

## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Tuesday, September 24, 2019 12:30 PM**

**Location: Western Connecticut State University, Danbury**

**Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #3**

### 1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
<b>PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>		
Barry Abrams	Juniper Ridge Tax District	<a href="mailto:abramsb@hotmail.com">abramsb@hotmail.com</a>
Tom Altermatt	City of New Danbury	<a href="mailto:t.altermatt@danbury-ct.gov">t.altermatt@danbury-ct.gov</a>
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Annie Dance	Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities	<a href="mailto:AMcCarthyDance@gmail.com">AMcCarthyDance@gmail.com</a>
Alex Dasher	HARTransit	<a href="mailto:alex@hartransit.com">alex@hartransit.com</a>
Greg Dembowski	Town of Brookfield	<a href="mailto:gdembowski@brookfieldct.gov">gdembowski@brookfieldct.gov</a>
Benjamin Doto	West Terrace Neighborhood	<a href="mailto:ben@dotocivil.com">ben@dotocivil.com</a>
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Antonio Iadarola	City of Danbury Public Works	<a href="mailto:A.Iadarola@danbury-ct.gov">A.Iadarola@danbury-ct.gov</a>
Matt Knickerbocker	Town of Bethel	<a href="mailto:firstselectman@bethel-ct.gov">firstselectman@bethel-ct.gov</a>
David McCollum	Town of Bethel	<a href="mailto:mccollumd@bethel-ct.gov">mccollumd@bethel-ct.gov</a>
Abdul Mohamed	City of Danbury Traffic	<a href="mailto:A.Mohamed@danbury-ct.gov">A.Mohamed@danbury-ct.gov</a>
Ali Mohseni	New York Metropolitan Transportation Council	<a href="mailto:Ali.Mohseni@dot.ny.gov">Ali.Mohseni@dot.ny.gov</a>
Betsey Paynter	CityCenter Danbury	<a href="mailto:betsey@citycenterdanbury.com">betsey@citycenterdanbury.com</a>
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Francis Pickering	WestCOG	<a href="mailto:fpickering@westcog.org">fpickering@westcog.org</a>
Lenny Rodriguez	Spring Street Neighborhood	
James Root	Sierra Club, Connecticut Chapter	<a href="mailto:manoether@yahoo.com">manoether@yahoo.com</a>
Perry Salvagne	Get Downtown	<a href="mailto:prsalvagne@gmail.com">prsalvagne@gmail.com</a>
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OTHER ATTENDEES		
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Barbara Deveaux	Interested Citizen	
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## 2. Welcome

Yolanda Antoniak, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), began by welcoming all attendees to the third Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting. She explained that the project team spoke about the Needs and Deficiencies Analysis at the second PAC meeting. This third PAC meeting will focus on Purpose and Need. Purpose and Need is a very important part of the project since it defines the problem and what the project will achieve. She noted that today's meeting format would be different from the previous two meetings in that it will be more interactive for PAC members. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included a perspective gathering exercise, discussion on the project need, and discussion on the project purpose. She summarized the project's public outreach, including attendance at seven pop up events, three focus group meetings, 34 stakeholder meetings, one public open house, and 178 survey responses.

Y. Antoniak introduced Jeanine Gouin, of Milone & MacBroom, Inc. to begin the Purpose and Need presentation / workshop.

## 3. Presentation and Discussion

J. Gouin provided an overview of the three meeting objectives. She stated that the project team is interested in better understanding the unique perspectives of individual PAC members and constituencies. Another objective is to check in on local issues and priorities. The final objective is to provide context that will inform the development of the project Purpose and Need Statement.

The project team distributed a comment card to each meeting attendee. J. Gouin asked the attendees to take a few minutes to write their answers to the following questions.

1. From my perspective, the most pressing needs and deficiencies within the I-84 corridor in Greater Danbury are (List up to 3):
2. In my opinion, the I-84 Danbury Project would be successful if it achieved the following:

The comment cards were then collected by the project team to review and to share the collected responses at the next PAC meeting.

