

Route 5 Corridor Study Advisory Committee – DRAFT Minutes

5/5/2021 at 1:30 PM

Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Advisory Committee (AC) Members and Alternates

Jason Bowsza – First Selectman
Leonard Norton – Director of Public Works
Joe Ouellette – Planning & Zoning Commission

Despina Tartisinis – Sofia’s Plaza LLC
Joe Sauerhoefer – Public Works Department
Clark Chapin – Town Planner

Additional Attendees

Rob Aloise – CRCOG
Pramod Pandey – CRCOG
Casey Hardin – TranSystems
Tavey Chang – TranSystems

Patrick Zapatka- CTDOT
Tyler Roth – CTDOT
William Champagne - CTDOT

The Meeting Started at 1:30 PM

1) Introductions, Approval of minutes and Public Comments

Pramod Pandey led a roll call of attendees and the prior meeting minutes were approved. No members of the public were present for comment. Pramod stated that the meeting was being recorded.

2) Recent Activities

Casey Hardin outlined the presentation and summarized the status of the study. The study team is concluding the analysis and refinement of alternatives and is finalizing an implementation plan. The study team submitted a package of preliminary alternatives to CTDOT for review in February. Two review meetings were held to discuss CTDOT feedback. CTDOT is currently reviewing operational analysis for two of the preliminary alternatives and will provide comments to the study team by mid-May.

Casey explained potential upcoming changes to the transit network in East Windsor and Windsor Locks. CTDOT is hosting a series of public meetings to seek comments on the changes. Should the changes be implemented, the changes would go into effect in August 2021. Affecting East Windsor, the 905 route would no longer make its current two round trips per day on Route 5. It would be replaced by an extension of the 96 route, making the same number of trips. This change would offer a benefit in the form of complimentary ADA paratransit service, operated by Greater Hartford Transit District, which does not accompany the current express bus service.

A new local route is also planned to begin in August. The 24 route would connect the Windsor and Windsor Locks rail stations to Bradley International Airport. The study team has received the preliminary timing information this route and is evaluating the potential to extend this route to Warehouse Point and the Route 5 corridor.

3) Preliminary Alternatives

Casey presented the study's Vision, Goals and Objectives. This information had previously been reviewed by the Advisory Committee and is included in the Vision, Goals and Objectives Statement posted to the study website. Casey explained that the objectives and technical analysis conducted for the existing conditions and future conditions technical memoranda were used to identify the preliminary alternatives. He explained that the study team has broken the corridor into five segments and developed multiple alternatives for each.

Casey explained the deficiencies in the Newberry Road area, highlighting queuing and operational issues at the Newberry Road / I-91 ramp intersection and a lack of bicyclist, pedestrian and transit facilities. He presented five alternatives for the Newberry Road area and asked the Advisory Committee members for feedback.

Joe Ouelette identified potential lane utilization concerns with Alternative 2. He explained that drivers exiting I-91 northbound and intending to turn left at the Route 5 / Newberry Road intersection may not choose the correct lane at the pre-signal. This could result in the same weaving situation between the pre-signal and Route 5 that this alternative is intended to eliminate. Joe also noted that Alternative 2 would likely result in more rear end crashes than currently occur due to the introduction of a new traffic signal. Patrick Zapatka noted that CTDOT is currently reviewing the traffic operational analysis for Alternative 2 and would provide comments in two weeks. Casey explained that once CTDOT's feedback has been received they will consider the status of this alternative moving forward.

Casey introduced the northern segment, highlighting the lack of bicyclist, pedestrian and transit facilities, and congestion at Route 140. He also explained that the future design year (2040) traffic forecasts are heavily dependent on the proposed MMCT casino. The latest information suggests that it is unlikely that the casino will be constructed and opened in the near future, or perhaps at all. The final report will identify when widening concepts should be pursued as they would only be necessary under increased traffic volumes. Casey presented three alternatives for the northern segment and asked the Advisory Committee members for feedback.

Patrick asked whether there is currently pedestrian traffic on the west side of Route 5, the opposite side of the proposed sidepath. He also asked whether the Town requires commercial developers to implement sidewalks as part of new developments. Casey explained that minimal pedestrian traffic is expected on the west side of Route 5 due to the topography. Joe notes that the Town requires developers to include sidewalk along their frontage as part of developments exceeding a certain size threshold. Alternatively, they can also make a payment in lieu of sidewalks.

Casey introduced the Main Street segment, highlighting the awkward geometry at the Main Street intersection with Route 5 and the lack of bicyclist, pedestrian and transit facilities. He presented two alternatives for the Main Street segment and asked the Advisory Committee members for feedback.

Joe suggested that the proposed realignment of Main Street be modified to avoid a total acquisition of Coach Light Motors. Casey indicated that this change would be made.

Casey introduced the central segment, highlighting poor existing operations at South Water Street, the crash history near Thompson Road, operations that are expected to deteriorate at Tromley Road under future traffic volumes and a lack of bicyclist, pedestrian and transit facilities. He presented two alternatives for the central segment and asked the Advisory Committee members for feedback.

Joe suggested that the study team evaluate a raised median rather than the two-way left turn lane for the concepts that widen Route 5 to two lanes in each direction. Casey indicated that the study team would investigate this change.

Casey introduced the southern segment, highlighting the lack of turn lanes at signalized intersections, lack of bicyclist, pedestrian and transit facilities, queues that are expected to increase under future traffic volumes and access management deficiencies. He noted that the study team would develop an appendix to the final report with access management recommendations that the Town's Planning and Zoning Commission can use when assessing development proposals. He presented three alternatives for the southern section and asked the Advisory Committee members for feedback.

Joe explained the history of the four lane section near Southern Auto Auction and indicated he supported the road diet alternative. The group agreed that the study team should set up a meeting with Larry Tribble to discuss.

4) Recommended Implementation Approach

Casey explained that the study team is developing an implementation plan consisting of near, mid and long term recommendations. He defined each and noted how the previously presented alternatives would be sorted within the categories.

Casey noted that new video detection was installed at several signals within the corridor last year. He invited Len Norton to summarize initial feedback on their functionality. Len noted that he has heard positive feedback. Pramod offered that CRCOG could use their NPMRDS data to document the changes in travel speeds since the implementation of the new signal detection.

5) Next Steps

Casey explained that the study team's next steps include finalizing cost estimates, submitting the final report for review and comment, hosting a final public meeting and seeking formal endorsement of the study from CRCOG and the Town. He asked the Advisory Committee for any additional comments.

Patrick asked if cost estimates would be provided for near, mid and long term alternatives. Casey confirmed that estimates would be provided for all types of recommendations.

Patrick asked whether the final report would be shared with CTDOT for review. Casey confirmed that it would be. Patrick noted that comments on the traffic operational analysis would be provided within two weeks.

Pramod asked if the Advisory Committee felt that any alternatives should not be considered further. Jason Bowsza noted that funding sources for alternatives would need to be presented. Rob Aloise noted that having a completed corridor study can help with competitive funding opportunities.

Jason asked whether the study team intended to conduct the public information meeting virtually or in-person. Casey and Pramod indicated that currently the study team would plan for a virtual meeting. Casey asked if Jason had any recommendations for advertising the meeting. Jason suggested that the study team reach out to the Journal Inquirer and provide contact information.

Jason asked whether the recommendations should be implemented with phases or whether they were all-or-nothing. Casey explained that they should be implemented in phases that can be tailored to available funding.

The Meeting Adjourned at 3:15 PM