

Hub of Hartford Steering Committee Meeting
January 27, 2010, 8:30 AM
Capitol Region Council of Governments, 4th Floor
241 Main Street, Hartford

Name	Organization
Bob Painter	Committee Chair/Frog Hollow NRZ
Mike Marshall	Aetna
Jackie McKinney	Asylum Hill NRZ
Kevin Burnham	City of Hartford
Roger O'Brien	City of Hartford
David Head	ConnDOT
Melanie Zimyeski	ConnDOT
Joe Barber	Frog Hollow NRZ/Co-Chair of Hartford 2000
Sandra Sheehan	GHTD
Hans Keck	Hartford Courant
Tomas Nenortas	Hartford Preservation Alliance/South Downtown NRZ
Toni Gold	West End Civic Association

Guests

Chris Stone	CTDEP
Carl Bard	MDC
Mary Rickel Pelletier	Park River Watershed

Public Attendees

Heather Brandon	Resident
Jason Billings	Student, University of Connecticut

Project Team

Tom Maziarz	CRCOG
Jennifer Carrier	CRCOG
Lia Huang	CRCOG
David Spillane	Goody Clancy
Amy Kohn	Goody Clancy
Mike Morehouse	Fitzgerald & Halliday
David Stahnke	Wilbur Smith Associates

- 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**
The motion to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2009 meeting as written was passed unanimously.
- 4. HUB Workshop on Preliminary Alternatives**
David Spillane reviewed the preliminary alternative review process to date.

Mr. Spillane explained that a vertical shift in the rail line is a very extraordinary undertaking, affecting approximately 2-3 miles of rail and surrounding infrastructure in the downtown area. The following summarizes the discussion:

- Toni Gold remarked that in 1914 there were plans to raise the rail line 20-30' above grade and felt that lowering the line by 50' today should be possible. Carl Bard noted that the Park River Conduit may require the rail line to be lowered more than 50'. Dave Stahnke added that the 2-3 miles of rail that would require reconstruction will impact the surrounding streets and development, adding significant cost to the project. Tom Maziarz explained that the engineering requirements and parameters to vertically shift a rail line are much different than a roadway with implications extending significantly farther.
- Mike Marshall noted that the New Britain Busway is designed to capitalize on rail access therefore accessibility should be maintained.

David Spillane briefly reviewed the preliminary range of alternatives identified to date. The following summarizes the discussion on each alternative:

Baseline

- Based on preliminary plans for a Viaduct replacement project that included a maintenance and protection (M&P) plan for traffic. Modern technology will be used to make a cleaner, quieter viaduct structure that is much easier to maintain. Sisson ramps will be reduced from existing structures.
- Jackie McKinney asked if the current complexity of the Sisson ramp structure has a purpose. Dave Stahnke replied that these ramps were originally designed for a future interstate connection that is no longer planned for.
- Toni Gold asked for more information on the baseline M&P plan. Tom Maziarz explained that this plan is designed at the planning level demonstrating that a viable method exists. The M&P of traffic can add considerable cost to a project and this will help develop a good baseline cost estimate.
- Toni Gold asked if the alterations to the Sisson ramps result in a new street. David Spillane confirmed that a narrower extension of West Boulevard is created.
- Mary Rickel Pelletier commented that since there are many improvements made with this alternative, it does not seem like a true "baseline". Tom Maziarz replied that if ConnDOT were to move ahead with a replacement structure, it would likely be very similar to these plans.
- Mike Marshall felt that noise is a big issue with the existing structure. Mr. Marshall asked how effective the noise reduction is with the modern technology. Dave Stahnke explained that modern structures have 180' spacing between joints rather than the 70' spacing in the existing Viaduct. A lot of noise is created when vehicles cross over joints, so overall noise should be reduced. Additionally, walls may be designed with sound absorption properties.

Boulevard

- I-84 transitions into a boulevard between Asylum Avenue and the existing Sisson interchange. In order to clear the rail line and meet Sigourney Street, the boulevard will need to be elevated in one section, creating a minor viaduct.
- Toni Gold added that Sigourney Street also needs to remain elevated to cross over the rail line.
- Tom Nenortas asked if the new boulevard and Sigourney Street could create new at-grade rail crossings. Tom Maziarz answered that the State is trying to improve safety by reducing the

number of at-grade crossings. Additionally, a new commuter line would increase rail traffic and conflicts.