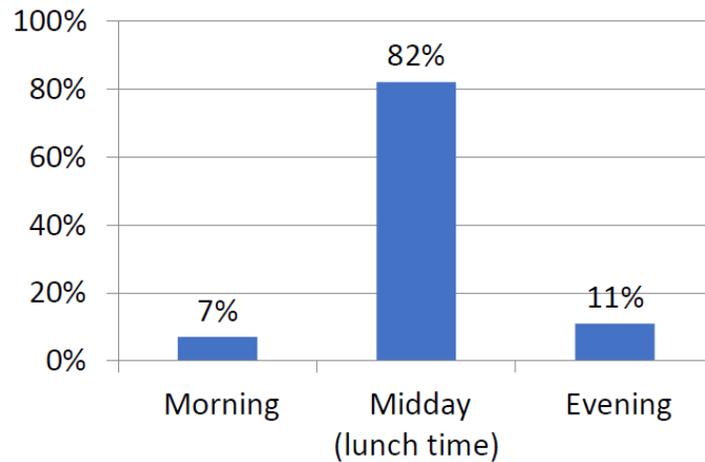
J. Gouin turned the meeting over to Patrick Gallagher, also of Milone & MacBroom, who introduced the concept of project need. He said that the need establishes the problem and is justified by data and research. In the case of the I-84 Danbury Project, project need has been quantified through the needs and deficiencies analysis. P. Gallagher stated that there are two key problems in the corridor identified in the needs and deficiencies analysis. They are congestion and poor mobility.

P. Gallagher briefly reviewed the information from the previous PAC meeting. He defined congestion and discussed the items that cause congestion in this corridor. He discussed the increasingly heavy traffic volumes and highway design deficiencies. Design deficiencies include incomplete interchanges, left hand exits, insufficient shoulder width, sharp curves, short merging, weaving, and poor signage. All these factors contribute to congestion. In addition, abrupt lane switches lead to safety issues. There is an average of one crash per day in the corridor. Most are rear-end and side swipe crashes.

P. Gallagher next defined mobility as the ability of the transportation system to effectively move people and goods. Causes of poor mobility include local traffic patterns; poor connections between the highway and destinations; increased travel demand; and low transit use, walking, and bicycling. He described the hub-spoke network configuration of local roadways in Danbury Center that results in lack of alternative east-west routes which likely contributes to 1/3 of the highway traffic coming from local trips. In addition, highway traffic often diverts to local roads to avoid highway congestion. It is difficult for travelers to access key destinations from the highway such as the hospital, major employers in the area and the Downtown community. In addition, demand for travel on the highway and local roads is increasing because the Danbury region is one of the fastest growing regions in the State. Finally, the lack of intermodal connections and transportation network alternatives discourage users from using other modes of transportation.

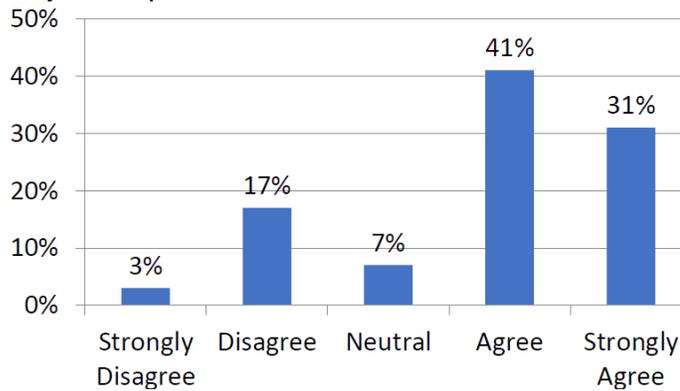
P. Gallagher next led the attendees through a series of questions related to project need. Each attendee answered the questions via individual keypads placed at each seat. The questions and results are displayed below with the first question being a practice question to poll the PAC members whether the 12:30 pm meeting time is appropriate for PAC members.

Practice Question: What time of day works best for future Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meetings?



