

REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, May 26, 2021, from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Location: Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting Platform

Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #6

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Barry Abrams	Juniper Ridge Tax District	abramsb@hotmail.com
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James Root	Sierra Club, Connecticut Chapter	manoether@yahoo.com
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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Marcy Miller	FHI Studio	mmiller@fhistudio.com

2. [Welcome](#)

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) hosted its sixth Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) for the I-84 Danbury Project on Wednesday, May 26, from 12:30 – 2:00 PM via the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting platform. Marcy Miller, of FHI Studio, welcomed attendees to the PAC Meeting and provided an overview of the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting platform and team members. Yolanda Antoniak, of CTDOT, reviewed the agenda and relayed that the purpose of the meeting was to continue exploring four additional concepts with the PAC.

3. [Presentation](#)

Y. Antoniak commenced the presentation portion of the meeting by providing the PAC with a list of activities the project team has worked on since the previous PAC Meeting in November 2020. She reviewed the draft purpose statement, explained how the project purpose will be used, and presented a refresher on the toolbox for concept development. She stated that the team would be discussing Concepts 2, 6, 7, and 9 during the meeting. She noted that each concept number is an identifier to reference the concept and does not imply prioritization. The concepts will not necessarily be released or presented at PAC meetings in sequential order.

S. Kalluri, of CDM Smith, provided an overview of how each of the concepts was evaluated. The five main categories against which concepts are evaluated 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 began the discussion on Concept 2 collector distributor (CD) - Road Center. He described how this concept, a 1.5-mile-long parallel CD road, could serve to potentially remove 1/3 of the traffic off I-84. He discussed how Concept 2 could improve access to Tamarack Road and Danbury Hospital. It could also improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity by providing sidewalks and enhancing shoulders for bicycle use. He suggested that bike lanes could also be provided.

S. Kalluri was assisted by Patrick Gallagher, of SLR Consulting, who displayed an interactive story map of Concept 2. S. Kalluri discussed how traffic could flow with the potential construction of the CD road and how the concept could improve access to key connections such as Main Street, North Street, and Tamarack Avenue. He discussed the intersections of these roads with the CD road, noting that they would get wider to accommodate the traffic flow on the CD road.

S. Kalluri summarized the traffic analysis for Concept 2. The congestion on I-84 would improve greatly, and congestion to Danbury Hospital and Downtown would also improve because the CD Road would provide access to the Danbury Hospital and Downtown. He stated that congestion would increase outside of the concept limits when the traffic from the CD Road merges back into I-84 in either direction. In addition, the CD Road intersections with Main Street, North Street, and

Tamarack Avenue would experience congestion because the CD road would essentially pull 1/3 of the traffic off I-84. As a result, these intersections would need to be widened with additional turn lanes. S. Kalluri stated that the Golden Hill Road connection at Main Street would be eliminated due to traffic backups on Main Street coming from the CD Road intersection. This traffic backup on Main Street would block access to the Golden Hill Road intersection. This traffic would be required to use Madison Street. CD road construction would require multiple phases. The estimated cost for Concept 2 is in the range of \$0.5 billion, which does not include engineering and right-of-way (ROW) costs. S. Kalluri concluded by stating that Concept 2 has merit for reducing congestion and improving mobility on the highway. It would likely need to be combined with other concepts.

S. Kalluri next discussed Concept 6 - Interchanges 3 and 4 Segar Street Eastbound, which mainly looks at the eastbound traffic near Exits 3 and 4 on I-84. He stated that, in Concept 6, I-84 eastbound traffic would be prohibited to use the Lake Avenue exit (Exit 4). A barrier would be installed to prohibit this traffic to exit Lake Avenue. The reasons to prohibit this movement is to eliminate some of the major causes of congestion (e.g., weave condition, lane drop-offs, short section) at this location. A new connection would be provided to the I-84 eastbound traffic via Segar Street with a flyover ramp to the Chucks Steakhouse and Park and Ride Lot on Segar Street. He discussed the pros and cons of this concept, noting that the pros include reduced congestion on I-84 and Route 7, reduced weave condition between I-84 and Lake Avenue, and minimal environmental impacts. He stated that the estimated cost for Concept 6 is anticipated to be less than \$0.5 billion, which does not include engineering and ROW costs. The study team recommends that the concept move forward into the evaluation process. It could be combined with other options.

