

REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Thursday May 9, 2019 12:30 PM

Location: Western Connecticut State University, Danbury

Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #2

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Tom Altermatt	City of New Danbury	t.altermatt@danbury-ct.gov
Sharon Calitro	City of Danbury	s.calitro@danbury-ct.gov
Matthew Cassavechia	Danbury Hospital	Matthew.Cassavechia@wchn.org
Roger Connor	Western CT State University	Conorr@wcsu.edu
JoAnn Cueva	Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce	Joann@danburychamber.com
Greg Dembowski	Town of Brookfield	gdembowski@brookfieldct.gov
Benjamin Doto	West Terrace Neighborhood	ben@dotocivil.com
Paul Estefan	City of Danbury / Danbury Airport	p.estefan@danbury-ct.gov
Sandy Fusco	Putnam County	sandra.fusco@putnamcountyny.gov
John Gentile	Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities	jmgsr1550@aol.com
Kristen Hadjstylianos	Western Connecticut Council of Governments	khadjstylianos@westcog.org
Jeff Hanson	Town of Redding	Jhanson@townofreddingct.org
Fred Hurley	Town of Newtown	fred.hurley@newtown-ct.gov
Matt Knickerbocker	Town of Bethel	firstselectman@bethel-ct.gov
Paige Lawrence	CT <i>rides</i>	paige.lawrence@ctrides.com
Christine Lucsky	AAA	Clucsky@aaanortheast.com
David McCollum	Town of Bethel	mccollumd@bethel-ct.gov
Ali Mohseni	New York Metropolitan Transportation Council	Ali.Mohseni@dot.ny.gov
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Katie Pearson	Danbury Library	kpearson@danburylibrary.org
Ed Perzanowski	CT <i>rides</i>	Ed.perzanowski@ctrides.com
Lawrence Post	Cartus	Lawrence.post@cartus.com
Jay Purcell	Town of Brookfield	jpurcell@brookfieldct.gov
Sgt. Michael Roach	Connecticut State Police	Michael.roach@ct.gov
Ernesto Rodriguez	Spring Street Neighborhood	estordgz@yahoo.com
James Root	Sierra Club, Connecticut Chapter	manoether@yahoo.com
Rick Schreiner	Housatonic Area Regional Transit	ricks@hartransit.com
Frank Sequenzia	City of Danbury – Traffic	f.sequenzia@danbury-ct.gov
Ralph Tedesco	Town of Brookfield	rtedesco@brookfieldct.gov

OTHER ATTENDEES		
NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
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Tom Doyle	Connecticut Department of Transportation	thomas.doyle@ct.gov
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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2. [Welcome](#)

Andy Fesenmeyer, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), began by welcoming all attendees to the second Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting, including the role of the PAC, purpose of the project, and project development process.

A. Fesenmeyer introduced the newest PAC member, Brigid Guertin of the Danbury Museum and Historical Society. She was not in attendance. He then introduced Sharat Kalluri, of CDM Smith, to discuss the *Needs and Deficiencies Report*.

3. [Presentation and Discussion](#)

Traffic

S. Kalluri provided an overview of the *Needs and Deficiencies Report*, focusing on traffic, safety, geometrics, accessibility, and multimodal elements. He asked attendees to raise a hand if they thought traffic is an issue on I-84 in Danbury. Most members raised a hand. S. Kalluri added that he recently took a helicopter ride through the project area to assess the congestion and driver behavior.

S. Kalluri discussed the amount of local traffic using the corridor. About 1/3 of the traffic between Exits 3 and 8 are local motorists seeking an efficient connection that the Danbury roadway network does not provide. In the morning, many drivers typically choose between Route 7 and I-84 westbound to White Plains and points west. In the evening, drivers often opt for Route 7 via Norwalk.

S. Kalluri presented a heat map that shows the concentration of congestion on I-84 in Danbury. The evening peak hours are worse than the morning peak hours. The morning peak congestion occurs in the westbound direction near the Route 7 merge with I-84. Westbound I-84 traffic typically backs up from Exit 7 into Newtown. Southbound Route 7 traffic from Brookfield typically is congested approaching the merge with I-84. In the evening, eastbound traffic is typically congested starting at the New York line all the way to Exit 7.

S. Kalluri explained that traffic counts, the helicopter survey, and other input are all critical to understanding driver patterns and existing conditions. The team will use these to calibrate the traffic model. This is an important process to accurately develop future traffic forecasts.

S. Kalluri introduced traffic speed categories, as a precursor to the helicopter video footage of morning conditions. The videos showed congestion in the morning and evening peak periods.

Potential population and employment growth are factors considered when modeling future traffic conditions. The State of Connecticut expects 0.7 percent population growth annually by 2040. By 2040, travelers will spend significantly more time in congestion on I-84 and Route 7.

S. Kalluri asked if members of the PAC had any questions. James Root, of the Sierra Club, questioned the source of the projections. S. Kalluri responded that the projections are from CTDOT based on an anticipated increase in employment and population in the year in 2040 plus anticipated traffic generated from large developments approved by CTDOT through the major traffic generator process. The team is also collaborating with New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to gather similar data for the neighboring counties in New York.

Jay Purcell of the Town of Brookfield and Paul Estefan of City of Danbury / Danbury Airport asked if autonomous vehicles were considered in the analysis. S. Kalluri confirmed that their incorporation is limited and subject to available research and testing. While, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is gathering and testing autonomous vehicle data and driver behavior broadly, modeling for this project is largely based on current driver behavior.

