

## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Monday, November 16, 2020 from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM**

**Location: Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting Platform**

**Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #5**

### 1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
<b>PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>		
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## 2. Welcome

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) hosted its fifth Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) for the I-84 Danbury Project on Monday, November 16, 2020, from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM via the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting platform. Marcy Miller, of Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc. (FHI), welcomed attendees to the PAC Meeting and provided an overview of the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting platform. Yolanda Antoniak, of CTDOT, said that the purpose of the meeting is to begin exploring concepts with the PAC and to explain the evaluation process. She then reviewed the agenda.

## 3. Presentation

Y. Antoniak commenced the presentation portion of the meeting by giving a summary of the previous PAC Meeting. She reviewed the draft purpose statement, explained how the project purpose will be used, and presented a refresher on the toolbox for concept development.

Sharat Kalluri, of CDM Smith, introduced Concept 1 to the PAC. This will be the first of numerous concepts that are evaluated by the project team. This concept proposes adding lanes to the I-84 mainline, creating lane continuity and three lanes of travel in each direction. This concept eliminates the left-hand exit ramps at Exit 3 and Exit 7, improves horizontal curvature and vertical geometry, and maintains current alignment and right-of-way of I-84 to the extent possible.

S. Kalluri explained how Concept 1 would be implemented in different sections of the project corridor. In the area of Exit 1 and Exit 2, the mainline would be widened to provide three consistent travel lanes in each direction, however, no interchange improvements are proposed under this concept at Exits 1 and 2. This concept provides lane continuity at Interchange 3, reduces sharp curves to meet design standards, and adds a fourth travel lane in each direction. The left-hand off-ramp from I-84 westbound to Route 7 south would be replaced in this concept by a right-hand ramp, but the left-hand off-ramp from Route 7 northbound to the left lane of I-84 west would not be corrected. The horizontal curve would be straightened to help traffic congestion and improve speed in the corridor. In the area of Interchange 4, lane continuity would be maintained, and the I-84 westbound on-ramp would be relocated. Lake Avenue will not be changed.

The weaving traffic pattern (i.e. the crossing of traffic streams that are moving in the same general direction) on I-84 eastbound would not be corrected in this concept. No interchange improvements are proposed at Interchanges 5 and 6. The mainline between Interchange 6 and Exit 7 would be widened to accommodate five travel lanes in each direction. This concept would not provide access to Danbury Hospital. In the area of Interchange 7, the mainline would be widened to provide three consistent travel lanes in each direction; the left-hand off-ramp from I-84 eastbound to Route 7 north would be replaced by a right-hand off-ramp; and the off-ramp from Route 7 southbound to the left lane of I-84 eastbound would be replaced with a ramp that merges onto I-84 in the right

lane. In the area of Interchange 8, the mainline would be widened to provide three consistent travel lanes in each direction; however, no interchange improvements are proposed under this concept at Interchange 8.

S. Kalluri explained the process for evaluating concepts. The five main categories that concepts are evaluated against are:

1. Traffic operations,
2. Effects to mainline I-84,
3. Key constructability elements,
4. Environmental resource analysis, and
5. Construction cost estimate.

S. Kalluri shared videos of how Concept 1 would improve mobility on the mainline and reviewed the pros and cons of the concept. The video evaluated current traffic conditions and what traffic would look like with Concept 1. He shared a graph of current travel times and what travel times would likely be with Concept 1. Future traffic predictions were factored into the videos. The projections show the anticipated travel times if no changes were made to the I-84 mainline and the travel times if Concept 1 was implemented. Concept 1 would make travel times more efficient.

S. Kalluri explained how Concept 1 affects mainline I-84. Horizontal curves would be improved at Interchanges 3 and 7 to design standards. Left-hand ramps would be changed to right-hand ramps. Acceleration and deceleration lanes would be lengthened to design standards. Weaving traffic would remain between Interchanges 3 and 4 and Interchanges 7 and 8.

S. Kalluri explained the pros and cons of Concept 1. The pros would be providing lane continuity, replacing left-hand ramps with right-hand ramps, reducing travel times during peak hour, improving highway geometry, impacting a footprint that is largely within the existing right-of-way, and typical construction methods could be used for the project. The cons of Concept 1 would be the lack of improvements at Interchanges 1,2,4,5,6, and 8, the lack of consistent design speed, no improved access to Danbury Hospital, and the weaving traffic remains between Interchanges 3 and 4 and Interchanges 7 and 8. The construction cost is estimated, between \$1 billion - \$3 billion.

Jeanine Gouin, of Milone & MacBroom, explained the environmental resource analysis for Concept 1. The resources evaluated in conjunction with the concept include sensitive noise receptors, land use and community impacts, cultural resource impacts (e.g. parks, cemeteries and historic sites), physical impacts (e.g. cut and fill and visual changes), wetland, watercourse and floodplain impacts, and biological resource impacts (e.g. wildlife habitats). J. Gouin reviewed the pros and cons of Concept 1 from an environmental perspective. Potential impacts associated with Concept 1 are anticipated to be modest and largely within the existing right-of-way, with no impacts to known historic resources, and no impacts to known 4(f) properties (e.g. parks and cemeteries). Cons include the proximity to a natural gas transmission pipeline between Interchanges 6 and 7, the proximity of the highway to certain residential properties, modest increases in noise levels, and potential water resource impacts at stream crossings associated with bridge modifications and replacements.