Ray Culver, of CDM Smith, next discussed Concept 9 - Route 7 Median-Mainline, a mainline concept that would move Route 7 into the median of I-84 between Exits 3 and 7. Route 7 would become an express facility where once motorists are on the facility, they would not have access to the downtown exits (Exit 5 or Exit 6). The purpose is to eliminate the existing left-hand weave between the Route 7 interchanges on I-84. This concept would eliminate the left-hand ramps to Route 7 from I-84 and right-hand ramps would be provided at Exits 3 and 7. This concept also achieves lane continuity on I-84. This concept does not propose any interchange improvements at Exits 5 and 6. P. Gallagher shared an interactive story map of Concept 9 while R. Culver discussed the typical sections and potential changes at the Route 7 interchanges (Exits 3 and 7). R. Culver reviewed the pros and cons of Concept 9, noting that while it reduces the congestion on I-84 and Route 7, it also requires a wide cross section on the highway and reduces access to/from Route 7. He stated that the estimated cost for Concept 9 is in the range of \$1-3 billion, which does not include engineering and ROW costs. The study team found this concept to have merit and recommends that this concept move forward into the evaluation process.

Jeanine Armstrong Gouin, of SLR Consulting, next discussed Concept 7 - Tunnel-West. This concept is referred to as "Tunnel West." The new alignment is about two miles long, and heads west from about Exit 5. Its purpose is to straighten the curve on I-84 in this area. She noted that the tunnel would be about 160 feet below grade. It can be constructed while maintaining current traffic on I-84 since the new alignment would not be near the present highway alignment. Lane continuity is maintained on I-84 under this concept. She stated that, while not impossible to build, there would be key constructability issues and other concerns such as construction duration, separation between neighborhoods, specialized staff and size / availability of the

equipment needed. The largest drawback of this concept is the significant impact to the West Lake Water Treatment Plant facility, which would require relocation. In addition, this concept would create a redundant highway system since the existing highway would need to remain in place to serve the Lake Avenue community and provide access to Route 7. The cost of this concept would range between \$3 and \$5 billion. The study team recommends that this concept be dismissed from further consideration.

Andy Fesenmeyer, of CTDOT, concluded the presentation portion of the meeting. He stated that the study team will next focus on non-highway concepts to share at the next PAC meeting. He presented a slide with various non-highway options such as telecommuting, flexible work schedules, transit facilities, commuter shuttles, intermodal connections as well as walking and biking. He stated that non-highway options are important and need to be considered since they also contribute to reducing congestion and improving mobility in the corridor. He also noted that incorporating these elements would not be limited to state and federal agencies but would also include coordination with other entities, (e.g., City and local transit providers, commuter shuttles, pedestrian and bicycle groups, etc.) as well as local businesses.

A. Fesenmeyer provided an explanation of the project process and timeline, noting that the project team is currently in the concept study phase, where a range of concepts and recommendations are being developed and evaluated. He announced that the study team plans to have most concepts (potentially more than 20) completed by the end of the summer. He added that the study is in the pre-NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) phase now. The next milestones will be developing a range of alternatives and making recommendations for the project to move into the NEPA phase. He stated that, after concept development, the Project Team will establish screening criteria and performance measures. This will likely occur in Fall 2021. Not all 20 concepts will necessarily be covered in PAC presentations. The Project Team will focus on the best performing concepts and those that are “outside of the box”. The Project Team can review any concept that the PAC requests a presentation on. He encouraged PAC members to visit the concepts page on the website at <https://www.i84danbury.com/concepts/>.

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.

Concept 2 - CD Road-Center

Dave Nardone, of Federal Highway Administration, questioned if the story map graphic is showing the CD Road with four lanes and no shoulders. S. Kalluri showed the cross section of the CD Road and its proximity to I-84 and confirmed that the CD Road would have two lanes with a shoulder in each direction. He noted that this concept helps I-84 because traffic moves over to the CD road, and it establishes connections at Main Street, North Street, and Tamarack Avenue.

Sharon Calitro, of the City of Danbury, questioned whether needing additional ROW could be accomplished within the right-of-way footprint. In addition, she asked how the project could tie

into Main Street to meet grades. S. Kalluri responded that meeting grade could be a concern. He added this concept could also require additional widening outside of the existing footprint. The study team would have to look at this in more detail in the next phase.

B. Abrams of Juniper Ridge Tax District questioned whether work on Tamarack Road will encroach the Still River and how environmental impacts will be considered here. Jeannine Gouin, of SLR, responded that there are three crossings in the area including Beaver Brook, Padanaram Brook, and Bogs Pond Brook. Any impacts will be identified and considered should this concept move forward.

B. Abrams also asked whether a motorist would be able to turn on Main Street from Golden Hill Road in Concept 2. S. Kalluri answered that a motorist would be able to connect between the CD road and Golden Hill Road, but the right turn from Main Street to Golden Hill Road would be eliminated. A driver would exit Golden Hill Road to Madison Street to the eastbound or westbound CD road. B. Abrams voiced concern that providing access to Madison Street and closing the Golden Hill Road connection would generate more traffic in the Juniper Ridge neighborhood and disrupt the quiet, bucolic community. B. Abrams added that Concept 2 as presented would likely not be supported by him or the Juniper Tax District. S. Kalluri thanked B. Abrams for his comment and said the study team would look at this more closely.

