

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) MEETING #6

Meeting Summary

Date: April 30, 2019

Norwalk City Hall Community Room

Time: 6:30pm

Attendance

PAC Members

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| David Waters | Building and Land Technology |
| Drew Berndlmaier | City of Norwalk |
| Mike Yeosock | City of Norwalk |
| Chris Wigren | Connecticut Historical Trust |
| JoAnn McGrath | Marcus Properties |
| Jo-Anne Horvath | None |
| Alan Kibbe | None |
| Joanne Ferrara | None |
| Ray Rauth | Sound Cyclists |
| Wes Haynes | Merritt Parkway Conservancy |
| Nancy Rosett | Norwalk Bike Walk Commission |
| Tod Bryant | Norwalk Preservation Trust |
| Peter Viteretto | Silvermine Community Association |
| Timothy Densky | Empire State Realty Trust, Inc. |
| Ariana Vera | Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) |

Connecticut Department of Transportation and FHWA Staff

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| Tom Doyle | CTDOT |
| Andy Fesenmeyer | CTDOT |
| Emilie Holland | FHWA |
| Kurt Salmoiraghi | FHWA |

Project Consultant Team

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| Ken Livingston | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. |
| Meghan Bard | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. |
| Shawna Kitzman | Fitzgerlad & Halliday, Inc. |
| Marguerite Carnell | Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. |
| John Eberle | Stantec |
| Gary Sorge | Stantec Consulting Services Inc. |
| Emily Valentino | Stantec Consulting Services Inc. |

General Public

1. Welcome

Andy Fesenmeyer of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the 6th Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project. He noted that this meeting is going to focus on looking at videos and models of the four remaining alternatives.

2. Meeting Overview

Andy F. reviewed the meeting's agenda items:

- Introductions
- General Updates
- Review of PAC #5
- MPAC Meeting
- RDV Model
- Schedule Looking Forward
- Next Steps for PAC

3. Summary of PAC #5 and MPAC

After introductions, Andy F. reviewed status of project process. He explained that Level 1 screening is completed, winnowing the initial 28 alternatives down to the current four. In the previous meeting, PAC members were asked to

review the Level 1 screening matrix. Alternatives that met the Purpose and Need advanced to the next level of screening, while those that did not were filtered out.

Andy F. also stated that they had presented at a Merritt Parkway Advisory Committee meeting for the second time where they provided an update on the project status.

4. Schedule Forward

Andy reviewed the project schedule. Environmental assessment and impact evaluation are upcoming, followed by preliminary and final design and construction in 2024. Next steps for the PAC include the Section 106/Landscape Subcommittee Meeting on May 7, 2019, PAC Meeting #7- Level 2 Screening Workshop (early June) and continued alternative screening.

5. RDV Videos

John Eberle of Stantec introduced design visualization presented in the RDV model. He explained that the select videos and models show alternatives from different views and driving directions. He stressed that the models are not final designs but indicate critical design areas, spatial relationships, and topography. The models do not include landscaping elements or infrastructure details, both of which will be added to alternatives that advance.

John E. then went through several videos, explaining what they were showing and pointing out critical design areas. To help orient the PAC members, Meghan Bard indicated the point of view on the projected maps.

PAC members viewed videos of the following routes: Alt 21 NB 15, Alt 26 NB 15, Alt 21 SB 7, Alt 26 SB 7, Alt 21 SB 15 to SB7, and Alt 26 SB 15 to NB 7.

6. Break-Out Review of the RDV Model

PAC members then separated into two groups to explore the RDV model in-depth. Andy F. told PAC members that they would not be regrouping to wrap, and that people were welcome to stay as long as they wanted to view the models and watch videos that had not yet been shown.

Ken Livingston led one group, showing members the alternatives from different viewpoint with one group, while John E. showed the model to the second group. They explained how each alternative varied from existing conditions and from each other. A PAC member requested that when viewing different alternatives from each viewpoint, that they revert to the existing view, so it was clearer what the change would be.

A PAC member asked about the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT). The NRVT was not included in the models based on discussions with the NRVT group, that the current alignment will proceed along the powerlines right of way, west of the Route 7 and proceed under Perry Avenue Bridge. There was also a question about the Merritt Parkway Trail, and Andy F. stated it was not part of the project area and why were trying not to impact it.

A PAC member commented that the Creeping Hemlock neighborhood experiences vehicle congestion during the morning commute. Andy F. agreed that was a problem and confirmed that the new design should address that issue.

A question was raised about Alternative 26 which adds signals to Route 7, and whether that alternative would result in speed limit changes. Emily Valentino said they would use traffic calming measures to show drivers they were going from an expressway to a signal and that the signals will be obvious and will be safer than the existing.

Peter Viteretto noted his preference for Alternative 26, which has the least amount of roadway and allows for more greenery or landscaping. He also requested to view the alternatives that are closest to existing conditions, noting that certain alternatives are "orders of magnitude" different from today's interchange. He suggested that Alternative 12A is very confusing, and the flyovers would be disorienting for a driver.

JoAnne McGrath requested to view how a driver would navigate from Merritt Parkway to Main Avenue. The group discussed the need for a structure such as rock cut or retaining wall at Main Avenue once realigned.

John E. reviewed bike facilities and the proposed 8' sidewalk.

John E. noted that while level of service is a factor in evaluating the alternatives, many factors are under consideration such as air and noise impacts. There are also many opportunities within each alternative. No alternative is a panacea.

Peter V. suggested that less signage is compatible with the historic Merritt Parkway. From a preservation standpoint, the design team must replace what is lost in character. He also asked the group to consider improving the experience along the river, supporting design decisions that would create a more joyful experience.

PAC members agreed that the models were helpful in understanding what the different alternatives were, and what the new routes would be and how they are different from the existing conditions.

PAC members were encouraged to leave comments on provided comment forms.

Comment form: The long ramps provide opportunities to merge onto the Parkway at unsafe speeds. We need traffic calming - less roads, more curves. W. Haynes, Merritt Parkway Conservancy

Follow up Action Item(s)

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.