J. Gouin discussed the initial assessment of Concept 1 and how it connects to the project's purpose. She said that Concept 1 reduces congestion, improves mobility on the highway, can be constructed through typical methods, and has a low probability of causing significant or irreparable harm to the environment. Minor impacts are, however, associated with this concept for which mitigation opportunities would be evaluated. This concept does not address local connectivity,

including other modes of travel adjacent to the highway. As such, the recommendation is to consider Concept 1 in combination with one or more other concepts that address mobility adjacent to the highway.

Andy Fesenmeyer, of CTDOT, explained potential improvements that will be considered in upcoming concepts. He provided an explanation of the project process and timeline. The project team is in the concept study phase, where a range of alternatives and recommendations are being developed and evaluated.

A. Fesenmeyer indicated that the next steps in the I-84 Danbury Project will be to refine Concept 1 and continue developing new concepts. The next PAC meeting is anticipated for Winter/Spring 2021. The project team plans to share new concepts for the PAC to provide input on at the next meeting. A. Fesenmeyer concluded the presentation by thanking the PAC for attending and opened the meeting up to questions.

#### **4. Question and Answer Period**

During the meeting, the project team provided opportunities for PAC members to comment and ask questions. Below is a summary of the questions, comments, and responses.

Sharon Calitro, of the City of Danbury, asked S. Kalluri to clarify Concept 1 as it relates to the Interchange 4 area. S. Calitro asked if vehicles will be traveling across three lanes to reach the exit. She expressed this as an issue. S. Kalluri said that vehicles will travel across three lanes and that future concepts may address the issue.

Barry Abrams, of the Juniper Ridge Tax District, noted that he has noticed a backup on the Interchange 6 off-ramp. He observed that traffic backs up onto I-84 westbound creating a dangerous condition. He asked if Interchange 3 would be a right-hand or a left-hand exit. S. Kalluri answered that, in Concept 1, it would be a left-hand exit. Regarding the Interchange 6 off-ramp, S. Kalluri responded that there will be more attention to this in future concepts. A traffic signal timing issue could be contributing to the backup.

David McCollum, of the Town of Bethel, asked if there is still potential for Exit 8 interchange improvements to be included in future concepts. S. Kalluri answered that the project team is looking at Interchange 8 solutions in future concepts.

Frank Salvatore, of the Danbury City Council, asked if CTDOT will deploy noise barriers due to the road widening from this project. J. Gouin said that the concepts are evaluating environmental impacts and mitigation measures. As part of the formal NEPA assessment, noise analysis will forecast future noise levels and enable an evaluation of the potential need for noise barriers.

Alec Slatky, of AAA, thanked the project team for the presentation. He asked whether the addition of travel lanes on I-84 will induce traffic on the highway. S. Kalluri answered that there will likely be some induced demand (i.e. increase in highway travel) because of the capacity improvements but that projections for future traffic factor that increase.

James Root, of the Sierra Club, asked if the forecast includes possible developments in public transportation. S. Kalluri said that the statewide model has a transit component. The traffic associated with the future developments is included in the forecast. The project team will be looking at concepts that would facilitate increased local travel including transit.

B. Abrams asked whether the construction is funded. A. Fesenmeyer answered that there are no construction funds allocated to the project at this time. This is typical of a project in this early planning stage.

J. Root asked if the purpose statement can be refined to explicitly state what is meant by congestion and mobility and whether non-highway solutions will be identified and evaluated. J. Gouin confirmed that non-highway solutions will indeed be evaluated for their potential to reduce congestion and improve mobility. Additionally, she indicated that while the “short-hand” purpose statement is being used for the initial concept assessment, it will be refined as the process proceeds to include a detailed description of and justification for the purpose, with definitions, goals, objectives, and metrics by which each alternative will be analyzed with respect to its ability to meet the project purpose. The final purpose statement will be issued only after receipt of input from the PAC and the public through the formal scoping process and will be presented in a document that provides the detail.

Abdul Mohamed, of the City of Danbury, suggested that B. Abrams contact him for concerns relative to the current Exit 6 congestion. M. Miller said that she would send A. Mohammed’s contact information to B. Abrams via email.

D. McCollum asked how many concepts the project team envisions presenting to the PAC. A. Fesenmeyer said that there is no set number. The project team plans to show the PAC all the concepts over the next several months.

A. Mohamed commented that he would like to see Interchange 4 safety issues addressed in future concepts.

M. Miller concluded the fifth PAC Meeting by stating that the project website has been updated and a newsletter will be released soon.