

**Meeting Notes of
Corridor Advisory Committee
Of Chief Elected Officials for
CTrail-Hartford Line and CTfastrak**

**Wednesday, October 7, 2015
8:00am**

**CTDOT Training Center, Room 1
2780 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT**

Attendance

Lee Edmann	Enfield
Scott Kaupin, Co-Chairman	Enfield
Craig Minor	Newington
Mary Ellen Kowalewski	CRCOG
Terry Borjeson	Newington
Gerry Amodio	New Britain Downtown District
Cara Radzins	CRCOG
Larry Kendzior	Meriden
Sandra Sheehan	GHTD
Diana Deng	Partnership for Strong Communities
Susan Westa	CT Main Street Center
Emily Hultquist	CRCOG
Lyle Wray	CRCOG
Brittany Stephenson	CRCOG
Tim Brennan	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
John Simone	CT Main Street Center
Toni Gold	CT Main Street Center
Ted Desantos	CT Main Street Center
Andrea Pereira	LISC
Jonathan Bodwell	North Haven
Michael Freda	North Haven
Eugene Livshits	SCRCOG
Mark Moriarty	New Britain
Steve Schiller	New Britain
Brian Cunningham	CTDOT CTfastrak
Ron Van Winkle	West Hartford
Elise Ross	CTDOT
Eric Lindquist	CTOPM
Peter Bryanton	Enfield
Darrin Lamore	Enfield CDC
Faith Palmer	Hartford
Mark Lewis	DEEP

Binu Chandy	DECD
Sean Ghio	LISC
Randall Davis	CTDOT
Bill Lee	Enfield
Peter Souza	Windsor
Jennifer Rodriguez	Windsor Locks
Christopher Edge	Berlin
Thomas Jost	WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff
Courtney Hendricsen	Enfield

Call to Order

Scott Kaupin called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

1. Acceptance of March 24, 2015 Meeting Notes

Terry Borjeson made and Steve Schiller seconded a motion to accept the meeting notes for the March 24, 2015 Corridor Advisory Committee. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Update on Proposed Transit Corridor Development Authority Legislation-Next Steps to Move Concept Forward: Remarks by Gian-Carl Casa, Undersecretary for Legislative Affairs, OPM

Gian-Carl Casa presented this item to the committee. There was a handout. No decision has been made on whether OPM will pursue this item in the 2016 legislative session. Mr. Casa indicated that the underlying issue stopping this bill in the last session was a general lack of understanding/acceptance among opponents that the initial concerns had been addressed in the final version of the bill. In the final version, it was clear that the Transit Corridor Development Authority would only work in municipalities that wanted its assistance, as signified by action of the local legislative body. It is unlikely that the Authority would do much bonding, but it could provide a range of services to make TOD development happen on selected sites.

Discussion: Lyle Wray said that CRCOG was willing to host informational sessions on a draft bill, if it is reintroduced in the 2016 session. He stated that the TCDA could be a very useful tool in helping to bring TOD projects on-line. There was a question from the committee on when a decision to pursue a new bill would be made, and Mr. Casa answered before early February 2016. Another committee member indicated that though he was a supporter of the bill, much misinformation had been spread.

3. Overview of CTDOT's CTfastrak TOD Capacity Study—CTDOT Staff and Parsons Brinckerhoff Consulting Team.

David Elder briefly explained this item to the committee citing the importance of the project. He highlighted the work of the TOD capacity study, and how it built on what CRCOG has started through the TOD market analysis. He introduced Tom Jost, project consultant from Parsons Brinckerhoff, who presented a powerpoint. The presentation (posted to CRCOG CAC web page) provided an overview of the project purpose, schedule and milestones, current status, CTDOT's role in TOD planning, and discussion of the importance of thinking regionally about TOD.

With CRCOG's assistance, workshops to assess the desire and readiness of communities to accept and encourage TOD are being planned in Hartford, New Britain, and West Hartford for December 2015/January 2016. So far, Newington has not expressed an interest in hosting a workshop.

Discussion: Lyle Wray said that CRCOG was delighted to have the opportunity to assist with these workshops. John Simone commented on anchor institutions and suggested broadening the focus on this element. Secondly, he spoke on the challenges of TOD, and the ways to help municipalities develop capacity, citing other cities as examples. Another comment from the committee stated the need to address the positive benefits of TOD to counter negative backlash at specific sites. Finally, comments from committee highlighted the importance improving the linkage of area development (new and existing) to the BRT service. Questions for DOT included whether similar study would be conducted in the rail corridor, to which David Elder stated yes, citing the CTrail-Hartford Line TOD Capacity Study which will be discussed next.

4. Overview of Purpose and Scope of Recently-Awarded \$700,000.00 FTA Grant to Study TOD Opportunities in the CTrail-Hartford Line Corridor—CTDOT Staff

David Elder presented this overview. He indicated that this study would be similar in scope to the CTfastrak TOD Capacity Study. The state was very happy to have received this very competitive \$700,000 FTA grant. The grant will be supplemented by \$200,000 in matching funds from the state. The first task will be to develop the final scope of work. The timeframe for completing the grant is 18-24 months. Kickoff will begin in approximately 4 months. The state will review planning that is underway in individual communities to make sure that work under the grant does not duplicate local efforts. Funds were released about a month ago. Public investment in the corridor would also be taken into account. Lyle Wray mentioned the need for additional discussion with the CAC and towns as the scope evolves, and gave examples of Cleveland as it related to role of public sector and anchor institutions in TOD.

