should be expanded to include clean diesel construction equipment used on highway projects.

Both of these recommendations have been included in this final Plan.

Related Community Involvement Efforts:

CAPITOL REGION PEDESTRIAN PLAN

CROCOG’s Regional Pedestrian Plan, *Walking Matters*, was adopted on May 25, 2005. Recommendations from the plan are incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan as part of this update, so the outreach effort for that study is summarized here.

This Plan was subjected to an intense community involvement effort that included guidance by the Bike and Pedestrian Subcommittee, more than 1000 personal notices of opportunities to comment, news releases sent to more than 50 media outlets, contact with town officials and town planners, a meeting with the Hartford School Crossing Guards, as well as the normal outreach efforts of publishing legal notices and holding public information meetings.

Some communities assisted with CRCOG's outreach effort, including West Hartford's inclusion of our meeting notice in a message to its list serve subscribers, a news item sent to its own local media outlets, mention in "Council Briefs," and publication on the Town's web calendar.

More than 40 comments were received, and modifications were made to the Plan where appropriate. The public assisted in setting priorities for recommendations that were eventually included in the Plan.

In the course of the development of the Plan, it became clear that the Region had a need for education on pedestrian planning and design methods. Staff responded by holding training workshops. In September 2004 and January 2005, seminars on pedestrian topics were held. The first was a session on innovative treatments for pedestrian crossings. The second was on ADA requirements relative to pedestrian infrastructure. Both seminars were advertised to CRCOG committees and to the broader stakeholder community.

DAY HILL ROAD INTERSECTION STUDY IN WINDSOR CT

The Day Hill Interchange Plan was adopted by CRCOG in 2006. Recommendations from the plan are incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan as part of this update, so the outreach effort for that study is summarized here.

Access to the Day Hill Road Corporate Area in Windsor from I-91 was identified as problematic so a study of the interchange was conducted. The study was undertaken with significant coordination among the Town, State, area stakeholders and the community. A formal public meeting was held on August 10, 2005 to discuss the interchange concepts and obtain public comments on the draft plan.

As a result of questions and comments that surfaced during the public meeting, the Day Hill Road Interchange Study was modified to include general information related to pedestrian and bicycle access in the area. The Town also suggested that the item be reviewed during the pedestrian sidewalk plan preparation. Other comments received during the meeting were documented and included in the appendix of the final study.

Following the public meeting and modification of the plan, a presentation was made at the December 19, 2005 Windsor Town Council meeting. At that meeting the Town Council accepted the recommendations of the Study and further recommended that they be added to the Regional Transportation Plan.

Public Involvement – Outreach to the Community for This Plan

The Transportation Committee at its March 26, 2007 meeting approved the draft Regional Transportation Plan for public comment. The following day, a legal notice about the draft Plan and about opportunities to comment was published in the Hartford Courant, a daily newspaper with wide circulation in the Region. This was followed on March 28 by publication of the same legal notice in both English and Spanish language in The Hartford News/El Reportero a bi-lingual newspaper. We also held two meetings on the draft Plan. Summaries of the notification process and the comments received are provided below.

PUBLIC NOTICE & MEETINGS

Notices. The following notices about the draft Plan were provided:

- Legal notices were published in newspapers in both English and Spanish
- A news release was sent to local media
- A notice was sent to town clerks and libraries, and to cable access televisions in the Region
- A notice was emailed to more than 900 persons who are interested in CRCOG activities
- A notice was posted on the CRCOG website

Meetings. The draft Plan was presented at the Environmental Justice Advisory Board meeting on April 3, 2007 and at a public information meeting on April 9, 2007.

COMMENTS RECEIVED & MODIFICATIONS MADE

Comments received are listed below with the response taken.

Multi-Use Trails. The Town of Windsor commented that the proposed Hartford–Windsor trail along the Connecticut River was not shown in the Plan, and requested that the Windsor trail as well as other similar trails be recognized in the Plan.

Response. The only individual trails identified in the Plan are the Charter Oak Greenway and the Farmington Canal Trail, which are inter-regional trails serving several regions and states. The map of inter-regional trails has been retained, but a second map has been included in the Bike and Pedestrian chapter to show all trails in the region. CRCOG will also continue to work with member communities and others to help plan and implement proposed trails such as the Windsor-Hartford trail. We have assisted Windsor, Hartford, and Riverfront Recapture in planning the Windsor-Hartford trail, and will continue to do so.

Technology to Improve Transit Service. The Environmental Justice Advisory Board recommended that there should be a stronger commitment to using technology to enhance transit service for bus riders. It was noted that major bus stops and transit centers could be equipped with electronic signs that tell how long you must wait until the next bus arrives. These next bus arrival signs use real-time data collected from GPS units on buses that give riders up to the minute information on bus arrival times.

Response. The Plan already had a recommendation to implement an automatic vehicle location (AVL) system for Hartford buses. The recommendation also included related technology to improve transit and rideshare service and management. The existing recommendation was amended to make implementation a priority, and CRCOG will work with CT Transit, the Greater Hartford Transit District, Greater Hartford Rideshare, and ConnDOT to advance this proposal.

Diesel Emissions from Construction Equipment. The Environmental Justice Advisory Board recommended that the Plan's recommendation for clean diesel buses be expanded to include clean diesel construction equipment used on highway projects.

Response. CRCOG was successful in funding a project to retrofit CT Transit diesel buses with particulate filters. While expanding the recommendation to include highway construction equipment is reasonable, it must be focused on policy initiatives rather than project-based or funding initiatives. Highway construction equipment is owned by private companies, so change must be achieved by modifying the construction bidding requirements. Bidders can be required to use clean diesel equipment, and ConnDOT already does so on its largest construction projects. The proposed change is to expand ConnDOT's bidding requirement to include more projects. The recommendation has been modified to state that we encourage ConnDOT to expand the clean diesel requirement to more projects.

Union Station. The Greater Hartford Transit District commented that the Plan should include some discussion of the importance of Union Station as a regional intermodal center, and as a historically and architecturally significant structure in downtown Hartford. They also noted that the station is expensive to maintain and is in need of major repair and rehabilitation.

Response. The transit chapter has been modified to include this discussion, and also notes the importance of Union Station to the New Britain Busway and the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield Rail project.

Public Comment Period – March 26, 2007 to April 25, 2007

The 30-day public comment period on the Plan commenced on March 26, 2007, when CRCOG's Transportation Committee members approved the release of the draft Plan for consideration by the public. The comment period ended on April 25, 2007, when CRCOG's Policy Board voted to approve the Plan with revisions based on comments received, as described above.