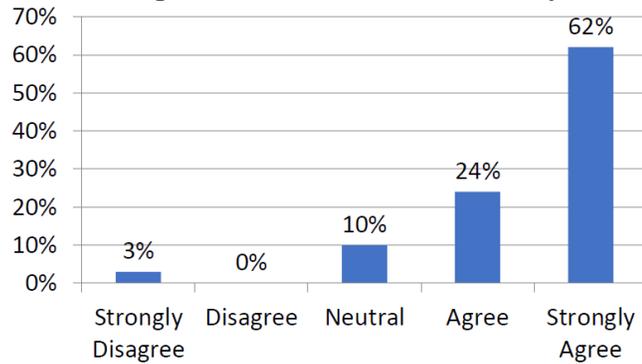
Questions Related to Need:

1) I routinely change my travel patterns or behavior in order to avoid congestion on I-84.

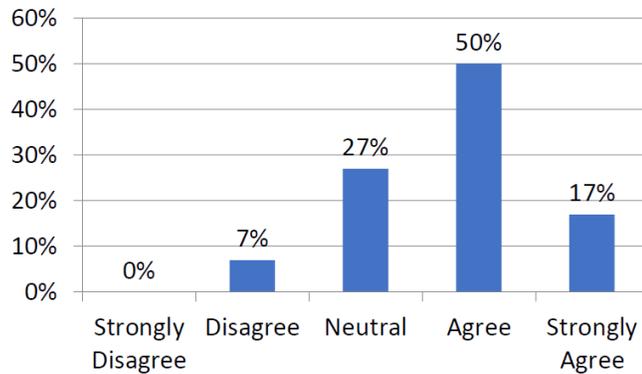


One attendee noted that he typically avoids the highway on his commute to Middletown, NY by taking local roads through New Fairfield. Another attendee added that the use of Waze is redirecting motorists to local and previously less traveled roads to bypass highway congestion.

2) Traffic congestion on I-84 has gotten worse over the last five years.

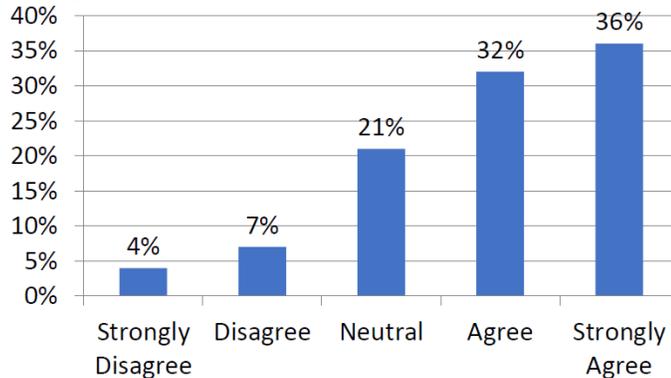


3) Traffic congestion on I-84 is hurting the local economy.



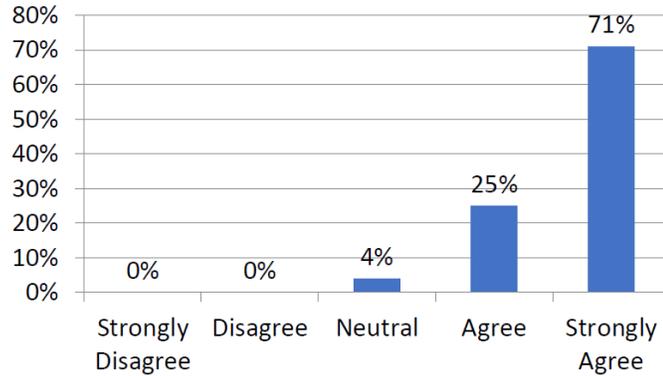
An attendee questioned how to define economy. P. Gallagher answered that this is open to interpretation. It could be whether employers have difficulty recruiting employees to the region or may not want to locate in the area because of congestion. Another attendee stated that he shops locally because it is difficult to get across town. Yet another attendee suggested that more needs to be done to get 18-wheelers out of the left lanes. P. Gallagher responded that trucks do account for 10 percent of the highway traffic, a high percentage.

4) Danbury's local street network makes it difficult to travel between destinations within the city without using the highway.

