



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

### PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) MEETING #8

Meeting Summary

Date: July 11, 2019

Merritt 7 - City Hall Community Room

Time: 6:30pm

#### Attendance

| PAC Members   |  |
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| David Waters  | Building and Land Technology                         |
| Drew Berndmaier   | City of Norwalk                                      |
| Mike Yeosock  | City of Norwalk                                      |
| Timothy Densky  | Empire State Realty Trust                            |
| JoAnn McGrath   | Marcus Properties                                    |
| Jo-Anne Horvath   | Creeping Hemlock Neighborhood                        |
| Alan Kibbe  | Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners         |
| Nancy Rosett  | Norwalk Bike Walk Commission                         |
| Tod Bryant  | Norwalk Preservation Trust                           |
| Peter Viteretto   | CT ASLA  |
| Ariana Vera   | Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) |
| Wes Haynes  | Merritt Parkway Conservancy                          |
| Connecticut Department of Transportation and FHWA Staff |  |
| Yolanda Antoniak  | CTDOT  |
| Andy Fesenmeyer   | CTDOT  |
| Michael Calabrese                                       | CTDOT  |
| Emilie Holland  | FHWA   |
| Project Consultant Team                                 |  |
| Ken Livingston  | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.                          |
| Meghan Bard   | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.                          |
| Paul Stanton  | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.                          |
| John Eberle   | Stantec  |
| Gary Sorge  | Stantec  |
| General Public  |  |



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### 1. Welcome

Andy Fesenmeyer, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 8<sup>th</sup> Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project. He said the meeting would focus on getting to a reasonable number of alternatives to take into the environmental documentation process.

### 2. Meeting Overview

Andy F. reviewed the meeting's agenda items:

1. Introductions
2. Review of PAC #7
3. Level 2 Screening Exercise
4. Environmental Documentation Process
5. Next Steps
6. Schedule

### 3. Review of PAC #7

John Eberle, of Stantec, reviewed the PAC #7 meeting, discussing the Level 1 screening, as well as the Level 2 screening and evaluation criteria that had been established in the previous meeting. John E. discussed the objective of the Level 2 screening exercise, reiterating that the goal is not to pick a preferred alternative, but rather to get to a reasonable number of alternatives for analysis in the environmental document.

### 4. Level 2 Screening Exercise

John E. showed the Level 2 screening criteria that was discussed during the PAC #7 meeting. A PAC member asked where noise and air quality are on the screening matrix, and John E. stated that they are not part of this level of screening, noting that those and other criteria will be studied in detail in the environmental document. John E. said that the PAC will go through each of the Level 2 Screening criteria individually, grading with black (Fatal Flaw), red (Does Not Sufficiently Meet Goal), yellow (Moderately Meets Goal), or green (Meets Goal). A blank screening matrix was shown on a board at the front of the room, and Paul S. graded each alternative on the board based on the discussions that ensued.

1. Compatible with Regional Initiatives: Regional initiatives were defined as keeping the interchange between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway free flow. Alt 26 and Alt 20B were both graded red, and 12A and 21D were graded green.

2. Construction Costs: John E. presented data on the number and length of bridges, ramp lengths and road miles to show that some alternatives would be more expensive than others. Alt 12A was determined to be the alternative with the highest construction costs, so was graded red. Alt 20B and Alt 21D were grouped together as being less expensive than 12A but more expensive than 26, so were graded yellow. Alt 26 has the lowest number of bridges, bridge and ramp lengths and was graded green.

3. Maintenance Costs: John E. presented the same data as for construction costs, as they expect maintenance costs to be similarly proportionate. Alt 12A was graded red, Alt 20B and Alt 21D were graded yellow, and Alt 26 was graded green.

4. Integrating Project Roadways into Environment / Neighborhood Context: Meets Goal was established as "No new ramps / roadways in proximity to Merritt Parkway," and as all alternatives will have new ramps, none would be graded green. The criteria would then focus on the footprint and compactness of the alternatives. Alt 12A, Alt 20B, and Alt 21D all have large footprints and were graded red, while Alt 26 has a more compact footprint and was graded yellow.



