

CRCOG Cost Review Subcommittee Meeting
Monday November 16th, 2020
11 AM
Meeting held remotely via Zoom

DRAFT until
Endorsed
by the
Committee

Name

Jon Colman
Patrice Carson
Doug Wilson
Sandy Fry
Kevin Kelly
Peter Hughes
Mark Moriarty
Gary Fuerstenberg
Jim Sollmi
Jeffrey Doolittle
Bill Hawkins
Derrick Gregor
Bob Jarvis

Organization

Bloomfield
Bolton
East Hartford
Hartford
Hebron
Marlborough
New Britain
Newington
Rocky Hill
South Windsor
Suffield
Wethersfield
Windsor

Guests

Jonathan Thiesse
Adam Kessler
Rob Trottier

Bloomfield
Windsor
New Britain

Staff

Robert Aloise
Mike Cipriano
Roger Krahn
Ryan Faulkner
Devon Lechtenberg
Cara Radzins
Sotoria Montanari
Karen Stewartson

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- 1. Roll Call** – Alphabetically by Member Municipality, then others. The meeting was called to order at 11:01 am by the Chair, Jon Colman from the Town of Bloomfield.
- 2. Public Forum** – No one chose to speak.
- 3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from April 20th, 2020 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made by Patrice Carson from the Town of Bolton, seconded by Jim Sollmi from the Town of Rocky Hill to approve the meeting minutes from the April 20th, 2020 meeting. This motion was passed unanimously.

- 4. LOTCIP Project Scope Modification Request: Bloomfield Blue Hills Complete Streets Phase 1** – Ms. Sotoria Montanari stated that the Town of Bloomfield is requesting the approval of a scope change without a change to the awarded LOTCIP project funding amount. She mentioned that the project was approved by the Transportation Committee under the 2018 LOTCIP Solicitation as a stand-alone sidewalk project for \$939,600. Ms. Montanari stated that comments from a public information meeting in August 2020 were the reason the Town of Bloomfield was requesting a scope modification that will incorporate additional elements to create a more robust complete streets project. In order to do so within the existing funding allocation, the Town is requesting a reduction of the project limits from 1,700 to 1,100 linear feet. Ms. Montanari also said these additional elements are proposed to improve safety and offer a more welcoming environment for pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists. Items that are proposed to be added to improve the project include granite curbing, decorative lighting, a brick snow shelf, and buffered bike lanes, centered in the area of the project where it is more densely populated. Granite curbing is a town standard and will be included in the Town of Bloomfield’s Complete Streets Master Plan and Design Guidelines. Also, granite curbing better accommodates the brick snow shelf, both at installation and from a maintenance standpoint. Ms. Montanari indicated the newly proposed project limits will be from the City of Hartford line to Elizabeth Avenue. Originally, the project limits were from the City of Hartford line to Britton Drive, and the area of reduced scope between Britton Drive and Elizabeth Avenue includes a large cemetery and a single industrial site with minimal direct transportation usage. Mr. Jonathan Thiesse of the Town of Bloomfield indicted there was an expectation from the public to include complete streets components into the project and the public had a strong desire for a complete streets project in the area. Ms. Montanari stated that staff recommends committee approval of a LOTCIP Bloomfield (L011-0002) Blue Hills Complete Streets Phase 1 project scope modification. A motion was made by Peter Hughes from the Town of Marlborough, seconded by Jim Sollmi from the Town of Rocky Hill to accept approval of Blue Hills Complete Streets Phase 1 project scope modification to provide additional complete streets elements and reduce the project limits from 1,700 to 1,100 linear feet. This motion was passed unanimously.
- 5. LOTCIP Project Delivery Metrics and Discussion** – Mr. Robert Aloise provided an overview of the LOTCIP Project Delivery Metrics memo to the committee, stating that at the October Transportation Committee meeting CRCOG staff were directed to review LOTCIP project delivery and associated metrics. He indicated that CRCOG previously focused on and tracked the design phase timelines, but based on Committee input and feedback, CRCOG has assembled data more holistically for all three phases of project delivery. He stated that delivery timelines were divided into three phases: application phase (application submittal to CTDOT to commitment to fund letter), design phase (commitment to fund to authorization to advertise), and bidding phase (authorization to advertise to authorization to award) for fiscal years 2015-2020. A chart that will be explained later demonstrates the findings. Mr. Aloise indicated that there are opportunities for the process to be improved, and recommendations will be provided for committee discussion. Additionally, Mr. Aloise said discussions regarding whether or not legislative changes are appropriate will be discussed. He indicated most of the recommendations can be administered without any substantive changes to the program and may be delivered within the existing framework of the current LOTCIP program.

Ms. Sotoria Montanari reviewed the graph figure that was depicted in the memo. She indicated that the graph provided the number of projects by fiscal year, time durations by phase in months, and the number of CTDOT employees reviewing projects. Program growth from fiscal years 2015 to 2018 was accompanied by increases in project durations, likely due to program expansion and insufficient CTDOT staffing during those times, CTDOT staff turnover, and a temporary 2018 freeze on commitment to fund letters due to fiscal uncertainty. Additionally, Ms. Montanari said project timelines have decreased since peaking in 2018, and CRCOG staff anticipates that these trends will continue due to increased CTDOT staffing levels.