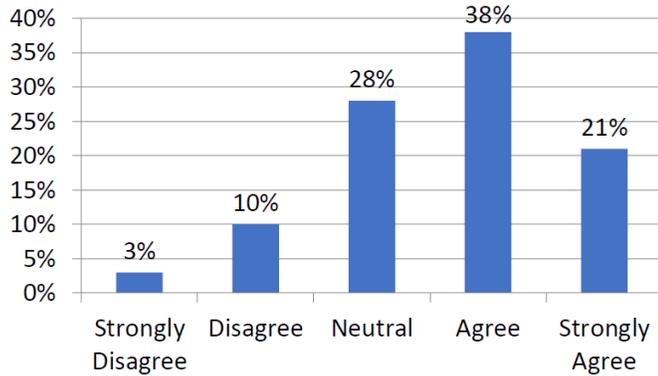


An attendee commented that people who travel on local streets do it as a matter of choice.

5) Improved access to rail and bus transit service is a need within the region.

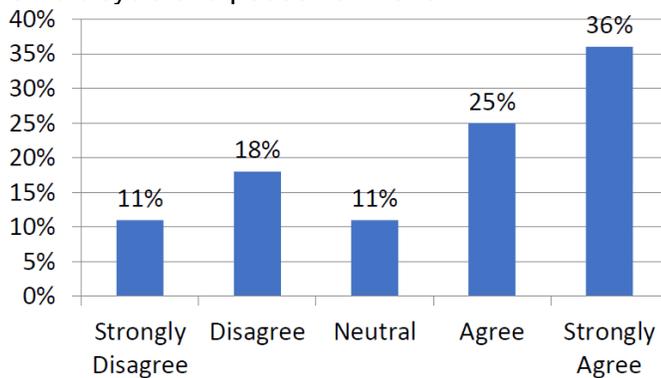


6) The expansion of the Park & Ride system along I-84 and Route 7 is a need within the region.



J. Gouin questioned whether there is a specific location where this expansion is needed. An attendee answered that expansion and promotion of the Park & Ride system are needs.

7) I-84 acts as a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian travel.



An attendee stated that the underpasses are poorly lit. Others commented that the City is simply not walkable or bikeable. Another added that none of the municipalities are bicycle-friendly in this region. The hilly terrain, narrow roads, lack of signage and infrastructure,

and lack of driver and bicyclist education are all problems. Some of this is a result of the historical build out of Danbury and neighboring towns hundreds of years ago.

J. Gouin next presented on the project’s purpose, stating I-84 is important because it is a major commuter and freight route near major employers in one of the fastest growing regions of the state. She defined purpose as “what the project is to achieve”. It is the intended outcome, rather than the action itself. She stated that potential solutions are called alternatives. She provided an example situation where a shortage of parking was the problem in a community. In that case, the project purpose would be to alleviate the shortage of parking. There are numerous alternatives, or solutions, that can alleviate a shortage of parking. These can include carpooling, vanpooling, transit, increasing parking fees, and other solutions.

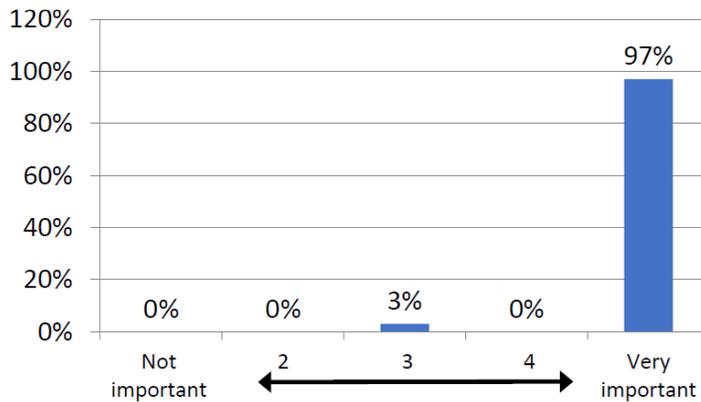
J. Gouin stated that the project Purpose and Need is typically supplemented with goals and objectives that help define the full intent and desired outcomes of the project. These goals and objectives also serve to help evaluate and compare the alternatives against one another.

An attendee questioned whether this study would evaluate cost and schedule. J. Gouin responded that both would indeed be evaluated during the alternatives analysis process.