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5. Elevated Ramps: Elevated ramps were determined to be a fatal flaw. Alt 12A features an elevated ramp and therefore was graded black. Alt 20B, Alt 21D, and Alt 26 were all graded green as they do not include elevated ramps. John E. graphically demonstrated ramp heights for each alternative in relation to the Merritt Parkway.

6. Potential Impacts on Norwalk River: Meets goal was set as “No Norwalk River crossings,” and all alternatives feature a crossing of the river, so none were graded green. Alt 26 was graded yellow, as it has the fewest river crossings, while Alt 12A, Alt 20B and Alt 21D were all graded red, for having the most river crossings.

7. Proximity of New Ramps / Roadways to Neighborhoods: Alt 26 was graded green as it was determined to impact the least number of neighborhood quadrants, Alt 12A and Alt 21D were both graded yellow as they impacted some neighborhoods, and Alt 20B was graded red because it impacts the most neighborhoods. Peter V. pointed out that new roads for 20B would bring the Parkway closer to the power lines, which would impact landscape views from the Merritt Parkway. One PAC member asked how neighborhood impacts are determined, including air, traffic and noise, and John E. said those will all be assessed in the environmental documentation process.

8. Anticipated Impacts / Effects to NRHP-Eligible Sites: Meets goal was determined to be no impacts, which none of the alternatives met. Moderately meets goal allows for potential impacts, while does not meet goal means likely impacts. Alt 21A, Alt 20B and Alt 21D were all graded yellow and Alt 26 was graded green.

After a short break, John E. presented the completed matrix to the PAC. He asked if the PAC was comfortable eliminating Alt 12A because it has a fatal flaw (i.e. elevated ramps). The PAC members said they were ready to remove Alt 12A from consideration.

Next, John E. asked if the PAC felt Alt 26 should be moved on for a full review, and the PAC members said it should.

Pointing out that 21D had fewer red and more green grades than 20B, John E. asked if the PAC was comfortable removing 20B from consideration and moving 21D to full review. Some PAC members expressed concerns about eliminating 20B because it seems like a compromise solution between 21D and 26, as it is mostly free flowing, featuring only two signals. Andy F. pointed out that 20B was eliminated from consideration in the original study in the 1990's because it is not free flow. There followed some discussion about the necessity of Level 3 screening, and whether PAC members would be comfortable with the idea of 21D being eliminated. One PAC member said they would have a problem with 21D not moving on to a full review, as it had been the consensus alternative in 2008. Andy F suggested tabling the decision temporarily, moving on to discuss the environmental process and then coming back to decide. All agreed with Andy F.'s suggestion.

### **5. Environmental Documentation Process**

Paul S. presented information related to the topics covered in the environmental document. He indicated that natural resources as well as the built environment/community resources are considered in the assessment and gave examples of each. He discussed the process for assessing resources that are minimally impacted, such as farmlands and coastal resources, and then contrasted those to resource topics such as noise and traffic that involve a much more detailed level assessment – including modeling. He then explained how a preferred alternative is arrived at by the FHWA and CTDOT and the decision process

### **6. Level 2 Screening (cont.)**

John E. suggested handing out ballots, but PAC members said they were comfortable voting with a show of hands on a final range of reasonable alternatives for review in the environmental document. John E. asked if they were comfortable removing Alt 20B from consideration and moving Alt 21D and Alt 26 to the environmental review process. Nearly everyone raised their hands in agreement. There was no further discussion on the alternatives. The PAC agreed that Alternative 26 and 21D would be evaluated within the environmental document.



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### **8. Next Steps**

Andy F. thanked the PAC for their work thus far and said they would continue to have a role in the future project planning. He stated that the project team plans to host a public meeting in September 2019, and he hopes the PAC will participate and help notify the public of it.