David McCollum, of the Town of Bethel, asked to review the regional congestion graphic. He assessed that, in reading the graphic, the Danbury congestion is worse than the Waterbury congestion.

Fred Hurley asked if it is too early to assess impact of potential statewide tolling. S. Kalluri confirmed that it is too early. A. Fesenmeyer echoed the statement. Tolling policy and consideration of toll gantries is a separate, legislative study effort. F. Hurley asked if tolling might impact congestion in this corridor. S. Kalluri stated that completing several missing connections in the street network could alleviate congestion.

Safety / Geometrics

S. Kalluri addressed safety and geometrics, citing an average of one crash a day in the corridor. Many are rear-end crashes that result in property damages with no fatalities. Three fatalities occurred within two years, two of which were pedestrian related. Weaving movements to meet left hand entrance and exit ramps, inadequate merges and diverges, and the incomplete interchange

at Exit 6 factor into the crashes. Sharp curves, poor sight lines, and poor lane continuity also contribute to crashes. S. Kalluri compared the crash rate in this corridor to other sections of I-84 in Connecticut. The Danbury section experience less crashes on an average daily basis than the sections in Waterbury (before construction) and Hartford, but more than the rest of I-84 east of Hartford.

Paige Lawrence of CT *rides* asked for an explanation of “1/2 crash per day”. S. Kalluri stated that the annual number of crashes is divided by 365 days, which can result in a calculation of 0.5 crash per day.

S. Kalluri presented a series of maps of safety and geometrics, discussing specific areas of safety and geometry concern. J. Gentile noted the I-84 hills also create safety issues. S. Kalluri confirmed that relatively steep grades are an issue, especially for trucks.

S. Kalluri presented eastbound and westbound run times at 3 PM from Exit 5 to Danbury Hospital, a major employer. D. McCollum questioned why the run time trials did not use the same route both ways. S. Kalluri responded that the team wanted to understand two primary paths between Exit 5 and the hospital. The key takeaway is that both popular routes take about 7 - 9 minutes.

P. Estefan mentioned that the many traffic lights are an issue on local roads. S. Kalluri confirmed that the team will assess signals around Exit 6. An attendee asked if local roadway connections will be considered in the redesign. S. Kalluri confirmed the team would look at these in vicinity of the project area and stated that the Danbury’s existing hub and spoke network (i.e. many regional arterials lead to downtown) poses a challenge to access downtown and creates congestion.

P. Estefan asked if the analysis considers New York-based summer travel to points of recreation. S. Kalluri said the focus is on design hour rather than seasonality. As the team advances into design, they will assess more specific travel trends.

Multimodal Travel

Dave Sousa, of CDM Smith, next discussed the findings on multimodal travel. He stated that the project team conducted a stakeholder survey to understand community members’ travel habits. Private car is the most popular mode of travel in Danbury. Only four percent of the respondents travel by bus, 87 percent do not carpool, and 84 percent do not use commuter rail. Fifty percent of the respondents would like to walk or bike if it was safe and convenient. D. Sousa said that encouraging people to use alternate modes of transportation and providing service to meet that demand will result in fewer vehicles contributing to congestion.

D. Sousa reiterated that many major roads lead to downtown Danbury. The “hub-and-spoke” nature of streets in Danbury tends to lead traffic to the city center which focuses traffic impacts on high-capacity bus routes and at the HART network’s downtown bus pulse point or bus exchange plaza. When there is an incident or traffic congestion on I-84, many motorists exit the highway to avoid its congestion. This adds to congestion on city streets.

D. Sousa added that there are few comfortable walking and bicycling routes in Danbury, largely because of gaps in the sidewalks, narrow roadways, historic development patterns (e.g. sidewalks, limited setbacks), and steep grades. He introduced the concept of desire lines which are paths of

greatest priority for bicyclists and pedestrians. He also presented the 19 streets that cross over or under I-84 in the corridor. Of these, there are 13 that are identified as high-priority crossings that could benefit from pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

D. McCollum asked if Danbury High School allows students to ride bicycles to school. D. Sousa answered that he was not aware if students are allowed to ride bikes to school. P. Esteban asked if the major arterials to Danbury High School could accommodate bicyclists safely considering congestion. D. Sousa stated that congested streets are not incompatible to safe bicycle travel because vehicles travel relatively slowly.

D. Sousa next discussed local bus and shuttle routes, illustrating several routes operated by HART. He stated the importance to consider the transportation needs of people who routinely use transit to commute to work or who use transit to travel to school or to markets, especially low-income populations, who are more likely to be transit dependent. An additional consideration is the connection to the MTA Harlem Line and Danbury branch line.

D. Sousa described Travel Demand Management (TDM) a method of identifying alternate modes of transportation. Examples include improvements to park and ride lots, encouraging employers to support carpools and telecommuting, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) for improved real-time traveler communications, and HART shuttles to rail stations.

4. Next Steps / Conclusion

A. Fesenmeyer stated that the Needs and Deficiencies Report is complete. The project team will next plan to define the project's Purpose and Need Statement. The next PAC meeting will include an interactive workshop on the Purpose and Need Statement. It will be led by Jeanine Armstrong-Gouin of Milone & MacBroom. A completed environmental document is expected by early to mid-2020s.

5. Written Comments Submitted on Cards at Meeting

There were two cards submitted at the meeting. A summary of their comments and suggestions include:

- Extend the project limit to the NY state line. Needs involvement of New York State for coordination.
- If I-84 wants to get away from the "hub and spoke" concept, wouldn't HART want to consider the same as well?