

West Hartford Road Diet and Safety Study

Technical Study Committee (TSC) Meeting #3

Friday, November 20th, 2015

West Hartford Town Hall

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Attendees:

TSC Members

Todd Dumais – Town of West Hartford, Planning & Zoning

MaryEllen Thibodeau – West Hartford Bicycle Advisory Committee

Tracey Wilson – for Senator Beth Bye

Duane Martin – Town of West Hartford, Engineering

Robert McCue – Town of West Hartford, Police

Una Berry – Montessori School of Greater Hartford

Tom Wood – American School for the Deaf

Project Team Members

Emily Hultquist – Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)

Mike Morehouse – Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI)

Rory Fitzgerald – Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Patrick Zapatka – CTDOT

Introductions

The meeting started with an introduction from Emily Hultquist. Ms. Hultquist described the progress that has been made on the project since the public workshop in mid-October. She spoke about the Bishops Corner Neighborhood Association meeting that was attended by her and Mike Morehouse as well as some of the press coverage that the project has received. Ms. Hultquist stated that the online survey results and public comments received throughout the project will be compiled into an appendix and delivered with the final product of this project.

MaryEllen Thibodeau reported on the November 8th neighborhood walk that was organized through the West Hartford Bicycle Advisory Committee. Ms. Thibodeau stated that the walk was attended by a core group of bike advocates as well as other residents who were new to the group. She said that the group noted there was debris on the road from car mirrors, etc. and that neighbors on North Main Street came out of their homes to engage the group as they walked by. She stated that everyone that came out was very interested and supportive of the idea of traffic calming along the street. Tracey Wilson said that they noticed that the sidewalk curb cuts for the intersections dropped people off right into North Main Street rather than the side streets, she suggested this possibly be changed.

Emily turned the presentation over to Mike Morehouse.

Presentation

Mike Morehouse of FHI presented on the outcome of the workshop and the public comments and discussion during the three days. He reviewed the three big ideas that came out of the workshop – a typical road diet design, a road diet with a multi-use bi-directional side path and a roundabout concept at the driveway of the American School for the Deaf. He also presented several new ideas that have been created since the workshop.

Robert McCue asked a question about traffic diversion. He stated that he believed not only Troutbrook would feel the impacts of diverted traffic, but also Mountain Road, Quaker Lane, and the other side streets like Fern Street. He said the roads are currently stressed already.

Duane Martin said that currently, North Main Street handles more vehicle trips per day than Troutbrook, a road that probably could handle additional trips. Mike Morehouse said that we want to continue to build trips to West Hartford Center and to Bishops Corner, to fuel the town and its businesses, but that these trips don't necessarily need to be car trips. By completing the road diet, hopefully the street will be more conducive to bicyclists and pedestrians who will also be shopping in town.

Mike Morehouse discussed some safety concerns associated with the multi-use bi-directional side path. He stated that the high number of driveways and curb cuts on North Main Street could lead to a high level of conflict for bicyclist and pedestrians. Another challenge with the side path idea is getting people or young riders across the street onto the side path. He also said that ASHTO discourages the side path treatment and that he believes the 5' on street shoulders could be striped as a bike path, especially if the road was 42' in spots, as Duane Martin mentioned in an earlier discussion.

Tracey Wilson stated that a main purpose of this road diet is to improve safety on the roadway and asked what other infrastructure improvements might improve safety? Mike Morehouse stated that he felt the road diet is the best option to calm traffic and improve safety on North Main Street.

Robert McCue asked about the intersections, and whether or not the study would look to change how they operate. He said that most of the accidents happen right at the intersections, so he questioned the logic that the road diet would reduce crashes if nothing was being done to improve the intersections themselves. Mike commented that the dedicated left turn lanes would continue through the intersections, so that would improve safety.

MaryEllen Thibodeau commented that by improving the bikeability and walkability of the town, the overall quality of life in West Hartford will improve.

Tracey Wilson agreed and added that improving the safety of the roadway will also improve quality of life. She stated that a road diet would promote transportation options for the community which will also improve quality of life and hopes that it will be seriously considered.

Mike Morehouse closed the discussion by commenting that the TSC may wish to choose a preferred option moving forward.

Emily Hultquist stated that the ultimate goal is to present all of the alternatives and the pros and cons of each in a matrix style document that can be used in further discussion and decision making.

Next Steps:

- Analyze the transportation modeling being conducted at CRCOG
- Continue to test alternatives and bring back more information to the TSC for consideration
- Emily to post Workshop Report and Today's Meeting Presentation on CRCOG's website
- Close online survey in early December and create a survey results appendix and a public comments log
- Project team to estimate cost of implementation
- Study report presentation and development of study poster
- Final meeting – potentially a joint board meeting of several town boards