

REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, June 22, 2022, from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Location: Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting Platform

Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #9

1. Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS / PHONE
PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Barry Abrams	Juniper Ridge Tax District	abramsb@hotmail.com
Tom Altermatt	City of Danbury	t.altermatt@danbury-ct.gov
Sharon Calitro	City of Danbury	s.calitro@danbury-ct.gov
Jennifer Carrier	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	
Greg Dembowski	Town of Brookfield	gdembowski@brookfieldct.gov
Peter Frengs	Town of Brookfield	
Guyauth Gabbidon	HARtransit	guyauthg@hartransit.com
Veera Karukonda	City of Danbury	v.karukonda@danbury-ct.gov
Matt Knickerbocker	Town of Bethel	firstselectman@bethel-ct.gov
Rudy Marconi	Town of Ridgefield	selectman@ridgefieldct.org
David McCollum	Town of Bethel	mccollumd@bethel-ct.gov
Anne Mead	Danbury Public Schools	meadan@danbury.k12.ct.us
Craig Negri		
Katie Pearson	City of Danbury	k.pearson@danbury-ct.gov
Francis Pickering	Western CT council of Governments	fpickering@westcog.org
Perry Salvagne	Get Downtown	psalvagne@gmail.com
Paul Steinmetz	Western CT State University	steinmetzp@wcsu.edu
Chris Roscia	CTWeather	chris@ctweather.com
James Root	Sierra Club, Connecticut Chapter	manoether@yahoo.com
Frank Salvatore		fse7rrt@gmail.com
Rick Schriener	HARtransit	ricks@hartransit.com
Alec Slatky	AAA	aslatky@aaanortheast.com
Unidentified caller		

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
Nilesh Patel	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	Nilesh.patel@ct.gov
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Lynn Murphy	CTDOT	Lynn.Murphy@ct.gov
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CONSULTANT TEAM		
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Melissa Santley	CDM Smith	santleym@cdmsmith.com
Kevin Rivera	FHI Studio	krivera@fhistudio.com

2. [Welcome](#)

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) hosted its ninth Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) for the I-84 Danbury Project on Wednesday, June 22, 2022, 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. She introduced the project team and handed the presentation to Krishalyn Macrohon, of CTDOT. K. Macrohon reviewed the agenda and relayed that the purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion on the concept screening criteria, its examples and applications. She added that the team would present next steps and leave ample time for discussion and questions from the PAC.

3. [Presentation](#)

K. Macrohon provided the PAC with a list of activities the project team worked on following the previous PAC Meeting on May 25, 2022. She stated that the team published an article and an ad for the Tribuna newspaper to announce the Listening sessions, hosted two Listening Sessions, added more concepts to the website, attended the Street Festival pop up event on June 4th, and continued to create content and post to social media. She said the purpose of the listening sessions was to allow attendees to ask questions about the concepts and to show how to navigate the project website. She then provided a list of the current PAC members, noting that no new PAC members have joined since the last meeting.

Rick Black, of SLR Consulting, first presented the summary of the screening process as briefly introduced in the previous PAC meeting. He presented six general screening phases that the team will use in the coming months:

1. Develop screening criteria
2. Apply screening criteria
3. Screen concept segments
4. Combine concept segments
5. Segment combination screening
6. Reasonable range of alternatives

R. Black discussed the fatal flaw analysis, which is the beginning of the overall screening process. During this step, a fatal flaw can occur if a concept lacks potential to meet the project purpose, if there are constructability issues related to technical feasibility and cost, or if there are unjustifiable environmental impacts. Concepts that pass this fatal flaw analysis will move on to the concept screening analysis, whereby the project team applies the screening criteria (#2 above). For instance, Concept 7 – The Tunnel, is not recommended for advancement because of the impacts to the water treatment plant and the neighborhoods, as well as the construction and maintenance costs. Therefore, this concept failed the fatal flaw analysis.

R. Black discussed the items that the team will consider during the concept screening. He stated that the team is looking at such criteria as congestion and mobility, geometry and design, access,

schedule and budget, property impacts, sensitive community cohesion, wetland and stream impacts, and sensitive species.

Due to the extent of the study corridor, R. Black stated that the evaluation of the study corridor is divided into four segments: west, center, east, and mainline. The goal is to find one or more concepts that work for each segment and combine them to create full project alternatives that can meet the project purpose.

R. Black explained that each concept is further evaluated for their engineering and environmental considerations. He first described the engineering considerations which looked at its key considerations on addressing the peak hour delay and lane continuity within the study corridor. He went on with the additional considerations such as providing access to Danbury Hospital, businesses on North Street and Downtown, improving local network, maintaining traffic during construction, and improving the highway geometry. R. Black added that schedule and budget are regarded as an additional engineering consideration. He frequently paused to ask the PAC whether they agreed with the listed criteria. The questions and comments on these are listed in the "Question and Answer" section of this report.

