



May 24, 2017

REPORT OF MEETING:

PROJECT: Route 8 & Waterbury Branch Line Corridor Transit-Oriented Development
& Alternate Transit Modes Assessment Project

MEETING: First Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE: May 24, 2017, 10:00 am - 11:30 am

LOCATION: Large Conference Room
Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor
Waterbury, CT 06702

ATTENDANCE: Attached

The NVCOG convened the first meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for the study. Members were solicited and appointed by the Chief Elected Officials of the participating municipalities. In addition, representation was requested from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), Metro-North Railroad (MNR), local bus operators – Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT), Valley Transit District (VTD) and North East Transportation (NET) – the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG), business community (Shelton Economic Development Corporation and Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce), and commuter council.

A presentation was made by the Project Study Team and SAC members participated throughout by asking questions and providing input.

I. Agenda

Mark Nielsen (NVCOG) opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending the meeting and their willingness to participate in the project. Each participants was asked to introduce themselves and indicate who they represented.

After the introduction, Mr. Nielsen briefly went through the proposed agenda for the meeting, indicating who would be covering each item.

II. Project Study Team

Mr. Nielsen described the organizations that comprise the Project Study Team and stated that it is an impressive group of professional agencies:

The Project Study Team includes:

- Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments – Liaison, Administrator
- Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments – Support Agency
- AECOM – Prime Consultant
- CDM Smith – TOD Scenarios, Forecasting
- Harriman – TOD Scenarios, Urban Design
- Planning4Places DBE – Planning Support, Build Out Scenarios
- Zuvic & Carr Associates SBE – Data Collection, Parking Inventory

Mr. Dunne (NVCOG) mentioned that in addition to the consulting firms listed as Team members, the MetroCOG will be a member of the study Team but that their specific role has not been determined. He stated that, because the study corridor crosses into and ends in downtown Bridgeport, MetroCOG would assist in the project assessment as it relates to alignments in their planning region.

III. Project Background

Mr. Nielsen described the project study area. It extends from the City of Waterbury in the north to downtown Bridgeport in the south. The principle study corridors are the Route 8 Expressway from the Borough of Naugatuck to downtown Bridgeport, the Waterbury Branch Rail Line from Naugatuck to the Devon Wye at the New Haven Main Rail Line, the town centers of Derby, Shelton, Ansonia, Seymour, Beacon Falls and Naugatuck, and the Bridgeport Avenue corporate corridor in Shelton.

The stated goals of the study were then discussed. The scope includes five main goals:

1. Identify new, enhanced and alternate public transit facilities and services, including local bus service, bus rapid transit routes and commuter rail, to transform town centers into vibrant, high-density communities that have access to efficient and high quality transit services.
2. Provide built environment densities that meet transit supportive standards for land uses and walkability, in order to facilitate and encourage the use of enhanced transit services.
3. Enhance transit connectivity, reliability and attractiveness.
4. Develop an implementation plan for incentivizing transit oriented and supported developments in the lower Naugatuck Valley Region.
5. Advance HUD's livability principles and extend sustainable communities.

Open discussion among SAC members took place. Mr. Nielsen explained that the primary goal of the study is to identify enhanced transit services that would be the catalyst for revitalizing the town centers along the corridor. These communities have a tremendous advantage over other similar communities in that rail infrastructure is already in place. Many places that want

commuter rail must incur the expense of acquiring right-of-way and building the infrastructure. The Naugatuck Valley has the corridor and infrastructure; it just needs to be improved to be able to provide the level of service that would attract riders and induce people to live and work in the corridor. Mr. Dunne further explained the intent for considering Bus Rapid Transit along Route 8 south of Derby. He explained that the corridor does not have a transit alternative available, as the WBL continues in a more direct southerly direction to connect the main line in Devon, whereas Route 8 continues in more southwesterly direction to Bridgeport. A BRT system would capture those working within the Bridgeport Avenue corridor or downtown Bridgeport and provide a more direct transit connection from the area to the New Haven main rail line.

Mr. Donnarumma (MRN) mentioned that the biggest factor impeding enhanced service on the WBL is related to the equipment. There are insufficient trainsets (there are three trainsets, housed in Stamford) to accommodate more frequent service and frequent equipment breakdowns require the need to provide bus service. He estimated that equipment failures occur four-to-five times each month. He also stated that new signalization will allow trains to operate bidirectional service simultaneously on the line but will not result in increased speed. The current travel time between Bridgeport and Waterbury is 55 minutes, additional equipment would be needed to add service. Mr. Dunne responded that the more critical need is providing more frequent service in evening for return trips to Waterbury. Currently, if a commuter misses the 6:00 pm train from Bridgeport, they will need to wait two-and-half hours for the next train. This level of service is insufficient to attract riders to the system; service needs to be much more convenient and frequent to attract riders. Mr Donnarumma responded that during the pm the trains on the branch line run consistently and only stop at each termini to allow enough time to reverse direction and perform required brake tests. Additional trainsets would be required to add service