Tom Altermatt, of the City of Danbury, asked how the City of Danbury can get copies of the concept plans. S. Kalluri answered that the meeting materials will be posted to the Concepts page on the project website.

T. Altermatt questioned where the motorist will have limited access to the CD road. S. Kalluri stated it will be Main Street, North Street, Madison, Street, and Tamarack Avenue. The primary purpose of the CD road is to enhance east west traffic flow in the corridor.

Perry Salvagne, of Get Downtown, stated that he agreed with B. Abrams on his traffic concerns on Golden Hill Road, especially considering the amount of traffic generated to/from Danbury High School at the top of the hill. He questioned how much of New Fairfield traffic will be diverted via the CD system. S. Kalluri answered that the study team, via request from B. Abrams will consider the diverted traffic on Golden Hill Road and other Juniper Ridge neighborhood roads. S. Kalluri added that New Fairfield traffic would have additional access via North Street to the CD road and get on I-84 westbound. That could potentially eliminate some of the cut-through traffic on Golden Hill Road.

John Gentile, of Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities, agreed with P. Salvagne's comments. He added that Padanaram Road, particularly getting on I-84 from Route 37 is difficult. S. Kalluri agreed that Route 37 is a challenge to travel on. This was part of the purpose of creating a CD concept. He added that current volumes are significant, and the study team is working to accommodate the traffic volumes for the future year of 2040. J. Gentile noted that people already use East Pembroke Road to avoid Route 37 traffic to and from New Fairfield.

Concept 6 - Interchanges 3 and 4 Segar Street Eastbound,

S. Calitro stated that this concept would add traffic onto the local city streets and would negatively impact Segar Street, particularly during the holiday season when people are going to the Danbury Mall. S. Kalluri stated that the study team looked at typical weekday conditions for traffic volumes in this area, including traffic to Great Plains Road. The analysis showed that Segar Street will be able to accommodate about half of the diverted Lake Avenue traffic from I-84. In addition, this concept could assist in eliminating the existing weave condition between Route 7 and I-84 at the highway's curve at this location. However, he stated that the study team will investigate these concerns further.

Frank Salvatore, of the Danbury City Council, commented that he was not aware that the parking lot on the east side of the Chuck's parking facility is a Park and Ride. S. Kalluri answered that there is a Park and Ride and the Chuck's lot. It is a combination of the two lots.

Concept 9 - Route 7 Median-Mainline

Francis Pickering, of Western Connecticut Council of Governments, stated that it seems like there are some missed opportunities for the current partial interchanges and existing access to local street network. He also added that there seem to be many lanes proposed, up to 10 lanes across with full width shoulder, which does not provide a lot of flexibility in case you have a crash. R. Culver answered that the study team did note many of these points, including access to Route 7, as cons to Concept 9. Emergency access could also be an issue. This concept was developed to assess whether separating I-84 and Route 7 could reduce congestion on the highway and fulfill the Purpose and Need.

F. Pickering asked if the study team would consider a non-barrier separation, particularly for high occupancy vehicle lanes, between I-84 and Route 7. R. Culver answered that the team has not looked at this yet but would consider it. He did note this could pose safety problems with people crossing the non-barrier separation. S. Kalluri added that the mainline concepts are generally looking to bring the mainline up to current design standards and recommended shoulder widths. F. Pickering added that this concept would take up a considerable amount of space that could be used for other purposes.

James Root, of the Sierra Club, referred to the Purpose Statement, and asked for a further explanation of the term "corridor". He added that, if the purpose is to just reduce congestion on I-84 itself, that should be called out in the Purpose Statement. J. Root also asked for an overview on the review process for the study. J. Gouin explained that the term "corridor" includes the highway and roads adjacent to the highway, and it considers other modes of transportation such as bicycle and pedestrian travel. It is a broader view than just the limits of the highway and includes consideration to the roadways adjacent to the highway. A. Fesenmeyer added that he will be discussing the review process in more detail later in the presentation and that the project team is conducting the pre-NEPA phase of the study now.

D. McCollum questioned why Concept 9 excludes changes to interchange 8? Are those going to be part of a separate concept? R. Culver answered that Exit 8 will be looked at in a separate concept. D. McCollum also questioned whether the traffic modeling factors in induced demand? S. Kalluri answered that the traffic model does factor in some latent demand from local traffic and what might be diverted back onto the highway with mainline improvements. Some of the



regional latent demand generated outside of the project limits is factored into the model. This could be possible in Concept 1 as well.

5. Adjourn

M. Miller concluded the sixth PAC Meeting by stating that the project website will be updated with the meeting materials soon.