

Route 5 Corridor Study Advisory Committee – Minutes

11/29/2018 at 3:00 PM

East Windsor Town Hall
11 Rye Street
Broad Brook, CT

Advisory Committee Members and Alternates

Robert Maynard – First Selectman	Tom Talamini - Resident
Leonard Norton – Director of Public Works	Despina C. Tartsinis – Sofia’s Plazas LLC
Matthew Tyksinski - East Windsor Planning and Development	Larry Tribble – Southern Auto Auction
Joe Ouellette – Chairman, East Windsor Planning & Zoning Commission	Joe Sauerhoefer – East Windsor Pubic Works

Additional Attendees

Pramod Pandey – CRCOG	Rory Fitzgerald – FHI
Casey Hardin – TranSystems	Ken Livingston – FHI
Nick Mandler – TranSystems	Charles Szymanski – Board of Selectman
Phil Tartsinis – Riverview Plaza Management	Jay Ussery – J.R. Russo & Associates
George Varessis - Sofia’s Plazas LLC	

The Meeting Started at 3:04 PM

1) Introductions and Schedule

Pramod Pandey began the meeting by introducing the study and summarizing the current status. The team is assessing future conditions including background growth, traffic operations, and recommended land use changes.

Joe Ouellette introduced a motion to approve the prior two sets of meeting minutes, from the advisory committee meetings on May 22 and October 11. Len Norton seconded. Despina Tartsinis noted that she still had an outstanding comment based on the incorrect last name attributed to George Varessis in the May 22nd minutes. The committee unanimously approved the motion with the noted revision.

Casey Hardin began the presentation by summarizing the purpose of the study, its current status, and the agenda for the meeting. He summarized recent stakeholder meetings with the Sofia's Plazas LLC and the Nutmeg Restaurant. The Sofia's Plazas had raised concerns over the placement of sidewalks. Mr. Hardin noted that the study would prioritize recommendations for sidewalk installations based on current needs and with pedestrian safety in mind. He also explained that the Nutmeg had noted difficulties with left turning traffic both into and out of their property. The study will evaluate access improvements at the site.

Mr. Hardin noted that the study's public survey had been posted online and around town at both libraries, Town Hall, Geissler's Supermarket, and Walmart. At the time of the meeting, 82 responses had been received on the electronic version. Mr. Hardin summarized some of the initial findings, which are included in the meeting presentation. He noted that the study's first newsletter had also been distributed. It was sent electronically to the study's mailing list, which was gathered at public involvement events, and will be sent to the East Windsor High School mailing list. Mr. Hardin will follow up with the committee after the meeting to confirm whether there are any additional mailing lists that could be used.

2) Future Conditions

Nick Mandler continued the presentation into the Future Conditions section. He noted expected developments within the corridor and the surrounding area that comprise the Future (2040) Base scenario. He presented the expected growth rates, generally around 20% along Route 5 south of Newberry Road and around 45% north of Newberry Road. Scantic Road and South Water Street would see increases in traffic volumes well in excess of 50%. Mr. Mandler explained the assumptions used to develop the Future Base traffic operational analysis. These included:

- Traffic signal timings optimized throughout the corridor
- An additional eastbound right turn lane on the I-91 Exit 44 off-ramp
- A new southbound right turn lane at the proposed casino entrance
- An additional northbound left turn lane at Route 140 (North Road)

Mr. Ouellette confirmed the proposed configuration of the I-91 Exit 44 off-ramp under the casino's off-site improvements would include a dedicated left turn lane, a combined through / left turn lane, and two right turn lanes. TranSystems will modify the cross-section in the model to finalize the analysis.

Mr. Mandler presented the results of the operational analysis, including a recap of existing conditions, for the Future Base AM and PM peak periods. He highlighted the degraded levels of service expected at the Route 5 intersections with Route 140 (North Road), South Water Street, and Tromley Road. He also noted that the Newberry Road / I-91 Exit 44 intersection would have approaches where volume would exceed capacity which could lead to queuing issues. Mr. Mandler then presented exhibits documenting the changes in traffic operations at these four intersections. He concluded this section of the presentation discussing potential improvements that the study team will consider during subsequent phases and asking the committee for any questions or comments.

Mr. Tribble noted that South Water Street experiences significant queuing issues under existing conditions. Mr. Ussery explained that through video recordings of study intersections, he has observed

that the traffic signal detectors at Route 5's intersections with South Water Street and Phelps Road do not appear to be functioning as designed. Mr. Ouellette asked that the First Selectman's office prepare a letter to CTDOT's District Maintenance Manager requesting that malfunctioning traffic signal infrastructure be repaired or replaced.