Ms. Montanari indicated that application phase durations have decreased from a high of ten months in 2018, while the total amount of projects in the application phase have nearly doubled. Design phase durations have decreased since 2018 from 27 to 20 months. Ms. Montanari mentioned that design phase time frames have been previously provided to the committee. Bidding phase durations have consistently ranged from two to three months throughout the program's history.

Mr. Aloise stated that CRCOG staff have identified strategies to improve LOTCIP project delivery durations and to improve performance. He noted that ten months in the application phase is too long even though the delay may be attributable to either the town or CTDOT. Mr. Aloise indicated we should strive to lower the application phase time duration to below five months. He said we will continue monitoring of project delivery metrics, with updates to the Transportation Committee and CTDOT possibly every quarter or at least annually. Mr. Aloise said CRCOG recommended creation of performance targets aimed at improving efficiencies, as well as the continuation of the pre-screening of LOTCIP applications with CTDOT prior to project selection to avoid eligibility issues. He said there would be renewed focus on municipal and CTDOT outreach to identify strategies to improve timelines in all project phases. Mr. Aloise stated to improve communication with CTDOT, CRCOG would schedule staff-level meetings with CTDOT on a regular basis to discuss project delivery coordination. Lastly, Mr. Aloise said there was need for a discussion with the CRCOG committees regarding the possibly of, and appetite for, possible LOTCIP legislative changes.

An open discussion on concerns pursued, and committee members discussed how they felt about the LOTCIP program. Mr. Peter Hughes from the Town of Marlborough stated he participated in a meeting with state representatives, CTDOT, and CRCOG and indicated that quarterly meetings are essential and non-communication is disadvantageous to the program. He also mentioned that some federal requirements should be removed to improve program efficiency. He indicated CTDOT should prioritize the final design review process in order to keep projects advancing in the construction season and create jobs. Mr. Hughes also questioned the use of PALs. He recommended CTDOT commit to improving processes.

Mr. Todd Penney from the Town of Coventry mentioned via email that while the program is working, CTDOT and municipalities can do better. Also, due to the current budget crisis, this is not the best time to make demands of CTDOT.

Mr. Doug Wilson from the Town of East Hartford mentioned that PALs are working much better than alternative approaches. He stated that the main problem is that projects on state roads are subject to closer CTDOT review, which may lengthen project duration.

Mr. Jim Sollmi from the Town of Rocky Hill asked if there were any positive outcomes from prescreening projects. He mentioned that three staff persons at CTDOT should be an improvement over just having one. Mr. Aloise stated that CRCOG believes the

prescreening process has had positive results. Ms. Montanari mentioned that prescreening along with additional staffing have been beneficial to the overall program to ensure the eligibility of projects and that there are no major hurdles to advancing projects.

Mr. Rob Trottier from the City of New Britain mentioned that he had a project encroaching a state road and had to wait seven to eight months for CTDOT to review the project. He also stated that since CTDOT staff is working from home, response time is delayed, and it has been very challenging to advance projects. Overall, Mr. Trottier stated that the program is working very and that he would not want to revert to the STP Program as there are additional challenges with that program. Ms. Montanari mentioned that CTDOT remote availability is a continuing problem and may be one of the issues mentioned at a CTDOT meeting. Mr. Aloise also mentioned that the new CTDOT contact person may facilitate some of these issues.

Mr. Jonathan Thiesse from the Town of Bloomfield echoed what Doug Wilson and Rob Trottier said. He also mentioned that getting the LOTCIP group involved is helpful and not having a LOTCIP presence would make things difficult.

Mr. Gary Fuerstenberg from the Town of Newington mentioned that his first LOTCIP project was in 2018 and it was a ten-month application approval process. The response time delay for receiving CTDOT comments was frustrating.

Mr. Jon Colman from the Town of Bloomfield stated that his observations are that communication is a key, and that constant contact with CTDOT will be beneficial. He also mentioned that in his opinion there are opportunities to significantly reduce the design side both on the state and municipal level because that's where the lag tends to be. He said we need to find a way for CTDOT to better review projects concurrently, as opposed to in succession. This way, more than one division can review projects simultaneously rather than sending it to numerous persons over time, which has a major effect on delaying the response from CTDOT. Mr. Colman stated that it's critical that CRCOG staff pursue continual and timely conversations with CTDOT because over time communication will have the most impact. He also mentioned that he did not think it's a good idea to pursue legislation at his time due to the nature of the upcoming session. He stated it should be put on the back burner, and if other approaches are not successful, we can come back to it as a last resort. Mr. Colman said it's best to keep the politicians out of it and utilize administrative avenues if possible.

6. Other Business –There was no other business discussed. It was noted that the next Cost review Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for **Monday, December 14th, 2020**.

7. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am with a motion made by Patrice Carson from the Town of Bolton, seconded by Jim Sollmi from the Town of Rocky Hill. This motion was passed unanimously.