



## Meeting Notes

Place: Plainville Public Library  
Auditorium  
56 East Main Street  
Plainville, CT

Date: April 19, 2017

Notes Taken by: Geoffrey Morrison-Logan  
and Theresa Carr

Project #: 42201.00

Re: Steering Committee and Technical Team Meeting  
Farmington Canal Heritage Trail Gap Closure Study and  
CTfastrak Connection Study (Gap Closure Trail Study)

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### ATTENDEES

#### Steering Committee & Technical Team

Tim Malone, Capitol Region Council of Governments  
Anna Bergeron, CTDOT  
Jim Cassidy, Plainville Greenway Alliance  
Garrett Daigle, Town of Plainville  
Mark DeVoe, Town of Plainville  
Bruce Donald, East Coast Greenway Alliance  
Laurie Giannotti, CT DEEP  
Maureen Lawrence, CTDOT  
Mark Moriarty, City of New Britain  
Rob Phillips, Town of Southington  
Edward Sabourin, CTDOT  
Pete Salomone, Plainville Greenway Alliance  
Grayson Wright, CTDOT

#### Consultant Team

Theresa Carr, VHB  
Mark Jewell, VHB  
Geoffrey Morrison-Logan, VHB

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The 5<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting took place on Wednesday, April 19, 2017 from 2:30-4:30pm at the Plainville Public Library. Much like the November 2016 meeting, this was a joint meeting with the project's Technical Team. The meeting purpose was to review project updates, discuss the screening criteria that led to the identification of a shortlist of practical and feasible alternatives, and walk through the shortlisted alternatives. The group also discussed upcoming public outreach efforts, including a possible public meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. This meeting summary is organized by agenda item, and captures the main points of the discussion and action items. Materials presented during the meeting are available separate from this meeting summary.

## Meeting Summary

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Tim Malone, CRCOG Project Manager, opened the Joint Steering Committee/Technical Team Meeting and then reviewed the purpose of the meeting:

*Today's meeting is about discussing **recent project activities**, presenting a **practical and feasible set of alternatives** for completing the gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, including the criteria used to get where we are, and **how we will evaluate remaining alternatives**.*

Tim reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included the following items:

- Public Comment
- Project Updates
- Alternatives Development
  - Long list
  - Short list
- Public Outreach Schedule
- Next Steps and Adjourn

Tim reviewed the project vision statement:

*"The vision for the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and CT**fastrak** Gap Closure study is to connect the communities with a **world-class multi-use trail** that closes the gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) through the towns of Southington and Plainville with a connection to the CT**fastrak** station in downtown New Britain. These links will **prioritize safety, comfort, and mobility for all users, regardless of age or ability**, through cohesive and attractive trails that promote economic and community vitality."*

Meeting participants went around the table introducing themselves.

### 2. Public Comment

Tim opened the meeting for Public Comment. No members of the public were present.

### 3. Project Updates – Restarting the Project

A summary of project updates was provided by Tim. The updates included items that were undertaken since the last Joint Committee Meeting that was held on November, 15, 2016. Tim provided copies of the November 2016 meeting summary and asked the group if there were any changes that needed to be made. The group had no changes to the meeting notes and agreed with their content.

The summary of project updates includes the following:

- An introduction to new team members
- Discussions about use of rail right of way
- Reference to the draft Existing Conditions report
- Adjustments to the “decision matrix” from the November meeting
- Organization and screening of alignment alternatives

***Team Organization:***

Tim introduced the organization of the team with and updated organization chart. Theresa Carr is our new consultant Project Manager, Mark Jewell moves into a Senior Technical Advisor role, Geoffrey Morrison-Logan will take a more active role leading outreach efforts, Chris Dewitt joins the team as the task lead for transportation planning. Theresa and Geoffrey introduced themselves.

