

Hub of Hartford Steering Committee Meeting
December 14, 2009, 8:30 AM
Greater Hartford Transit District, Multipurpose Room
One Union Place, Hartford

Name	Organization
Bob Painter	Committee Chair/Frog Hollow NRZ
Jackie McKinney	Asylum Hill NRZ
Joe Barber	Frog Hollow NRZ/Co-Chair of Hartford 2000
Sandra Sheehan	GHTD
Bob Benzinger	The Hartford
Tomas Nenortas	Hartford Preservation Alliance/South Downtown NRZ
Toni Gold	West End Civic Association

Guests/Public

Jennifer Cassidy	City of Hartford/Asylum Hill NRZ
Chris Stone	CTDEP
Carl Bard	MDC
Mark Deming	RBC
Heather Brandon	Resident

Project Team

Tom Maziarz	CRCOG
Lia Huang	CRCOG
David Spillane	Goody Clancy
Amy Kohn	Goody Clancy

1. Welcome

Bob Painter opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and leading introductions.

2. Public Forum No public comments were received.

3. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Toni Gold, seconded by Sandra Sheehan, to accept the minutes of the October 28, 2009 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Phase I Wrap-up

David Spillane provided an overview of the Phase I interviews; memo on economic development and preliminary evaluation criteria; and the workshop #1 summary and findings. Mr. Spillane noted that although different priorities and perspectives were expressed among individual sources, the themes that emerged were similar. The following summarizes the discussion regarding the Phase I findings:

- A member of the public, Heather Brandon, asked specifically about the City's input on the study. David Spillane answered that the City wants to ensure that the study recommendations are consistent with One City, One Plan, the City's Plan of Conservation and Development 2020. Connectivity and economic development are important to the City, desires echoed in comments from several other stakeholders as well.
- Bob Benzinger asked for clarification on what is meant by future "performance driven" federal funding. Tom Maziarz explained that due to financial challenges ConnDOT is currently facing, limited federal funding and project priority will be increasingly important in the future. The higher priority will likely be given to infrastructure 'preservation' or fix it first projects like the viaduct.

- Bob Painter noted that the highway today serves very important functions. The goal of lower dependence on automobiles and improved multimodal accommodations in the area will need to be transitioned into.
- Toni Gold expressed an interest in diverting truck and vehicle through traffic around downtown or even advocating increased use of freight rail in lieu of trucks.
- Toni Gold added that the evaluation criteria for alternatives should include the opportunity to reduce vehicle dependence and the ability to market Hartford's history and sense of place (restore quality of life).
- Heather Brandon (guest) noted that the alternatives should promote an integration of all transportation modes. Vehicles should not be completely eliminated, but a choice would be preferred.
- Carl Bard (guest) mentioned that the iQuilt project involves connectivity of the City as well, suggesting coordination with this study.
- Jackie McKinney mentioned that in Hartford's One City, One Plan meetings, a comment was made that the younger population is interested in trains not buses; a train system would be able to attract youth and foster Hartford's economic development. Bob Painter added that it is the perception of a bus versus the perception of a train that is the issue; if the idea of the bus system was reinvented/marketed in a different way it may be just as attractive. Joe Barber stated that for a bus system to be attractive, it must be useful first; it must meet the needs of the public.
- Jackie McKinney asked what the next steps are to finalize the Phase I documents. David Spillane explained that the documents will be refined as necessary and finalized at the end of the study.

5. Phase II Kick-off

David Spillane reviewed the structural range of alternatives that will be reviewed, noting that hybrid alternatives will be looked at as well and that the same solution does not necessarily need to be applied across the entire corridor.

Committee members engaged in a brainstorming session on Viaduct alternatives. The following summarizes the key comments:

- Toni Gold explained to the Committee that many of I-84's features in downtown are due to preparations for future Interstate connections; much of this is no longer needed and can be eliminated. Ms. Gold added that the current ramp system was politically motivated; some of these issues are no longer a concern. This study provides the opportunity to rethink these structures.
- Toni Gold suggested that the project team review the ability to lower the eastbound portion of I-84 between Union Station and Broad Street to match the westbound section.
- Jackie McKinney expressed concern over diverting traffic to other highways since they are aging as well and were likely not designed to handle this additional capacity. Of particular concern is the backup that already exists on I-91 northbound at the Charter Oak Bridge. Tom Maziarz noted that ConnDOT is currently reviewing this area; the Viaduct study may help raise the priority on this review.
- Tom Nenortas inquired about the study limits. Tom Maziarz explained that the study will focus on the Viaduct but other areas will be reviewed as needed (e.g. Charter Oak Bridge backup may need to be looked at).

- Heather Brandon (guest) suggested straightening the Viaduct corridor while being careful not to affect historic buildings.
- Carl Bard (guest) asked that the Capitol Avenue ramps be reviewed.
- Tom Maziarz stated that with the recent interest in high speed rail, the opportunity to reconstruct the trestle at Union Station has opened up. This too, can work in coordination with the Viaduct study.
- Chris Stone (guest) suggested a depressed highway in the center of the corridor for through traffic and boulevards on the adjacent sides for local traffic. Periodically the depressed highway can have an access deck with parks/green space. Toni Gold mentioned that both Pittsburgh and Cincinnati have this configuration. Bob Benzinger cautioned that RT 1 in Philadelphia is similar but has created connectivity problems. Tom Maziarz stated that the area near the St. Louis Arch and Pittsburgh are both examples of a depressed highway that does not inhibit pedestrian access.
- Toni Gold mentioned that Bill Mocarsky had sketched some ideas for this corridor that may be of interest. David Spillane has already spoken with Bill Mocarsky and has reviewed these concepts
- David Spillane noted that there are alternatives to an I-691 bypass. Through traffic may also be handled with a tunnel or similar.
- Carl Bard (guest) asked whether Phase II will address cost estimates for the alternatives. David Spillane answered that general/relative costs will be looked at.

6. Next Steps

The project team will process the suggestions provided by the Committee and the public as well as the information collected during Phase I. A few alternatives will be developed and assessed from urban design, economic development, and transportation viewpoints. The next HUB meeting will be scheduled for late January to review this information. The second public workshop will be held shortly after the next HUB meeting.

7. Other Business No other business was discussed.

8. Adjourn The meeting adjourned at 9:50 AM.