

REPORT OF MEETING

Date and Time: Wednesday, December 14, 2022, from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Location: Western CT State University Student Center

Subject: Project Advisory Committee Meeting #12

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
Matthew Cassavechia	City of Danbury	m.cassavechia@danbury-ct.gov
John Gentile	City of Danbury Commission for Persons with disAbilities	jmgstr1550@aol.com
David McCollum	Town of Bethel	mccollumd@bethel-ct.gov
Shay Nagarsheth	City of Danbury	s.nagarsheth@danbury-ct.gov
Katie Pearson	City of Danbury	k.pearson@danbury-ct.gov
Francis Pickering	WestCOG	fpickering@westcog.com
Perry Salvagne	Get Downtown	prsavagne@gmail.com
James Root	Sierra Club	manoether@yahoo.com
Chris Roscia	CTWeather	chris@ctweather.com

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		
NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
Nilesh Patel	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	Nilesh.patel@ct.gov
Krishalyn Macrohon	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	krishalyn.macrohon@ct.gov
CONSULTANT TEAM		
Sharat Kalluri	CDM Smith	kallurisk@cdmsmith.com
Jeanine Armstrong Gouin	SLR Consulting	jgouin@slrconsulting.com
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Conner Dickes	SLR Consulting	cdickes@slrconsulting.com
Rick Black	SLR Consulting	rblack@slrconsulting.com
Marcy Miller	FHI Studio	mmiller@fhistudio.com
Laura Parete	FHI Studio	lparete@fhistudio.com
Julie Georges	A. DiCesare Associates	georges@adicesarepc.com

2. Welcome

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) hosted its twelfth Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) for the I-84 Danbury Project on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 12:30 PM at Western Connecticut State University. Krishalyn Macrohon, of CTDOT, introduced the project team and asked PAC members to introduce themselves. K. Macrohon reviewed the agenda, which consisted of:

1. PAC update
2. Discussion of the combining of previously screened
3. Segment concepts
4. Screening of concept combinations

5. Next steps
6. Discussion/Questions

3. Presentation

K. Macrohon provided an update to the PAC and invited members to attend the public meeting that followed the PAC session. She handed the presentation to Rick Black, of SLR Consulting, who reviewed the screening process and the study segments. Sharat Kalluri, of CDM Smith, and Conner Dickes, of SLR Consulting, next explained the concept combinations that are being evaluated by the project team. They presented one concept combination as an example and explained how it would function.

R. Black iterated that the concept combinations are continuing to be evaluated for feasibility and consistency with the PEL purpose statement. He then presented the lists of key and additional considerations for engineering and environmental which are the basis of screening in matrix analysis. Key engineering considerations related to congestion and mobility include peak hour reliability on Route 7 and I-84 and corrections of weaving; while the additional engineering considerations evaluate their function to maintain business access, the distance between adjacent ramps, meeting driver expectations, and construction complexity and staging. Key environmental considerations include potential natural environment impacts, such as wetland, stream, and built environment such as property takes, impacts to sensitive and Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhood and Section 4(f). R. Black said that these concept combinations will be evaluated and likely narrowed down to a more condensed list of combined concepts.

S. Kalluri presented several non-highway options that are considered as potential break out projects. These include dynamic lane use, rail improvements, and bicycle travel, all aimed at improving mobility and decreasing vehicular traffic. He discussed potential regional transit services that could be provided between New Milford and Norwalk for north-south service, and between Southbury and Brewster to serve east-west. This would help improve regional connectivity in Danbury. S. Kalluri explained that a circulator/connector service is being explored to enhance access to work and shopping destinations. The new circulator route could provide transfers between HART and the new express services.

S. Kalluri presented the potential bicycle plan that is being evaluated by the project team and the City of Danbury. Danbury has topographical constraints that are taken into consideration as part of the plan. R. Black said that the PEL study is looking at reducing congestion and increasing mobility, and the project team is presenting potential options to improve these.

S. Kalluri discussed additional potential early action projects, which include traffic incident management improvements, arterial traffic management, corridor traffic management, intersection improvement at Main Street and Downs Street, Interchange 8 improvements (U.S. Route 6/Newtown Road), and travel demand management opportunities.

Neil Patel of the Connecticut Department of Transportation presented the next steps. The project team will finalize concept combination screening and develop a range of reasonable alternatives to move forward into the environmental study phase. The next PAC meeting will be held in early 2023, and the process will be documented in a PEL Report. A public information meeting is anticipated in Spring / Summer 2023.

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.

