

REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, November 20, 2019 12:30 PM

Location: Western Connecticut State University, Danbury

Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #4

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Barry Abrams	Juniper Ridge Tax District	abramsb@hotmail.com
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Sharon Calitro	City of Danbury	s.calitro@danbury-ct.gov
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Roger Connor	Western CT State University	connorr@wcsu.edu
Annie Dance	Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities	AMcCarthyDance@gmail.com
Alex Dashev	HARTransit	alex@hartransit.com
Greg Dembowski	Town of Brookfield	gdembowski@brookfieldct.gov
Benjamin Doto	West Terrace Neighborhood	ben@dotocivil.com
Paul Estefan	Danbury Airport	p.estefan@danbury-ct.gov
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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2. [Welcome](#)

Yolanda Antoniak, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), began by welcoming all attendees to the fourth Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting. She reminded PAC members that the previous PAC meeting focused on purpose and need and included interactive exercises on identifying the Project's purpose and need. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included the project team providing a recap on the comment card exercises from the prior meeting, the draft purpose statement, and a toolbox of concepts to address the draft purpose.

Y. Antoniak introduced Patrick Gallagher, of Milone & MacBroom, Inc, to provide the recap of the prior meeting's comment card activity.

3. [Presentation and Discussion](#)

P. Gallagher reviewed the feedback that the project team received on the comment cards. The project team distributed a comment card to each person at the third PAC meeting. The project team asked the attendees to take a few minutes to write their answers to the following statements.

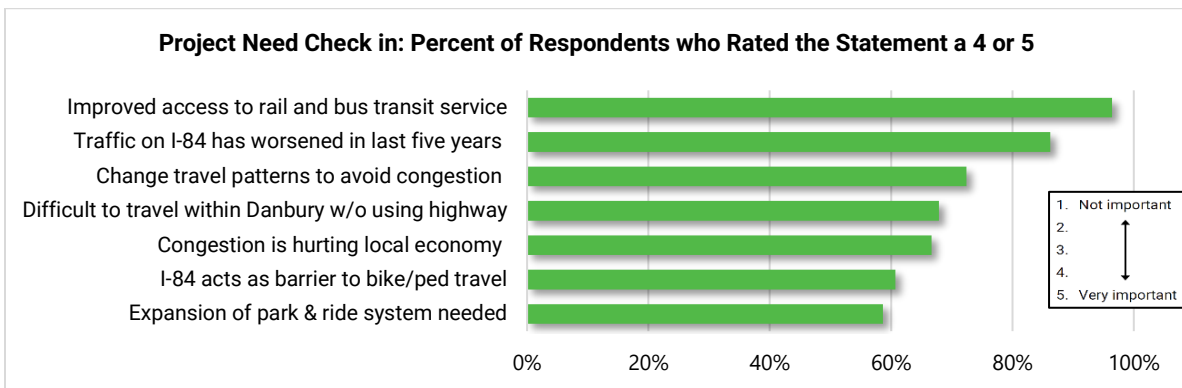
1. From my perspective, the most pressing needs and deficiencies within the I-84 corridor in Greater Danbury are (list up to 3)
2. In my opinion, the I-84 Danbury Project would be successful if it achieved the following

P. Gallagher said that congestion was the most common need and deficiency cited by the respondents, with 31 citations. The next most common need response was design deficiencies, with 12 citations. Ramp exits, safety, and several others were lower ranked citations.

