



Place: New Britain City Hall
Room 504
27 West Main Street
New Britain, CT 06051

Meeting Notes

Date: October 6, 2016

Notes Taken by: Andrea Drabicki

Project #: 42201.00

Re: Plainville and New Britain Planning Workshop Findings
Report Out
Farmington Canal Heritage Trail Gap Closure Study and
CT **fastrak** Connection Study (Gap Closure Trail Study)

The public meeting took place on Thursday, October 6 and was scheduled from 6:00-7:00pm. The meeting consisted of a presentation to report out the findings from the two public planning workshops held earlier that week on October 3 in Plainville and October 4 in New Britain, in addition to the workshop the Steering Committee and Technical team participated in on the morning of October 4. After the presentation a question and answer period occurred and a brief public engagement exercise was asked of attending members of the public.

Twenty (20) people from the public signed in at the meeting.

1. **Call to Order:** Mr. Tim Malone called the meeting to order at 10:14am and welcomed members of the Steering Committee and Technical Team.
2. **Public Comment:** No one chose to speak at this time.
3. **What We Learned:** Mr. Dave Head introduced the consultant team which will go into detail regarding the findings from the two public planning workshops held earlier that week on October 3 in Plainville and October 4 in New Britain, in addition to the workshop the Steering Committee and Technical team participated in on the morning of October 4.
 - a. Ms. Samantha Thomas, Blue Zones, then described the process the consultant team used to gather information from the public using "informed consent". Whereas citizens and stakeholders are active in the planning process throughout the duration of project schedule to determine where an alignment should be routed through their community; thus, creating enough political and social capital for decision makers to buy-in to the process and the final preferred alignment as determined by the citizen base in each community.
 - b. Ms. Mary Embry, Mobycon, then reported on what the consultant team heard during the public workshops:
 - i. **Town of Plainville – Challenges:**
 - Existing infrastructure networks, especially major intersections and at rail road crossings

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- Existing traffic volumes and patterns
- Wayfinding through town and to destinations
- Destinations and residential areas are spread out, so a linear trail does not appear to meet all potential needs without supplemental side trails.

ii. City of New Britain – Challenges:

- Existing infrastructure networks, especially major intersections and at rail road crossings
- Existing traffic volumes and patterns
- Existing road conditions around industrially zoned areas

- c. Mr. Lennart Nout, Mobycon, presented the alignment routes that the attending participants of both communities developed at the public workshops (see Presentation Packet).

i. Town of Plainville – Opportunities:

- Several primary routes were identified as potential alignments
- Secondary routes or “loops” were identified with purpose to connect schools and shopping
- Need a stronger east-west connection though the community
- Norton Park was identified as an important destination
- Several alignments were routed through downtown, which was also identified as an important destination
- End user trip types tended to be more recreational than commuter oriented

ii. City of New Britain – Opportunities:

- Primary routes were identified along the Route 72 corridor
- Secondary looping routes were identified to provide a recreational experience for the end users
- Need a stronger north-south connection though the community
- Walnut Hill Park was identified as an important destination
- End user trip types tended to be more commuter oriented in nature

4. Next Steps: Mr. Dave Head then proceeded to explain the next steps in the process. They are:

a. Technical Evaluation Process

- i. Due to the large project area including a three (3) town area and two (2) neighboring communities the consultant team has developed a model to assist in calculating and assessing multiple variables

- ii. The consultants will take all the alignment routes that were developed during the October public workshops and Steering Committee/Technical Team workshop and run them through the Decision Matrix model and compare the alignments against each other
- iii. The alignments will be compared and evaluated by the consultant team by looking for the highest ranking alignment
 - Whereas, an alignment that receives a higher ranking is determined as having high benefit or low negative impacts and;
 - An alignment that has a lower ranking is of low benefit or high negative impact
- iv. Facility Types will then be voted on by the public through a series of on-going public engagement activities that are currently on the project website and located at public locations in throughout Plainville, Southington, and New Britain i.e. Libraries, YWCA, YMCA
- v. The consultant team will report back to the public and committees in early December the initial findings from the Technical Evaluation process