Questions

- Barry Abrams, of Juniper Ridge Tax District, asked whether adequate space is provided for the Route 7 northbound flyover to I-84 westbound on the west segment of the Concept Combination A (CC-A) development. The project team said that the I-84 mainline will be shifted to the west to provide room.
- Tom Altermatt, of City of Danbury, followed up on the earlier question and asked for the copy of the ramp's grading plan. S. Kalluri replied that the project has only produced the conceptual plan and has not looked at its elevation.
- Chris Roscia, of CT Weather, asked about the proposed angle of the flyover ramp on CC-A vs. its current angle. S. Kalluri stated that this will be evaluated more in design. N. Patel said that a lot of these details will be worked out once we get through the process.
- B. Abrams asked about how much of the road shrinking is an optical illusion due to the Route 7 overpass on I-84 eastbound at Interchange 3. S. Kalluri agreed with Barry and that the project team is looking to improve sightlines in this area.
- T. Altermatt observed that the project seeks to flatten the mainline horizontal curve and asked if the same treatment will be done to the vertical grade of the mainline. S. Kalluri confirmed that this will be looked at in the design phase.
- On the center segment, T. Altermatt pointed out the need for full interchange at exit 6. S. Kalluri acknowledged the remark and assured that Concept 26 will address the North St access, which is included in other concept combinations.
- C. Roscia asked whether elevation between exits 7 and 8 will be addressed in this project, which he compared the issues with exit 3. S. Kalluri explained that the project will make recommendations for horizontal curve improvements, but project currently does not have detailed elevation. He also pointed out that exit 3 requires more work compared to exit 7.
- On the east segment, Francis Pickering, of WestCOG, asked if the CD road will have freeway to freeway connection between I-84 eastbound and Route 7 northbound, and Route 7 southbound and I-84 eastbound at Interchange 7. He added if the CD road on eastbound direction will be signalized and intersect with Federal Road. S. Kalluri responded that the CD road will neither provide freeway to freeway connection between Route 7 and I-84 nor it will have any signals or intersect on local roads such as Federal Road. This area is like the I-84 / I-384 interchange but does not accommodate as high of a speed.



- C. Roscia asked the project team's thoughts about the Federal Hill on-ramp to Route 7 southbound. He asked if it will be eliminated. S. Kalluri said that as part of the overall project the project is trying to maintain lane continuity by adding a lane on Route 7 southbound to create 2 lanes. The add lane concept on the mainline segment will provide 3 lanes on I-84 and will meet with the 2 lane Route 7 southbound traffic at Interchange 7, forming a total of 5 lanes. He added that lane drop will take place somewhere between exits 3 and 5. Details have yet to be determined at this phase.
- C. Roscia asked when the analysis of the combined concepts will be completed. N. Patel said that the study team plans to meet with the PAC again in early next year to discuss the updated combination concepts.
- Sharon Calitro, of City of Danbury, asked if placing gates, as seen in Virginia and Pennsylvania, have been explored as alternative to signing the Dynamic Lane Use (DLU). Neil Patel responded that placing gates may have future maintenance issues, but he expressed willingness to explore this.
- F. Pickering asked whether DLU will sacrifice the left shoulder and expressed his concerns on DLU with inadequate shoulders for emergency access or disabled car during operations of DLU. He added that WestCOG once studied this strategy on I-95 for right shoulder and was not pursued due to complications with emergency access. N. Patel replied that opening the left shoulder to traffic has more benefits than using the right shoulder and stated that more evaluation is required for DLU.
- B. Abrams asked where the dynamic lane starts and stops and how drainage concern on dynamic lane affects the speed and handling of cars. S. Kalluri responded that the banking of the dynamic lane will be carefully evaluated in the design phase and will consider its maintenance needs. The transitions of dynamic lane use will be along where Route 7 and I-84 merge but details are still being assessed.
- F. Pickering suggested adding ramp metering or looking at peripheral routes through Danbury to divert traffic from the mainline. S. Kalluri said the team is looking at some of these ideas. He said that the volume on both I-84 and Route 7, where ramp metering was looked at, are high hence ramp metering will not work. He added that the team also looked at other strategies on improving the local roads such as retiming the signals and intersection improvements.
- C. Roscia asked about the timeline for dynamic lane use. N. Patel said that this is still being evaluated and this could be one of those early action items.
- David McCollum, of the Town of Bethel, asked if local connector service would be multi-directional. S. Kalluri answered that yes, it would be a loop. The service routes have not been developed yet.
- J. Gentile shared his observation that some I-84 traffic is now pushed to the local roads in Danbury. S. Kalluri replied that the project seeks to improve the overall congestion and mobility in the city by keeping the I-84 traffic to stay in highways, while local traffic to stay in local roads.

- B. Abrams noted that residents who have two vehicles may not make the decision to get on a bus to relieve traffic. S. Kalluri clarified that rail and bus services provides mobility options and are not intended to draw everyone to use. He added that if more options are available and accessible, residents will likely consider these options.
- B. Abrams shared his smooth experience taking the Metro-North to Grand Central through Danbury line and believed it may be more of a marketing issue of people not knowing about this service.
- C. Roscia asked if the state has mass transit days. The project team is not aware of any recognized designated transit day, but the state is doing a better job of marketing transit services.
- James Root, of Sierra Club, asked if the draft PEL is available for review. The project team said that the PEL Report is in progress and not completed yet. More information will be available at the next PAC meeting in early 2023. The PEL Report is anticipated to be published for review in 2023.
- B. Abrams asked if properties will be acquired. N. Patel said that some properties may be acquired as part of the rights of way process depending on the needs of the project. Eminent domain is the last resort. Jeanine Armstrong-Gouin, of SLR Consulting, said that this will be evaluated during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase.

5. [Adjourn](#)

R. Black concluded by thanking the PAC and reminding them of the public meeting at night. The next PAC meeting is anticipated for early 2023.