***Use of Rail Right of Way:***

Tim provided an update on the use of the rail right of way based on discussions with Pan Am Railways. The following was noted by Tim:

- At this time, the project will not assume rail right of way is available
- Use of north-south rail right of way is not considered a fatal flaw
  - Effort made to shift alignments outside rail right of way
  - Will take impacts on rail right of way into consideration during evaluation

***Existing Condition Report:***

Tim provided an update on the Existing Condition Report. The following was noted by Tim about the Report:

- The report sets the “goal posts” for evaluating alternatives
- The report compiles information about what is on the ground today so that it can inform the alternatives evaluation step
- The report considers transportation and land Use
- The report considers existing and future (near-term) conditions
- Focuses on Plainville and New Britain with some references to Southington

**Refinements to Decision Matrix:**

Comments provided by the Steering Committee and the Technical Team from the November work session have been incorporated into the decision matrix. Further refinements to the evaluation step are covered under the next agenda item.

**Organization and Screening of Alignment Alternatives:**

This topic is covered under the next agenda item.

**4. Alternatives Development and Screening Summary**

Geoffrey Morrison-Logan described how each of the individual concepts introduced through the fall 2016 public charrettes and outreach discussions were converted into alternatives for either the Plainville or New Britain segments. A total of 14 concepts were developed in Plainville and five (5) in New Britain. Together, these 19 concepts are referred to as the long list of potential alternatives.

Theresa Carr provided a summary of the screening criteria that was used to assess the long list, and to create a shortlist of practical and feasible alignments to be carried through the evaluation step. The intent of the screening step is to create a shortlist of practical and feasible alternatives. The intent of the evaluation step is to identify one preferred alignment connecting the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail through Plainville, and one preferred alignment connecting this trail with the CT **fastrak** station in New Britain.

These screening criteria are as follows:

No.	Screening Question	Threshold
1.	Does the alternative connect at the north and south ends with the East Coast Greenway/FCHT (constructed, or in design)?	Connects at north end with North West Drive between Route 10 and Route 177  Connects at south end with Town Line Road between Route 10 and Route 177
2.	Does the alternative connect with downtown Plainville?	Connects with Route 372 (Main Street) no further east than Woodford Avenue  Connects with Route 372 (Main Street) no further west than Route 177
3.	Does the alternative have a major off-road element?	More than 75% off street, to get as close as possible to East Coast Greenway goals of 100% off-road trail facility

No.	Screening Question	Threshold
		NOTE: Side paths adjacent to roads are considered off-road
4.	Can the alternative be constructed without significant ROW impacts?	Fewer than 30
5.	Does the alternative avoid undue reliance on Railroad ROW?	Avoids requiring portions of path being constructed within the Waterbury Branch ROW  Avoids having three or more at-grade crossings of the Waterbury Branch  Avoids requiring permanent impacts to rail yard
6.	Does the alternative avoid being overly circuitous (for no apparent reason)?	Not more than double straight-line distance between North West Drive and Town Line Road

Theresa described that the application of the six screening criteria resulted in the identification of four alignments in Plainville. Of these four, she described that one (Alignment A) does not meet the 75% off-road criterion but was retained because it was the preferred alternative from the latest study on this segment, the 2009 Milone & MacBroom study. Furthermore, one additional alignment (Alignment B) was potentially problematic in that it requires a flyover of the Pan Am rail yard, but upon further consideration it was deemed feasible and should be evaluated.

Theresa stated that because the starting number of concepts in New Britain was small the screening step was not applied.

**Comments from Committee**

- 1) The Committee stated support for the screening criteria and the screening results
- 2) One Committee member asked about the ROW impact threshold of 30 impacts – was that 30 potential impacts to private parcels, or private and public combined? Theresa clarified that the threshold was 30 potential impacts to private parcels, which could be residential, commercial, or industrial.
- 3) There was a discussion about reliance on railroad ROW, and whether that screening criterion should be expanded to include any reliance on rail ROW, including the north south line. Theresa clarified that even though the north south rail line was not considered to be a fatal

flaw criterion, all effort was made to shift trail alignments outside the rail ROW. This would not preclude future discussions with Pan Am but would allow the current project to move forward.

