



PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) MEETING #1

Meeting Summary

Date: March 27, 2017

Norwalk City Hall Community Room

Time: 6:30pm

1. Attendance

First Name	Last Name	Organization
PAC Members		
Elizabeth	Stocker	City of Norwalk
Mike	Yeosock	City of Norwalk
Christopher	Wigren	Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation
Jo-Anne	Horvath	Creeping Hemlock/Cranbury Neighborhood
Peter	Viteretto	CTASLA
David	Waters	Harbor Point/Building and Land Technology
JoAnn	McGrath	Marcus Partners/Merritt 7
Jill	Smyth	Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Alan	Kibbe	Norwalk Association of Homeowners (NASH)
David	Olson	Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH)
Nancy	Rosett	Norwalk Bike Task Force/Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance
John	Moeling	Norwalk Land Trust
Britt	Liotta	Norwalk Transit District
Jim	Carter	Norwalk Valley River Trail
Joanne	Ferrera	Silvermine Community
Jon	Chew	Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG)
Connecticut Department of Transportation Staff		
Rich	Armstrong	CTDOT
Andy	Fesenmeyer	CTDOT
Jenn	Sweeney	CTDOT
Project Consultant Team		
Meg	Harper	Architectural and Historic Services (AHS)
Ross	Harper	Architectural and Historic Services (AHS)
Stacey	Vairo	Architectural and Historic Services (AHS)
Mike	Fisher	BL Companies
Kim	Lesay	BL Companies
Stephanie	Brooks	FHI
Ken	Livingston	FHI
John	Eberle	Stantec



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Chris	Mojica	Stantec
Brian	O'Donnell	Stantec
Gary	Sorge	Stantec
Mike	Dion	VN Engineers
Community Representatives		
Steve	Kleppin	Norwalk Planning & Zoning

2. Welcome

Rich Armstrong, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 1st Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project. He welcomed the group and presented a basic overview of the project.

3. Meeting Overview

R. Armstrong reviewed the meeting's agenda items: introduction of project teams, overview of PAC role and process, review of CEPA/NEPA process, updates on work status, review of current alternates, and public outreach. He introduced John Eberle, of Stantec to begin the presentation.

4. Introductions

John E. presented an overview of the consultant team organization and staff from each firm introduced themselves. John E. then introduced Andy Fessenmeyer and Jen Sweeney of CTDOT.

5. Project Advisory Committee Process

Andy F. provided an overview of the PAC process. PAC members introduced themselves. Andy F. stressed the importance of the PAC to provide input and communicate with their constituencies on the project and bring comments/concerns back to the Committee.

6. Project Background

John E. provided a brief overview of the Project and purpose/principles of the project. He introduced a preliminary project workflow which includes documentation of environmental conditions, development of alternates, finalization of alternates, preliminary final engineering, permitting and construction. John E. stressed this is a preliminary schedule and will be adjusted based on number of alternates under consideration and overall public acceptance and support of alternates.



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7. NEPA/CEPA Process

John E. provided an introduction to NEPA/CEPA including a review of topics that will be evaluated as part of the environmental documentation process. John E. stressed the need to develop a clear Purpose and Need statement for the project. He explained the project team is working through the development of a Purpose and Need statement and the PAC will review at the next meeting.

John E. then paused the presentation to solicit questions from the PAC.

Questions:

Q: Will 106 and 4(f) be a component of the project?

A: Yes, it will be a key component of the environmental documentation process. Stacey Vairo of AHS then provided a brief overview of the statutory language and requirements of Sections 106 and 4(f). Stacey V. stated the Section 4(f) requirement “raises the bar” for highway projects requiring all prudent and feasible alternatives be considered. It was agreed that a more detailed review of Section 4(f) will be a component of an upcoming PAC meeting.

Comment: Please include project team contact list in PAC binder.

8. Update on Work Status

John E. provided a brief update on the work status for the project. He noted most of the traffic data collection has been completed. A comprehensive Origin & Destination data collection effort was also completed. Fieldwork to document wetlands and critical habitats is also complete. There has also been screening of potential archeological sensitive areas.

9. Alternates

John E. presented an overview the alternate development process and the two existing build alternates that will be further evaluated. John E. discussed the potential for more alternates to be proposed as the project moves forward. John E. briefly walked the PAC through the Alternate 21C and Alternate 26 concepts. The project team will also review the prior considered alternates from 2008 working group and earlier environmental documentation process.

10. Public Outreach

Ken L. provided an update on the outreach process. He asked the PAC to suggest potential meetings/events/individuals for the project team to meet with in the coming months.



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11. Next Steps

John E. presented an overview of the next six-months for the project. The next PAC meeting will be scheduled for late May. The public scoping meeting for the NEPA/CEPA process will then be scheduled for early June or early September.

12. PAC Questions and Comments

Q: What is overall acreage impact of the project and what landscaping components will be integrated into the project? There is a desired for more green space and ecological understanding of landscape treatment. Avoid detention basin hollows.

A: We do not have specific acreage impacts at this time as it will depend on alternates. We will work to both fully understand and incorporate recommended landscape treatments. We will work closely with the PAC and specifically the Merritt Parkway Conservancy on the landscape design components of the project. AHS will provide an overview/background of the Merritt Parkway character at the next PAC meeting.

Comment: The viewshed for this project should seek to replicate the original design intent of the Parkway.

Comment: Please present locations where the Alternate 26 signals have been implemented in a similar manner in Connecticut.

Comment: Please consider having meetings in the Norwalk City Hall Common Council Chambers where acoustics are better.

Q: How does Alternate 26 signals impact the "Super 7" concept?

A: The signals do not preclude the development of "Super 7". If such a project was re-evaluated the signals would have to be a consideration in the project.

Q: Could Alternate 26 traffic signals be flashing in off-peak times?

A: That is something we would consider.

Comment: So far this project is a vast improvement over past efforts. Need to approach landscape design through original intent of Merritt Parkway.

Comment: One of the goals should be to enhance the character of the Parkway. This should be blended into the purpose and need.

Q: How does the final decision making process occur?



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A: From a regulatory perspective the final decision is made by CTDOT and FHWA. The PAC will play a key role in providing guidance, developing recommendations and reviewing work efforts.

Comment: Please continue to focus on the aesthetics of the project.

Comment: The sooner the better for this project, it is crucial to economic vitality of the area.

Comment: Please incorporate topography and 3D simulation into future graphics.

Understanding the elevation changes is key to understanding alternates.

Comment: Need to consider how Norwalk Valley Trail (NRVT) and potential for Merritt Parkway trail converge in project area and need to consider routing of NRVT.

Comment: Need to consider bicycle and pedestrian improvements on Main Avenue.

Comment: Alternate 26 seems to have a fatal flaw with signals. Need to consider how Main Avenue would be impacted.

Q: As part of the NEPA/CEPA Environmental Assessment (EA)/Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) will you have a preferred alternative?

A: Yes, within the EA/EIE a preferred alternative will be identified.

Q: Can you envision the no-build alternative could be decided upon?

A: Yes, for example if the alternates are not found to meet the purpose and need or do not improve connections and travel times in the area.