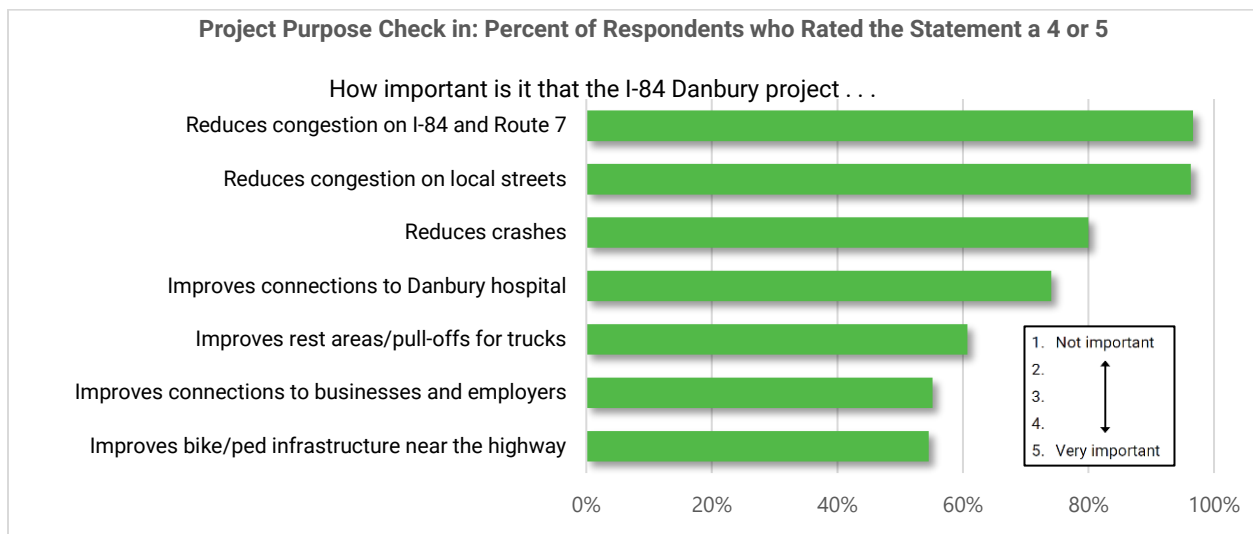
Next, P. Gallagher discussed the PAC responses to the statement of what features would make this project a success. Reducing congestion was the most common success feature cited by the respondents, with 22 citations.

P. Gallagher provided a recap of 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 next provided a recap of the clicker exercises. He discussed the percent of respondents who replied with a rating of four (important) or five (very important) for various needs. A chart showing these results is displayed below.



Jeanine Gouin, of Milone & MacBroom, Inc, next discussed project purpose. She stated that the project purpose is what the action will accomplish. She summarized the results of the clicker exercise for project purpose. She discussed the percent of respondents who replied with a rating of four (important) or five (very important) for various needs. A chart showing these results is displayed below.



J. Gouin stated that all the purpose citations fell into one of two categories, congestion and mobility.

J. Gouin next presented the following draft project purpose statement:

The purpose of the I-84 Danbury Project is to reduce congestion and improve the mobility of people and goods in the I-84 corridor in greater Danbury.

J. Gouin stated that the purpose statement will be used as a preliminary litmus test as concepts are developed and evaluated. If a concept meets the purpose question, it will continue through the analysis. If it does not, it will be eliminated from further consideration.

J. Gouin stated that there are several tools that can reduce congestion, including reconfiguring left hand exits, maintaining lane continuity, and improving geometric alignment. She added that Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies are those that seek ways to get people out of single-occupant vehicles. There are also several tools for improving mobility, including improving the connections between the highway and: 1) local roadway network, 2) critical facilities such as the Danbury Hospital, 3) downtown Danbury, 4) major employers, and 5) alternate modes of transportation.

Sharat Kalluri, of CDM Smith, presented a toolbox of strategies that can potentially be considered during the concept development process. He presented a mainline toolbox that illustrated various highway improvements, an interchange toolbox with possible interchange improvements, a streets toolbox for state and local road improvements, and non-infrastructure toolbox that includes intelligent traffic systems, improved connections to transit, and various travel demand management strategies. He noted that the strategies, as presented, are general and not specific to this corridor. Specific strategies applied to conceptual improvements for this corridor will be presented at the next several PAC meetings.

Mainline strategies to improve congestion and mobility can include eliminating weave movements by replacing left hand exits with right hand exits. He discussed what a weave operation is and why it can be problematic for drivers and safety. Another mainline strategy could be to maintain lane continuity by adding an additional lane where it currently drops off. Another mainline strategy to improve congestion and mobility could be to smooth out sharp geometric curves.

An example of an interchange strategy to improve congestion and mobility in the more heavily used portions of the corridor could be to space interchanges further apart. This would increase the time and distance for vehicles to change lanes and reduce [driver](#) confusion entering and exiting the highway. An example of a local road improvement is to create collector – distributor roads parallel to the mainline. An attendee questioned whether a collector – distributor road is the same as a service or frontage road. S. Kalluri answered that frontage roads are designed to move traffic at much higher speeds than collector – distributor roads. Thus, they don't provide the same network connections and pedestrian and bicycle opportunities that a collector – distributor road can. Finally, S. Kalluri presented example interchange and intersection types, describing such features as a simple diamond interchange, divergent diamond interchange, roundabouts, and more.