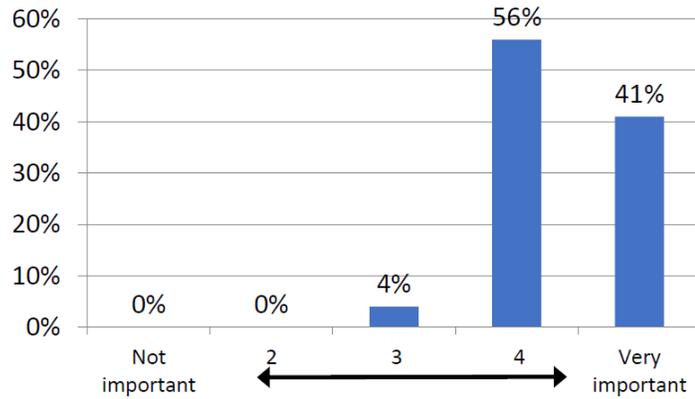
J. Gouin next led the attendees through a series of questions related to project purpose. Each attendee answered the questions via individual keypads placed at each seat. The questions and results are displayed below.

Questions Related to Purpose:

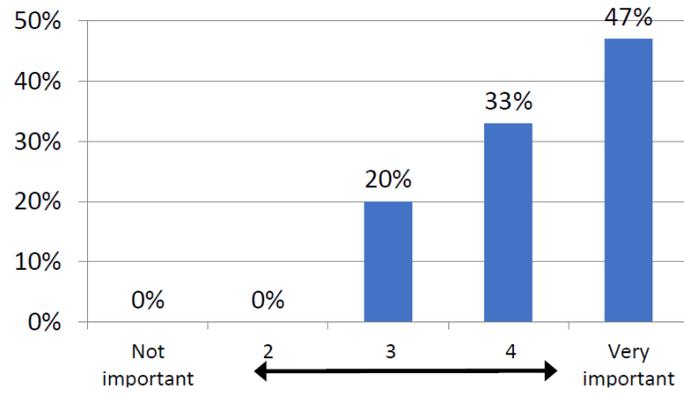
- 1) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project reduces congestion on the highway (I-84 and Route 7)?



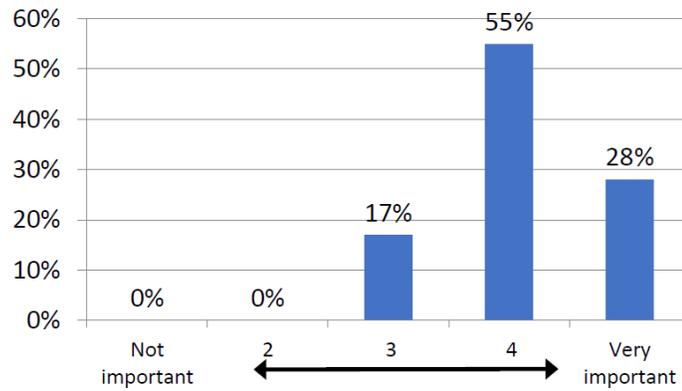
2) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project reduces congestion on adjacent local roadways?



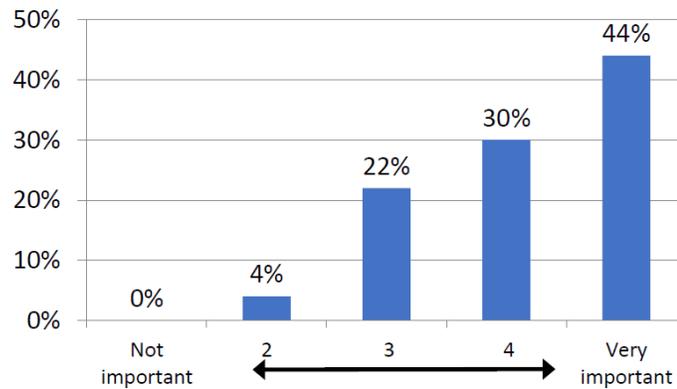
3) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project reduces crashes?



4) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project reduces sharp curves and weaving?