- 4) Some discussion took place about whether Alignment B, which features a flyover of the Pan Am rail yard, should be screened out due to screening criterion 5. Theresa clarified that Alignment B appears to require a construction easement from Pan Am, but does not appear to impact train movements on a permanent basis. Alignment B therefore, for now, will move forward into the evaluation step.
- 5) The group discussed screening criterion 6. What does overly circuitous mean, and does a recreational trail need to worry about being circuitous? Theresa agreed, and stated that this was why the criterion allowed for diversion and meandering by creating a threshold of double straight-line distance. If a concept was more than double straight-line distance, the team asked whether there was an obvious reason for the diversion (what attraction was connected). If no obvious connection was made, the concept was removed.

Mark Jewell walked the Steering Committee and Technical Team through the shortlisted alignments using Google Earth as the platform. The alignments were:

- **Alignment A** – the preferred alternative from the 2009 Milone & MacBroom study, this alignment assumes use of the Pan Am north south rail right of way, uses Cronk Road and Main Street, Pierce Street, Broad Street, Hemingway Street, through Norton Park to Robert Jackson Way. It is majority on-road.
- **Alignment B** – this alignment turns east on an off road path on the northern edge of North West Drive, crosses North West Drive to an off road alignment on boardwalk or trail, curving back west along the southern edge of the treatment plant to Cronk Road, on a flyover of the Pan Am Rail yard and the Waterbury Branch to Neal Court, Main Street, Pierce Street, the historic canal right of way to Norton Park, continuing on historic canal right of way to Town Line Road.
- **Alignment C** – called “the western alignment” this alignment turns west on the northern edge of North West Drive, turning south on Peron Road connecting with Tomasso Nature Park and continuing south on mainly town-owned property, tunneling under Route 72. In the vicinity of Phoenix Soil, the trail would come along the eastern edge of Route 177 on an off-road alignment. South of downtown this alignment follows the previous paths of Pierce Street, former canal right of way to Norton Park to former canal right of way.
- **Alignment D** – similar to Alignment B but this alignment turns west at Robert Street extension, and follows an at-grade alignment at Cronk Road to Norton Place, E Main Street to Pierce Road, former canal right of way to Norton Park. This alignment might curve in back of the industrial businesses east of Robert Jackson Way to Town Line Road.

The New Britain alignments mainly follow Woodford Avenue and Black Rock Road. The New Britain off road alignment would fit between Route 72 and Black Rock Road. A variation of local street alignments are considered between Route 372 and the New Britain **CTfastrak** station.

### **Comments from Committee**

1. The Committee stated general support for the shortlisted alternatives
2. Mark Moriarty of the City of New Britain asked why the screening criteria were not applied to New Britain alignments. When Theresa responded that the New Britain alignments did not appear to have the same goals as the FCHT alignments, Mark disagreed. He stated that off-road was critical to this alignment, even if it is not something the City could accomplish immediately.
3. The group went on to discuss this at some length and ultimately recommended that the consultant team apply the screening criteria to the New Britain alignments, knowing that only one alignment would pass the screening step. Therefore, the consultant team will devote resources in the short term to test the feasibility of this one off-road alignment, including an exploration of grades, property impacts, costs, crossings, and phase-ability before proceeding to recommend it as a preferred alternative.

### **5. Public Outreach Schedule**

Geoffrey talked through the project's work plan and next steps, with an emphasis on touch points with the general public. In particular, the group is looking at a public meeting to discuss the long list of project alternatives, the screening and evaluation criteria, and the shortlist of practical and feasible alternatives. The date that is being targeted for the public meeting is May 22.

The schedule and draft agenda for the next public meeting was provided as a handout.

#### **Proposed Public Meeting Format**

##### **Presentation | Question and Answer | Open house**

- 6:00-6:15 Sign in, open house
- 6:15-7:15 Presentation and Q&A
- 7:15-8:00 Open house, submit comments

### **6. Next Steps and Adjourn**

The Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.

**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:



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Theresa Carr

Notes Approved by:



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Tim Malone

Distribution: Attendees

Project File 42201.00