Mr. Szymanski asked how proposed changes to Route 140, including a potential median, in Windsor Locks and across the Connecticut River to Warehouse Point, East Windsor would impact traffic in the study area. Mr. Hardin noted that these changes are being evaluated as part of the broader effort to reconstruct the Windsor Locks rail station and are related to the at-grade railroad crossing of Route 140 near its intersection with Main Street in Windsor Locks. It is not anticipated that these changes would affect traffic patterns on within the study area. Mr. Ouellette explained that CTDOT has presented concepts to the Town Board of Selectman, and that no particular design had yet been selected. Mr. Hardin offered to provide an update at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

3) Land Use

Mr. Hardin introduced the next section of the presentation, which focused on potential development opportunities within the corridor. He explained that once a future development scenario is agreed upon as part of this study, a future traffic forecast 'Future (2040) Build' accounting for this growth will be developed. That forecast will be the basis for developing alternatives for the study.

Ms. Fitzgerald continued the presentation by explaining that the study team has evaluated parcels that are considered 'ripe for change' and considered how they could be developed or redeveloped in line with the town's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), including the Route 5 Corridor Study breakout. These had been discussed with the committee at the prior meeting. She noted that access and trip generation have not been fully vetted for the proposed concepts, but will be as the study advances.

Ms. Fitzgerald presented a series of seven exhibits depicting development or redevelopment concepts at sites throughout the study area. Mr. Hardin then concluded this section of the presentation by asking for the committee's input on the seven exhibits.

Mr. Talamini asked how many residential units, in total, the proposal includes. Ms. Fitzgerald explained that the density of units for each site has not been determined. Mr. Talamini noted that residential development impacts traffic volumes, noting the impact of recent residential developments on Route 140. Mr. Hardin replied that this process will be iterative and that the next step would be to assess potential traffic generation for these proposed development sites.

Mr. Ouellette noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission would probably oppose new residential development on Route 5 as there are better opportunities elsewhere in town. He noted that the utility infrastructure in the corridor makes Route 5 well-suited to commercial development, especially in comparison to other areas of town. Mr. Livingston explained that the recent POCD called for a Walkable Residential Core surrounding the High School. Mr. Ouellette interpreted that recommendation as being in support of the existing land uses in that area, rather than direction to add residential capacity. Mr. Maynard added that additional residential development is not desired in that area. Mr. Pandey

summarized by committing to review different land use types than residential in this area. Mr. Ouellette supported additional commercial and business uses.

Mr. Ussery noted that the POCD probably considered a proposed residential development north of Phelps Road that has since been stopped. He added that an industrial park, similar to the one on Thompson Road, could be a viable alternative on that parcel. Ms. Fitzgerald noted that preliminary survey results do not indicate that additional industrial development is the public's primary concern. Mr. Pandey and Mr. Hardin agreed to evaluate potential industrial development with the committee's support.

Mr. Tribble asked if the industrial use would be supported by zoning. Mr. Hardin explained that the study can recommend zoning changes to fit the long term corridor vision.

Mr. Tribble noted that the prior meeting materials included renderings depicting the addition of sidewalks along Route 5. He asked whether there would be demand for them. In his opinion, that section of Route 5 is not well suited for residential development, noting that the town has other 'village'-type areas. Mr. Pandey explained that the study team has been consistent with the POCD, but that other options can be assessed. Mr. Tribble explained that, in his opinion, the exhibits presented include too many coffee shops. He feels the vision should be for a dense business corridor.

Mr. Hardin asked for feedback on site #5, where an existing use is shown as redevelopment to another type of land use. In this case, auto storage is shown as being converted to commercial retail and food. Ms. Tartsinis indicated she was not sure whether the traffic volumes at that location support the scale of food and retail development being illustrated. Mr. Ussery noted that it is difficult to generate development further away from the I-91 and I-291 bridges, as this area is cut off from potential customers to the west by the Connecticut River.

Mr. Maynard and Mr. Talamini noted that Route 5 is the only major north / south route in town and that it is important to the town that it be an artery and a business center. Mr. Pandey asked whether the study team could depart from the town's existing zoning as other concepts are considered. Mr. Ouellette noted that the town is not happy with the current zoning. Mr. Maynard noted that a new Town Planner would be starting on December 17th.

Mr. Tribble cautioned against installing 'sidewalks to nowhere'. Mr. Szymanski questioned the market for significant industrial development, given the number of vacant commercial buildings in surrounding communities. Mr. Hardin responded that the study team will assess pedestrian demand and safety while recommending areas for new sidewalk construction.

Mr. Ouellette noted that additional public involvement would be required should the study team's recommendations deviate from the approved POCD. Mr. Hardin agreed and noted that the study team would emphasize those deviations in an effort to obtain consensus on the study's vision and plan.

4) Next Steps

Mr. Hardin resumed the presentation by discussing next steps. He noted that, based on the prior discussion, the first public information meeting would likely be delayed to spring 2019. He explained that the study team is scheduling a stakeholder meeting with representatives from the casino development

group. Mr. Hardin stated that the study team will meet with the new Town Planner, likely in early 2019, and develop a new set of development exhibits to present to the committee. Mr. Maynard reminded the group that the consulting firm LADA is currently conducting a land use study of the Warehouse Point neighborhood.

The Meeting Adjourned at 4:12 PM