

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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Corridor Advisory Committee Of Chief Elected Officials for CTfastrak and CTrail-Hartford Line Zoom Video Call

Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 1:00 p.m.

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Attendees	
Chris Kervick	Nat Gale
Michael Freda	Mike Freimuth
Ted DeSantos	Jim Redeker
Lisa Rivers	Matt Pafford
Diana Palmer	Al Raine
Katherine Lutz	Renata Bertotti
Carl Amento	Chris Brewer
Laurie Whitten	Alexandra Daum
Courtney Hendrickson	Elise Greenberg
John Bernick	Jennifer Rodriguez
Randal Davis	Aaron Swanson
Steve Gazillo	Chip Beckett
Jenn Reilly	Eric Runowicz
Dennis Solensky	Luke Bronin
Gerry Amodio	Anne Kleza
Sean Ghio	Pam Sucato
Chris Edge	Peter Souza
Diana Deng	

Call to Order

Michael Freda and Chris Kervick called the meeting to order.

1. Welcome and Introductions: Co-Chairs Michael J. Freda, First Selectman, North Haven, and J. Christopher Kervick, First Selectman, Town of Windsor Locks;

2. **Acceptance of January 14, 2020 and April 4, 2019 Meeting Notes.**

Carl Amento moved approval of the meeting notes from January 12, 2020 and April 4, 2019 as presented. Randal Davis seconded the motion. Passed unanimously by a voice vote.

3. **Introduction of those present.**

Chris Kervick asked attendees to introduce themselves.

4. **Update on CTfastrak Service – CTDOT Staff;**

Lisa Rivers gave an update on CT*fastrak*. She noted that ridership is down due to COVID-19. Now averages 6,400 on the guideway and 9,300 in the corridor. CTfastrak ridership is tracking slightly lower than normal fixed route bus service. CTDOT is taking the opportunity to perform some maintenance on facilities such as parking lots.

5. **Update on CT*rail* Service – CTDOT Staff;**

John Bernick gave an update on CT*rail* Hartford Line service. Ridership is down around 70% below pre-COVID levels. Performing better in recovery than other rail services in the state. He noted that CTDOT is looking to see if there is something short of double tracking that gets close to the majority of the vision for the service. This would involve double tracking key choke points on the line but leaving the rest single tracked for now. It would allow the Hartford Line to get up to 42 trains per day (instead of 50 that full double tracking would allow). It was noted that this also provides an opportunity to advance the Enfield station. Single tracking allows for a permanent solution in Enfield as the temporary platform doesn't need to be torn out for double tracking.

North haven advancing into final design. A site has been located and there are excellent opportunities for redevelopment.

There was a discussion about the cost differential between the modified double tracking plan and full double tracking. Many in the group were concerned about how much of the full vision would be sacrificed and how much money it would actually save. This was of particular concern given recent announcements about infrastructure funding. There was also concern that the modified plan would preclude implementing the full plan in the future. John Bernick replied that it would not. John Bernick then shared his screen to show a schematic view of the proposal. John Bernick also shared that the modified proposal would save approximately \$100 million.

6. **Update on Springfield to Worcester rail study. PVPC staff.**

Nobody from PVPC was present at the meeting.

7. **Presentation:** Hartford Springfield Boston Rail Service Economic Impact Study. - AECOM

Steve Gazillo and Chris Brewer gave a presentation on a study that looked at economic impacts associated with completing the Hartford Line and implementing East-West rail between Springfield and Worcester.

A discussion of the study's findings followed the presentation. It was noted that what is implied but is not explicitly stated is that there is cost of doing nothing. That cost is continuing on the region's existing growth trajectory. It was suggested that including federal income tax impacts would also be impactful since it's likely the projects would need federal support.

It was asked if the costs shown in the study included relocating the tracks in Hartford. The study did not include that but did include the relocation of Union Station. It was also suggested that extending the period of growth forecast out to 2050 would emphasize the continued lack of growth in the region. A request was made to see the maps that included Downtown New Haven. The team replied that those would be in the report. Tim Malone noted that the team is working on a rollout strategy for the report.

8. **COVID-19 Impact and Recovery in the corridor:**

There was a discussion about the impacts of COVID-19 and prospects for recovery.

It was asked what the ridership of CT Rail was compared to pre-pandemic. John Bernick stated that it was about 70% below. Tim Malone asked how does that compare to the rest of the country? Jim Redeker stated that it compares favorably to the rest of the greater region.

Chris Kervick noted that there is a need to come up with a strategy on how to capitalize on where we're going instead of where we've been. Chris Brewer noted that anecdotal evidence from news reports shows that people are returning to work sooner rather than later. The reality is that people may be returning to a hybrid model. Mayor Bronin noted that if that hybrid model persists, people may be willing to live farther from that office provided there are good transit options. Being on the periphery of those larger markets could be very beneficial. He also stated that he has been part of a larger push toward north atlantic rail that would create 100 minute service between Boston and New York.

Renata Bertotti stated that the biggest problem that COVID revealed is that we weren't built in a resilient way. Need more flexibility and multiple options for living and transportation. Chip Beckett said that he would argue that CT never fully emerged from the savings and loan crisis of the late 1980s. We need to do something different.

9. **Municipal updates on transit-oriented development and related projects**

Chris Kervick invited those in attendance to give updates on projects in their towns.

- North Haven - extensive amount of work on a design package for a train station. Available land for additional affordable housing and transit-oriented development.
- Windsor Locks - Meeting today with the US DOT Build America folks. Station is fully funded. Waiting to hear about the start date. Have a pretty ambitious TOD plan for the area around the station including a shared parking facility and a public market adjacent to the station. Five to six parcels of land for adaptive reuse. Four are privately held and that has been a bit problematic. The town holds options to purchase three of the four privately held sites.
- New Britain - 256 of new units that came online are 91% occupied. Heard today that there is a workforce housing development that lost the developer due to environmental issues. Another developer bought an abandoned bank and will be placing a development there. The parcel next to Columbus Commons will be going back on the market.
- Enfield - very excited about presentation from DOT to town council last night. Looking at August 2022 for a permit to build the station. Saddened about loss of the casket mill. Now we have to rethink a little about what is going to happen across the tracks in downtown. Looking at demolishing some older buildings in the TOD area for some multi-use in the future.
- Windsor - this fall the council authorized a consultant to look at the potential of installing a quiet zone throughout the length of Windsor. Many resident concerns about the noise. Would cost about \$6 million to do the work to establish a quiet zone. Looking for other interested communities to work with the town and the DOT to include quiet zones in future plans. DOT is working on temporary platforms at the historic Windsor station. Working with two developers on potential infill TOD within a half mile of the station. Renata Bertotti noted that Meriden is also looking into quiet zones
- Newington - going to be starting to talk about the Newington junction station again. Restarting the process of developing TOD zoning. Had been stalled before. Area lends itself to TOD. Going through permitting on a number of developments near Cedar Street. Some hotel and some residential.

10. **Possible Future Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date: Committee Suggestions; and**

Michael Freda noted that the next meeting would likely be in September. Ideas for agenda items can be sent to Lyle or Tim.

11. **Other Business and Announcements.**

No other business came before the committee. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:45.