b. Criteria of the Decision Matrix

- i. The Decision Matrix criteria, vetted by the Steering Committee as definable and measureable, are the following:
 - Connectivity
 - Traffic Safety
 - On vs. Off Road
 - Personal Security
 - Environmental Impacts
 - Rights-of-way Impacts
 - Cost

c. Facility Types

- i. After ranking the alignments, appropriate facility types will be determined for each segment of an alignment, the facility types are (see Presentation Packet):
 - Separated Bike Lane
 - Buffered Bike Lane
 - Rail with Trail
 - Bike Lane
 - Multi-use Trail
 - Wide Shoulder
 - Shared Roadway (Sharrow)Side Path

5. Conclusions: Mr. Dan Burden, Blue Zones, then asked members of the public who previously attended the planning workshops held earlier in the week. Approximately half of the audience raised their hands. Mr. Burden then proceeded to ask members of the public who participated in the workshops if the consultant team "left anything out?" and "are we on track"? Mr. Burden then proceeded to ask all attending members of the public if there were any questions. The following questions and answer period occurred:

Q: What is the time line on this project? When can we report back to our friends where the trail is going?

A: The Project is scheduled to be complete in August of 2017. You should have a good idea of the refined alignment after the next set of planning workshops in January 2017.

Q: Will you take into consideration what the State is doing regarding the connection from New Britain to Plainville?

A: Yes, all considerations will be taken into account. The State is an ongoing and active participant in the study process and is continually providing feedback to the study team.

Q: Are we using the rail road right-of-way?

A: Using the rail right of way is an option, however, based on past experience a plan that does not use the rail right of way needs to be vetted and agreed upon.

Q: We went through a lot of this seven (7) years ago and it went nowhere, will this happen again?

A: Based on recent events and the pressure to close the gaps in the FCHT and make a connection to CTfastrak, it is felt that the outcomes of this study will move forward. However, to ensure that this happens the communities continued support is a critical piece of the puzzle.

Q: The Stanley Works buildings in New Britain are an eyesore, why aren't they being torn down?

A: This is a local issue and should be brought up with the City.

Q: It feels like there is a lot of interest what is the time line for the state to secure money?

A: The State has several avenues of funding available once an alignment is chosen, some of which are federal monies for trail design and construction as well as State money identified in the Governors "Let's Go CT" transportation plan.

Q: How can we influence our town officials?

A: Your continued support of the project is critical, including attendance at Town Council meetings and speaking with your representatives.

Q: Who brought this idea of "closing the gap" in New Britain? Why the interest all of a sudden by the state? Which aspect of the study takes priority, Plainville or New Britain?

A: The Plainville to New Britain CTfastrak connection was added to the study once CTfastrak was slated to open and begin operations. It will allow users other mode choices to access the CTfastrak than just local busses or motor vehicles. While both portions of the study are important, the Plainville portion of the study was always envisioned as being taken care of first. Due to interest from the state and local advocates, completing the Plainville Gap will likely take priority.

Q: Can federal money get applied to assist in "closing the gap"?

A: The team noted that there is considerable interest in closing the gap and that as long as the communities continue to support the project, there should not be an issue with finding funding. Many funding sources are available (both state and federal), but garnering enough support will be the key. Mr. Grayson Wright with the

CTDOT added that the Department is behind the study and supports closing the gap. He also added that finding funding should not be an issue.

6. Meeting Adjourned: 7:00pm

Next Steps

- The consultant team will perform the Technical Evaluation Process by ranking the alignments received by the public through the Decision Matrix model over the upcoming weeks
- The consultant team will report out these findings to the public and committees by early winter
- The consultant team will proceed with soliciting input from the public to weight user Trip Types through several mechanisms including display boards at public events
- The consultant team will continue to solicit input from the public to vote on the Facility Types they would like to see best in their community through several mechanisms including display boards located at prominent public community locations and through the public website

Statement of Accuracy:

- We believe these minutes accurately describe the discussion and determinations of this meeting. Unless notified to the contrary within 5 business days, we will assume all in attendance concur with the accuracy of these notes.

Notes Submitted by:



David Head

Notes Approved by:



Tim Malone

Distribution: website – interested parties list

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