Ms. Rivers (CTDOT) asked about the level of demand for rail service currently on the WBL. While the current ridership on the WBL is low, at about 300 per day, there is potential to substantially increase ridership if more frequent, reliable and convenient service is implemented. Mr. Nielsen explained that the town centers near the trail station have infrastructure to support higher density residential and commercial uses; however, it is not reasonable to attract residents to the town centers without the complementary frequent rail service. The current schedules and levels of service are not inducements for people to live in these areas. Mr. Nielsen stated that we need to implement robust rail service in order to attract demand. We cannot expect higher density to occur first to generate rail demand; rail service is required to be in place before we can expect increases in population to levels that would support expanded transit service.

Ms. Rivers also asked whether the communities along the corridor are receptive to the concept of TOD and willing to accept higher density land uses. Mr. Dunne stated that all of the host cities have been supportive of higher residential densities in their downtown areas and consider enhanced rail service as a key element to revitalization. He pointed out the efforts of Naugatuck to redevelop several vacant parcels adjacent to the trail station as TOD-type uses and is working with CTDOT in relocating the Naugatuck rail station closer to these parcels.

IV. Existing Conditions

Mr. Gazillo (AECOM) presented an overview of the work completed to date on collecting information and data on the existing conditions within the corridor. He explained the Team has reviewed many previous studies; the study is not starting from scratch and will be based on many of the concepts and findings from past studies. He explained that the intent is to build on what has already been done and work toward developing a strategy and plan for implementing preferred options. The key studies that the Team is reviewing include:

- CTDOT Waterbury Branch Line Improvement Study
- MetroCOG Long Range Transportation Plan
- Greater Bridgeport Alternate Modes Study
- CNVR Long Range Transportation Plan
- Valley Long Range Transportation Plan
- CTDOT Capital Projects Report
- GBT Long Range Transit Master Plan
- Let's Go CT
- Waterbury Area Transit Study
- Connecticut Statewide Bus Study

Mr. Gazillo summarized meetings that have been held with key stakeholders, including CTDOT, MNR and local bus operators. The meetings were held to gain insights into transportation in the corridor from the perspectives of the operators, obtain current operating data, identify current gaps and constraints, determine the condition of existing infrastructure, and ascertain status of future improvement projects. It was stated that there are efforts through CTDOT to procure more equipment for the branch lines but it can take up to 5 years. The new Hartford line is experiencing similar troubles and CTDOT will be leasing equipment until such time as a procurement can be made.

Mr. Donnarumma (MRN) stated that this summer five crossing will be replaced on the Waterbury Branch Line as part of the overall improvements. For planned outages MTA commuter buses are used with a combination of local and express routing.

In addition, the Team has initiated data collection along Route 8. Travel time runs have been conducted to identify congestion points and determine average travel speeds, and an assessment of crashes is underway.

The meetings with local bus providers collected route characteristics, ridership, funding, fares, fleet, programmed improvements, and travel times. On board counts were conducted along various bus routes connecting the study corridor. Surveyors counted the number of passengers boarding and exiting the bus by specific bus stops.

A parking inventory has also been completed. The availability and utilization of parking spaces within a half-mile of each of the train stations were counted.

Environmental and land use mapping has been completed in vicinity of all of the WBL stations and along the centerlines of Route 8 and Bridgeport Avenue. Travel patterns were also identified through Census data.

Mr. Nielsen explained that the Team is investigating the feasibility of obtaining travel data from a commercial vendor – StreetLight Data. The company obtains travel data from a variety of sources including cell phones and GPS, and converts it to transportation/travel metrics, including origin and destination matrices, travel speeds, trip purpose, modes, and routes using an on-line platform. StreetLight Data conducted webinar demonstration of their platform for the Team. The Team is preparing a detailed scope of metrics needed for the study and asked StreetLight Data to provide a fee proposal.

V. Public Outreach

Mr. Gazillo stated that a critical element of the study public and stakeholder outreach. The public outreach plan includes conducting at least three Study Advisory Committee meetings, one large public information meeting, and a series of design workshops or Charrettes to inform, educate and solicit input from the public. In addition, a project website has been developed and ready to go live. Mr. Nielsen accessed the website and briefly described the content. He highlighted the “Contact Us” page and explained that it lists several ways the public can contact the Team to offer comment or ask questions. A comment email address has been set up to link to the Team: rt8corridorstudy@nvcog.org. The URL for the website is <http://rt8corridorstudy.com>. Mr. Gazillo explained that the website is hosted within the NVCOG website, so it will be easily transitioned to that site upon completion of the study.