R. Black emphasized that the improvements to the highway geometry relate to ensuring adequate distances between the adjacent ramps in center section, meeting the driver expectations, removal of left-hand ramps, and maintaining consistent design speed throughout the corridor. There were no comments from the PAC related to adding or deleting the geometric considerations.

R. Black next discussed environmental considerations. He said that they are subdivided into built and natural environment impacts. Similar to engineering considerations, environmental considerations are evaluated for their key and additional considerations for both built and natural environments. Key built considerations include property impacts, dead-end streets and their effect to community cohesion, and Environmental Justice neighborhood impacts. He added that any project cannot disproportionately affect neighborhoods that are typically disadvantaged or underrepresented in the transportation planning process. R. Black continued to discuss the additional built considerations. These include community facility impacts, Section 4(f) impacts (which includes parks, wildlife refuges, and historical properties), visual / aesthetic impacts, cemetery property impacts. In addition, impacts to the natural gas pipeline, history property impacts will be considered for the built environment.

For the natural environment, key considerations include wetland and stream, state-listed species habitat, and Northern long-eared bat and bog turtle impacts. Additional considerations include impacts to floodplains and other critical environmental areas. He paused to ask the PAC whether they agreed with the listed criteria. The questions and comments on these are listed in the "Question and Answer" section of this report.

R. Black then touched upon the application of rating criteria and the concept screening process through examples. He discussed that concepts in each segment are evaluated with the application of rating criteria and analyzed for its degree of impacts or improvements as represented by green, yellow, or red bubble, signifying good, no, or substantial impacts. He displayed a chart that presents the overview of the concept screening process for all segments. It shows if a concept moves forward or fails the screening process. Concepts that are not dropped in the process will move forward to the next phase of the process – Combine Concept Segments. Then the combined

concept segments will be further analyzed for their feasibility, congestion/mobility, redundancy, and high impacts. The anticipated outcome is known as the reasonable range of alternatives which will continue through a detailed environmental study.

Nilesh Patel, of CTDOT, concluded the presentation portion of the meeting. He 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 noted that the team will likely have reviewed and screened the 26 concepts by the end of the concept study phase in Spring 2023. N. Patel stated that the next steps will be to start combining various concepts to create a reasonable range of alternatives that meet the purpose. All alternatives will be screened, and the PAC will be involved in this process. The next meeting will be in early Fall 2022.

M. Miller concluded the meeting by thanking the PAC for attending.

4. Discussion

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

Engineering Considerations

Rudy Marconi, of the Town of Ridgefield, asked if the team has considered future residential and business growth and the impact it will have on the corridor. R. Black answered that the team does consider growth projections out to year 2040 and their traffic impacts on the corridor. Sharat Kalluri, of CDM Smith, added that the team also accounts for future growth in neighboring New York communities.

Francis Pickering, of Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), asked if the team is considering travel time reliability, or is that simply included as part of peak hour delay. S. Kalluri answered that at this point in the screening process, the team is keeping it very high level. Reliability will be covered in more detail later in the process, as the concepts are combined to form alternatives.

Tom Altermatt, of the City of Danbury, asked if road design issues such as grades and feasibility are considered part of the engineering considerations. R. Black answered that road design issues are considered in geometry. T. Altermatt also asked if local and state roads are considered as part of the congestion and mobility analysis. R. Black confirmed that some local roads are looked at in the analysis but consideration was focused on the feeder roads.

Chris Roscia, of CTWeather, expressed support to many of the concepts presented to date. He has received positive feedback from the community. R. Black thanked C. Roscia for speaking with the members of the community about the concepts.

James Root, of the Sierra Club, questioned if SLR Consulting took over for the prior work completed by Milone & MacBroom. Jeanine Armstrong Gouin, of SLR Consulting, stated that the two firms merged and provided more information about the acquisition. She noted that many of their employees stayed and continue to work on the project.

R. Marconi questioned about the development of other modes of transportation. R. Black answered that the team is considering incorporating elements of walking, bicycling, and transit as referred in Non-highway concept (Concept #4).

C. Roscia stressed the importance of improving the local network in the City. He added that the City's infrastructures, including pavement and signal timing, need improvements. R. Black answered that this corridor planning study is still assessing the network at a very high level. One goal of this process is to have several project recommendations, some of which can be tangential to the local network that feeds into the highway corridor. C. Roscia said he is interested to hear the City weigh in on which concepts they support. Marcy Miller, of FHI Studio, noted that the City of Danbury is on the PAC and has met with the project team several times. They are consistently hearing what the other committee members are contributing. S. Kalluri said the team has confirmed cooperation from the City.