S. Kalluri stated that utilizing a travel demand model is an additional way to assess the future traffic conditions on the road network.

David Sousa, of CDM Smith, next discussed non-highway improvement and non-infrastructure strategies. He added that these include TDM strategies as well as bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The bicycle and pedestrian improvements are particularly important because they can improve first-mile / last-mile trips and access to transit. He stated that there are 18 crossings of local streets and the highway in the corridor. As the project team considers all improvements to the highway and ramps, it can consider incorporating additional, often lower-cost improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian network within the project area. He showed a series of renderings that show poor bicycle and pedestrian connections and an enhancement that improves conditions. These can include sidewalks, tighter vehicular turning-radii, bicycle lanes, and enhanced crossings.

D. Sousa closed by discussing features of TDM strategies. He said that 95 percent of autos on the highway in this corridor are single-occupant vehicles. Examples of strategies include flexible work schedules, taxis and shared vehicles, walking and bicycling, intermodal connections, commuter shuttles, better transit facilities, carpools, vanpools, and telecommuting.

4. Next Steps

Andy Fesenmeyer, of CTDOT, thanked everyone for coming to the fourth project PAC meeting. He stated that the project team has expanded the study limits to include I-84 to the New York state line (Exits 1 and 2). He added that the project team does not know whether work will be proposed in this new area.

A. Fesenmeyer stated that the next steps of the project include the development of a concept for I-84. The project team will present this concept to the PAC at its next meeting, which is expected to occur in Spring 2020. This PAC meeting will be an interactive workshop to review and discuss the concept. Subsequently, the I-84 Danbury team will consider PAC comments on the concept, incorporate them into revised concept where possible, or develop entirely new concept(s) as appropriate.

A. Fesenmeyer stated the importance of the PAC members remaining involved in the project.

5. Question and Answer Period

Annie Dance said that there is a newly funded pilot program aimed at preventing wrong way traffic. She asked if it is related to the I-84 Danbury Project. A. Fesenmeyer answered that wrong way driving often causes head on collisions. Most of the crashes in this corridor are rear end crashes. The pilot program will likely happen more quickly, while the I-84 Danbury Project construction is further out.

An attendee questioned if the travel demand modeling will account for traffic during construction, as construction traffic could be devastating. S. Kalluri answered that regional models do address this, and this model would account for project construction staging.

Barry Abrams, of Juniper Ridge Tax District, asked if the PAC would have a SimCity type of program to review the concepts and environmental limitations. S. Kalluri stated that the project team will

utilize a visualization tool with three-dimensional visualizations later in the process. He stated that the project team has much of the environmental resources and conditions already identified. They will utilize mapping software to overlay potential concepts and the resources.

A. Fesenmeyer said that the project team will begin the analysis comparing each concept against the project purpose. If it meets the purpose, the team will overlay the environmental elements and impacts. In the beginning, the project team will look at the most critical features and resources. The project team will later present matrices of the analysis to the PAC. J. Gouin stated that the project team already has detailed base layers of the environmental resources and understands where many of the environmental hotspots might be.

Rudy Marconi, of the Town of Ridgefield, stated that he is concerned about the project timeline. He believes the congestion will be unbearable by the time the project may be constructed. A. Fesenmeyer answered that there will hopefully be some smaller breakout projects from this study that can proceed before most of the improvements in the 2030s.

An attendee questioned whether the project team should be looking at a 2070 build out year instead of 2040. S. Kalluri stated that the project team has capability to do reasonable traffic estimates through 2040. After that, the range of variables that can influence the forecasts make them more unreliable.

An attendee questioned whether there would be right-of-way acquisitions. A. Fesenmeyer stated that the project team is working to collect survey information now. It will likely have that by the next PAC meeting.

An attendee questioned how the alternatives analysis will fit into the general concept development. A. Fesenmeyer answered that the project team will first develop concepts against the project purpose, without comparing them to each other. Further into the analysis, the project team will begin rating the concepts against each other. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis will require the project team to look at the remaining alternatives and their impact to air, right-of-way, and other natural and built resources.

Another attendee commented that pedestrians could use more crossing amenities. D. Sousa commented that the project team has Complete Streets tools to assess the concepts in detail.