- Chris Stone remarked that he initially liked the idea of a boulevard, but in understanding the physical constraints felt this option may continue to segment the City.
- Kevin Burnham suggested multiple boulevards that improve east-west connectivity. Mary Rickel Pelletier added that strengthening Capitol Avenue and Farmington Avenue would be beneficial. The Committee agreed that improving the street network is a study goal that all alternatives must consider. Jackie McKinney asked what enhancements might be made to improve Capitol Avenue and Farmington Avenue. Committee members suggested street trees, streetscape improvements, and potentially wider but nicer looking roadways.
- The Committee felt that the boulevard option did not address the study goals very well, but agreed that this level of review was important and these findings should be presented at the next public workshop.

Tunnel

- The eastbound barrel of I-84 is dropped below Asylum Avenue. The interstate continues underground and resurfaces at the existing Sisson interchange. Local street networks will improve and the new parcels near Asylum Avenue could become either mixed use development or an extension of Bushnell Park.
- Toni Gold asked where the access points would be to the underground interstate. David Spillane answered that the access points have not yet been defined, but for now it is assumed that the access points would be similar to those that exist today.
- Chris Stone asked whether the tunnel option will be easier to maintain and protect traffic during construction. Dave Stahnke answered that due to the type of tunnel needed, this option will be significantly more difficult to maintain and protect traffic during implementation.
- Mary Rickel Pelletier asked how the tunnel option might work with the Park River Conduit. Dave Stahnke answered that the tunnel option will either need to be built under the conduit or a new conduit will need to be built. David Spillane added that this needs to be explored further.
- Mary Rickel Pelletier asked whether this alignment would interfere with work that MDC is beginning. Kevin Burnham replied that the MDC work is further east and should not impact this alternative. Dave Stahnke pointed out that if the Gully Brook conduit crosses below I-84, it would need to drop below the westbound barrel of the interstate which would allow clearance to lower the eastbound barrel in the future.
- Toni Gold asked for details on the tunnel structure. Dave Stahnke explained that a tunnel in this area is very complicated. David Spillane added that technically complicated means that it can be done, but will be expensive. Dave Stahnke shared a profile view of the existing conditions and reviewed the bored and cut/cover tunnel options for the Committee, explaining that this tunnel location will likely need the cut and cover construction.

Composite

- A composite alternative is being developed that includes reducing the Sisson Avenue ramps, removing the Sigourney Street ramps and relocating the eastbound barrel of I-84 underneath Asylum Avenue to open up parcels for multi-use development or open space.
- Jackie McKinney asked about access to Aetna if the Sigourney Street ramps are removed. David Spillane answered that accommodations can be made with the rework of the Sisson Avenue ramps and improved street network.

Skyway

- Mary Rickel Pelletier felt that there is a big emphasis on hiding the Viaduct, but elegant structures have been built. Ms. Rickel Pelletier suggested that an elevated structure, vertically higher than the viaduct that exists today, be considered as an alternative. The Committee supported a “skyway” alternative.
- Roger O’Brien suggested a street underneath the new skyway to improve the local street network.
- Jackie McKinney asked whether a skyway would reduce the amount of black residue that exists today. Dave Stahnke stated that he did not have the expertise to answer this, but that with fewer joints in the newer viaduct structures friction with tires should be reduced and pollutants should be better contained.

General

- Bob Painter reminded the Project Team and HUB members to keep East Coast Greenway in mind.
- Dr. Painter noted that this plan may help eliminate State parking and push for more busway use
- Mike Marshall suggested the creation of a matrix summarizing each of the alternatives. David Spillane confirmed that a matrix will be created for the public workshop.
- Jackie McKinney noted that the I-91 northbound interchange to I-84 east via the Charter Oak Bridge is already strained. Any additional traffic to bypass the Viaduct through I-691 will add additional stress to this area. Tom Maziarz commented that the DOT is currently reviewing this area.
- Bob Painter asked whether ConnDOT might be interested in adding capacity to the Viaduct. Tom Maziarz stated that while it may not be the top concern, the DOT will look at this because it will be a 50-year investment.
- Toni Gold asked when ramps/access will be discussed with the alternatives. David Spillane responded that alternative details will be developed further in the next phase of the study.

5. Public Workshop #2

David Spillane explained that the range of alternatives reviewed will serve as the basis for discussion at the next public workshop. The public will be asked to respond to these alternatives and suggest additional ideas.

6. Transition in Project Management

Tom Maziarz will be leaving CRCOG and taking a position at ConnDOT. Mr. Maziarz will continue involvement with the study as a ConnDOT representative. Jennifer Carrier will oversee the study at CRCOG and Lia Huang will continue to assist with project management.

7. Next Steps

Next steps for the study involve preparation for the upcoming public workshop.

8. Other Business No other business was discussed.

9. Adjourn The meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.