Mr. Gazillo presented the preliminary project schedule. The plan is to complete the study within 18 months. Three SAC meetings are planned, one at the beginning of the study, one at about the mid-point, and one near the end of the study. Additional SAC meetings may be held depending on need to get direction from the committee.

VI. Transit Oriented Development

Mr. Sousa (CDM Smith) presented the planned tasks related to identifying and defining TOD opportunities. He explained that the process will encompass three main elements:

1. Inputs – zoning build-out, market analysis, demographics
2. Station Area Analysis – assess opportunity sites, community preferences, infrastructure needs, first-mile/last mile needs
3. Outputs – diagram opportunities, TOD principles and benefits, model block, conceptual TOD build-out plan

To educate and inform the public regarding TD opportunities, the Team will conduct a series of five design workshops or Charrettes. The series will consist of two workshops. The first workshop will consist of visioning and visual preferences for the areas near the rail stations, and the second will define a model TOD block. The model block will reflect public vision and will likely be different for each community. Four Charrettes will focus on TOD opportunities and will be held in: Derby, Ansonia, Seymour-Beacon Falls, and Naugatuck. The fifth Charrette will be held within the Bridgeport Avenue corridor in Shelton and will focus more on a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concept.

Based on the results of the design workshops, the Team will conduct an Alternative Transportation Modes Needs Assessment and develop a preferred alternatives plan based on discussions with local officials and stakeholders. The possible corridor alignments will be developed. Included will be an action plan for improvements to the Waterbury Branch Line.

VII. Next Steps

It was asked if there would be a tour of the corridor. The Team responded that the details of this are being worked out and information will be sent out to gauge an interest.

Mr. Gazillo concluded the meeting by describing the next steps in the study:

- Complete the existing conditions report
- Finalize the goals and objectives
- Schedule and conduct the charrettes – tentatively scheduled for the Fall of 2017
- Quantify transportation need in the region
- Begin developing the multimodal alternatives

Mr. Nielsen thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting and said that a report of the meeting and PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the project website.

Attendance Sign-in Sheet
Route 8 & Waterbury Branch Line Corridor TOD and Alternate Modes
Assessment Project
Steering Committee Meeting #1
May 24, 2017

Name	Organization	Phone Number	Email Address
Krystal Oldrad	AECOM	860-990-6822	Krystal.Oldrad@aecom.com
Jill Cahoon	AECOM	603-268-0684	jill.cahoon@aecom.com
Kevin Tedesco	AECOM	860-990-6739	Kevin.Tedesco@aecom.com
Mark Nielsen	NVCOG	203-757-0535	mnielsen@nvcogct.org
Stephen Gazillo	AECOM	860-990-6721	Stephen.Gazillo@aecom.com
Leslie Creane	Derby	203-927-6943	Lcreane@derbyct.gov
Lynn DioGiovanni	Derby	203-650-5599	lynndiogiovanni@gmail.com
Dave Sousa	CDM Smith	860-508-3295	sousad@cdmsmith.com
Sheila O'Malley	Ansonia	203-437-1598	somalley@ansoniaact.org
Mike Donnarumma	MetroNorth RR	646-996-9745	donnarumma@mnr.org
Maureen Lawrence	CTDOT Public Trans	860-594-2911	maureen.lawrence@ct.gov
Barbara Kalosky	NET	203-753-2538	bkalosky@northeastbus.com
Glenda Prentiss	NVCOG	203-757-0535	gprentiss@nvcogct.org
Christian Meyer	NVCOG	203-757-0535	cmeyer@nvcogct.org
Steven Demichele	GBT	203-416-1258	sdemichele@gogbt.com
Sara Radacsi	CTDOT RPO Coord	860-594-2856	sara.radacsi@ct.gov
Lisa Rivers	CTDOT Public Trans	860-594-2834	lisa.rivers@ct.gov
Roxane Fromson	CTDOT RPO Coord	860-594-2038	roxane.fromson@ct.gov
Chris Bielik	Beacon Falls	203-729-4340	cbielik@townofbeaconfalls.com
Kurt Miller	Seymour	203-888-2511	kmiller@seymourct.org
Fred Messore	Seymour	203-888-2511	fmessore@seymourct.org
Rick Dunne	NVCOG	203-757-0535	rdunne@nvcogct.org
Paul Grimmer	SEDC	203-924-2521	SEDC4@sheltonedcl.com
Ruth Parkins	City of Shelton, P&Z	203-924-4313	ruthparkins@sbcglobal.net