F. Pickering added that WestCOG is aware of the local circulation issues. WestCOG may initiate some stand-alone studies, separate from this effort that can address these issues. He continued that it's important not to worsen the access to the highway. He suggested a more direct connection between Federal Road and I-84 is desirable.

R. Marconi asked if the access to Danbury Hospital will be for emergency response only, or if this improvement will be open to the traveling public. R. Black clarified the team is most interested in whether this access is an important consideration in evaluating the concepts. R. Marconi said yes.

Alex Slatky, of AAA, asked if traffic safety will be a screening criterion. R. Black answered that safety is considered but is rolled into several other criteria, such as elimination of weaves.

T. Altermatt stated that the City had a recent meeting with the project team and expressed that the Exit 6 on- and off-ramp should be a priority. He believed this can help improve several access and mobility issues, including the hospital access.

C. Roscia asked how the team came up with the construction costs. R. Black answered that this is a high level of analysis and the team developed an order of magnitude range of costs for each concept. S. Kalluri added that the costs are quantified based on the number of structures will be impacted using the year 2020 construction costs. They will be refined to add more detail in future phases of work.

Frank Salvatore stated that the City of Danbury cannot handle the additional traffic during construction. He agreed that staging is a very important criterion.

Environmental Considerations

C. Roscia asked if there will be an environmental hurdle with any of the designs. J. Gouin stated that it is too early to make that call, but the screening process will eliminate those concepts that have unjustifiable environmental impacts. R. Black added that the environmental screening will include impacts to the built, natural, and social environments.

F. Pickering asked if the team is considering positive impacts, in addition to the negative impacts. He also asked if the team would consider mitigation strategies. R. Black answered the team is

including positive impacts in the analysis. The team is not considering mitigation strategies at this level of concept study phase. He added that mitigation would be included in future analyses.

Rick Schriener, of HARTransit, asked if there is a consideration for historic impacts, other than cemeteries. R. Black answered that screening would consider impacts to historic properties as part of the 4(f) consideration. There is also going to be coordination with the respective agencies that oversee many of these properties. J. Gouin stated that the team has completed an existing conditions assessment and know where these properties are.

C. Roscia questioned if the team is considering wildlife crossing the highway and its mitigation. R. Black answered that at the planning level, the team is not considering this. Once there are alternatives or identified projects, that type of mitigation will be considered.

J. Root suggested adding noise impacts as a criterion. J. Gouin answered that noise will be evaluated later during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review process, once the alternatives are more defined. She added that the team has already completed a baseline noise analysis. J. Root stated that there are some construction impacts to local businesses should be considered. R. Black answered that access to businesses and residential and commercial property impacts are considered in this stage of screening. He added that a socioeconomic criterion will be added, that includes construction, during the NEPA process.

R. Marconi reminded the team to continue to collaborate with the New York communities. M. Miller stated that this would continue long as the New York communities desire to meet with the team. The I-84 Danbury Project team will also continue to reach out as new milestones in the project occur.

F. Salvatore asked to confirm whether the labeling of concepts on slides 41, 42 and 45 (Example of I-84 Screening Process) will show the actual concept number. R. Black confirmed that the screening process will show the actual concept number.

T. Altermatt stated that the City has received questions on congestions and delays on I-84 as many drivers are trying to avoid I-84 in Danbury. He expressed hope for construction sooner. N. Patel responded that the team is considering Transportation System Management Operations (TSMO) strategies as presented in last PAC meeting which can be implemented quickly.

Written Comments

F. Pickering wrote that with respect to geometry, he would suggest considering shoulder / breakdown lanes. This is important not only for emergency vehicle access (e.g., ambulances going to/from hospital) but also so that disabled vehicles may move out of the way and have less impact on traffic flow.

C. Roscia wrote in to agree with F. Pickering's comment about considering shoulder / breakdown lanes.

A. Slatky stated that shoulder / breakdown lanes are also good for tow trucks and safety for disabled motorists.



F. Pickering wrote that the project team may need to consider a light sky / dark sky analysis as alternatives move into the later phases of screening.

Barry Abrams, of the Juniper Ridge Neighborhood, emailed the project team the following questions:

1. What has been the evolution since the last meeting of the Exit 5 idea, with eminent domain needed to take some of the properties?
2. Where does the service road that goes up the middle of I-84 stand?

S. Kalluri answered that Concept 2 is still under consideration for screening. This concept has been refined to eliminate the connection to Madison Avenue based on your comment. As part of the Concept Screening Process, each concept will be compared against one another within each segment (mainline, center, west, and east) using the criteria being discussed at this PAC meeting.

5. [Adjourn](#)

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