5. Report on September 11, 2015 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Workshop—John Simone, Executive Director, Connecticut Main Street Program

The State's new TIF legislation became effective about a week ago. John Simone stated that a great coalition had come together to bring about passage of this bill. He provided an update on the September 11, 2015 Connecticut Main Street-sponsored TIF workshop, and future pilot projects that are in planning stages.

6. BRT and Rail Project Updates by CTDOT Staff:

- a. Brian Cunningham of CTDOT provided this update. CTfastrak has been open for 6 months and ridership is growing. CTDOT is very encouraged by ridership levels which have already reached 2020 projections. Some initial problems, such as inadequate parking at some station areas, have been identified and are being addressed through the addition of parking spaces. This will be achieved through the creation of new parking spaces or the leasing of spaces from nearby businesses. The parking approach for the Downtown New Britain Station is also being addressed.
- b. CTrail-Hartford Line. John Bernick of CTDOT provided this update. Mr. Bernick stated that construction in all phases are progressing well. Construction is proceeding in two 6 hour shifts to mitigate customer concerns. The construction of new stations is on schedule. Wallingford, Meriden, and Berlin will have steel by December. Hartford currently ahead of

schedule, and may be completed by February. Signals remain a long process. Structures include the retaining of walls which is the major work. Little work continually done. CTDOT is still working through issues with Amtrak.

7. Corridor Advisory Subcommittee on CTfastrak Update—Terry Borjeson, Subcommittee Chair

The subcommittee was created as discussed for planning, preparing, and information sharing. Terry Borjeson announced he would not be running for office, and thus would be stepping down as Chairman. A new Chairman would be appointed after the November election. Mr. Borjeson would still sit on the State Rail Board, and would be happy to update the CAC on the work of that Board in the future. The CAC thanked Mr. Borjeson for his service as Chairman of the CTfastrak Subcommittee.

8. Updates on Municipal Activities: Reports on Two Key Projects Each

Meriden-City is completing construction of a 14-acre parcel flood control area, which will function as a park. The project should be completed by next Memorial Day.

West Hartford-Discussed Google project which had no follow up as of yet; also working on foreign business project. Story would be unique for CT

Windsor-130 new units of housing are under construction in the station area, due to be completed in 12-14 months. Also mentioned other new construction in the area.

New Britain-A Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing regarding the proposed construction of 90-100 units of housing, including a workforce housing set-aside, was met with neighborhood opposition, which is discouraging. There was confusion on the difference between affordable workforce housing and low-income affordable housing. More community outreach will be done before resubmitting the proposal. On the positive side, the Brinkerhoff building downtown is undergoing redevelopment. Also, three tours have been conducted promoting the downtown's changing image.

North Haven –Thanked DOT. Walkability improvements in the station area have been finalized.

Hartford-Reported on three projects.

Enfield-Updated the CAC on its future rail station project. The town has completed a brownfield assessment of the site, and remediation is underway. The town is continuing to negotiate with Eversource on an access agreement to allow for environmental assessment of a site the company owns, a process which has been in the works for 5 years. The town is continuing to work on a Thompsonville Station Area Master Plan, funding through a 2015 OPM Grant. The town is also investing in the downtown area.

Windsor Locks-updates included continuing work on the rail station relocation. The town now has ownership of the historic station, and is moving forward with its reuse.

Brief Reports:

a. Distribution of 9/2015 Update of Station Area TOD Progress Reports-

Emily Hultquist of CRCOG distributed the draft report, which has just undergone its first update since released in April 2015. She asked towns to review the draft that is posted on the CAC page of the CRCOG website, and inform her of any additional updates.

b. Highlights of Results: Spring 2015 Metroquest Public Engagement Survey—Envisioning TOD-

Ms. Hultquist indicated the 3rd phase of the Metroquest on-line survey wrapped up in May. It was designed to help people visualize what TOD might look like in different types of station areas (major, fully urbanized, suburban). There was a large response to the survey. Ms. Hultquist shared some top responses, which included that the majority of people would like to see medium density-mixed used development in station areas, and the least number of people liked housing only. 50% of respondents stated that they might at some time consider moving into station areas. While this is not a statistically valid survey, but rather a public information tool, these were encouraging statistics.

c. MetroHartford Brownfields Program—Projects that Support TOD

Mary Ellen Kowalewski reviewed environmental assessment work being carried out under CRCOG's MetroHartford Brownfields Program. 5 of the sites currently being assessed are within BRT or rail station areas. Ms. Kowalewski also reviewed the RFA's released by DECD for two brownfields funding programs. Municipalities were encouraged to apply.

9. Other Business and Announcements

a. Appointment of New CTfastrak Subcommittee Chair –is pending.

The next meeting will be first quarter of the 2016. Committee Chairs will work with Lyle Wray to select a date. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.