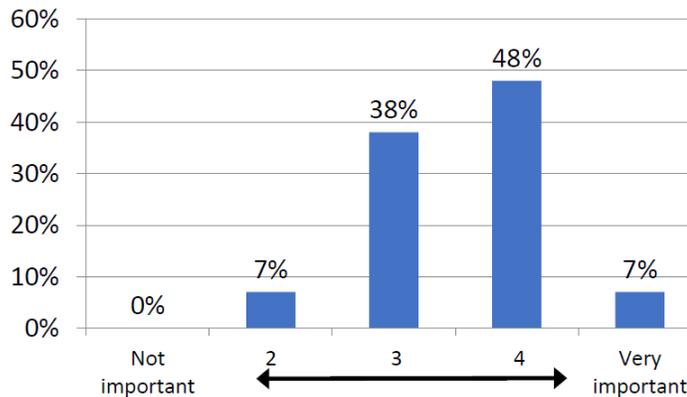


5) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project improves connections between the highway and Danbury Hospital?

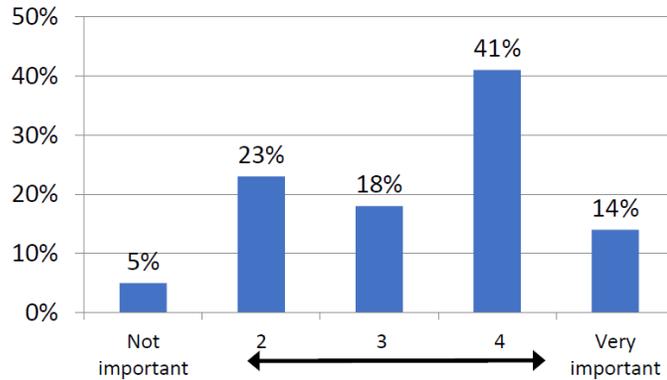


J. Gouin questioned whether the group thought access to the hospital is a problem. Barry Abrams, of Juniper Ridge Tax District, answered that he did not think access is a problem. Matthew Cassavechia, of Danbury Hospital, stated that he thought access to the hospital is not as critical an issue coming from within Danbury, but that access to the hospital is very challenging from the neighboring communities.

6) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project improves connections between the highway and businesses and employers?

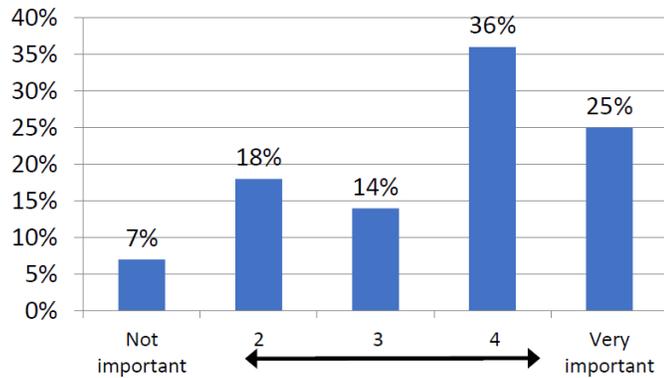


7) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project improves bike and pedestrian infrastructure near the highway?



J. Gouin questioned the group on how often they people see walking and bicycling. John Gentile, of Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities, stated that he sees many people bicycling on local roads going to Brookfield and Bethel. Another attendee added that a lot of the roads that people bicycle on are state roads. CTDOT should be thinking about these connections as well. Another person commented that they see bicyclists on roads, but there could be more. He has seen more pedestrians in recent years as well, especially near Exit 5 and the stores.

8) How important is it that the I-84 Danbury Project improves rest areas and pull-offs for trucks?



An attendee commented that trucks are parked on the highway shoulders at night and first thing in the morning, often near the Exit 2 underpasses.

### 3. Next Steps

Andy Fesenmeyer, of CTDOT, stated that the project team will summarize the feedback from today's meeting as well as draft a Purpose and Need Statement to share at the next PAC meeting. At that meeting, the group will begin discussing the process for developing concepts. The next PAC meeting will be held on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. He closed the meeting by speaking to the current project schedule.



Upon being asked, A. Fesenmeyer answered that a large project such as this will likely be built in phases.

An attendee questioned how PAC members can prepare for the next meeting. A. Fesenmeyer answered that there is nothing for the PAC members to do before the next meeting. He concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and participating in the workshop.