

## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Wednesday, January 22, 2020**

**Location: East Windsor High School, 76 S. Main Street, East Windsor, CT, 06088**

**Subject: Route 5 Corridor Study, Public Meeting #1**

### **Attendees from the Study Team\***

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS</b>
Pramod Pandey	Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)	ppandey@crcog.org
Patrick Zapatka	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	patrick.zapatka@ct.gov
Casey Hardin	TranSystems	crhardin@transystems.com
Steve Mitchell	TranSystems	sfmitchell@transystems.com
Pat Padlo	TranSystems	ptpadlo@transystems.com

\*See attached sign-in sheet for public and Advisory Committee attendees.

The study team exhibited six informational boards for attendees to browse at their leisure. Staff were on-hand to speak with attendees and answer any questions. The presentation was prefaced by opening remarks from the First Selectman of the Town of East Windsor, Jason Bowsza, and State Representatives Christopher Davis and Carol Hall. They introduced Casey Hardin, Project Manager for TranSystems, to begin the technical presentation. Mr. Hardin explained that the purpose of a corridor study is to evaluate safety, congestion and mobility and to identify potential travel demand growth into the future. In the case of this study, the planning year is 2040. He noted that the study team has published an Existing Conditions Report which is available on the project [website](#). A Future Conditions Report is being prepared for review by CRCOG, CTDOT and the study's advisory committee. The study team has recently initiated the alternatives analysis phase of the study. Mr. Hardin explained that there would be another public meeting, likely to be held in late-spring 2020.

Mr. Hardin explained that the study corridor includes approximately five miles of Route 5 stretching from the South Windsor town line to the Enfield town line. He noted that the planned MMCT casino and reconstructed Windsor Locks train station could affect travel demand within the corridor. Route 5 has a varied lane configuration throughout the corridor, primarily with two lanes (one in each direction) with turn lanes located at most signalized intersection. There are two locations where Route 5 has been widened to two or more lanes in each direction. These are near the Southern Auto Auction driveway and south of the I-91 ramps / Newberry Road intersection. Mr. Hardin explained that the character of the corridor transitions from north to south from commercial / retail development to residential then auto / industrial and finally to agricultural. Correspondingly, development density is highest in the north and lowest in the south.

Mr. Hardin presented the existing conditions traffic operations for the afternoon peak period (4 – 6 pm). He noted that there are poor (LOS E) operations at the I-91 ramps / Newberry Road intersection. He also indicated that some elements of the traffic signal system are not currently functioning as designed, causing traffic operations to deteriorate beyond the computed values. Mr. Hardin then presented crash

rates on roadway segments. He noted the area south of Thompson Road, where southbound traffic merges from two lanes to one, as having the highest rate for any segment within the corridor.

Mr. Hardin explained that the study team has developed two traffic forecasts, base and build for the 2040 planning year. The base scenario considers ambient growth in traffic from development in and around the study corridor that will occur independently of actions taken as a result of the study. Under the base scenario, traffic operations are expected to degrade throughout the corridor, in particular at the Route 140, I-91 ramps / Newberry Road and South Water Street intersections. The build scenario considers seven additional development concepts identified by the study team as part of the vision for the corridor. Similar to the base scenario, under the build scenario traffic operations are expected to degrade throughout the corridor, resulting in LOS F at Route 140, I-91 / Newberry Road and South Water Street.

Mr. Hardin then explained the study's goals including improving safety and mobility, addressing congestion and providing for economic growth in the corridor. He summarized several improvement concepts that focus on the entirety of the corridor including:

- Signalization and capacity improvements where increased traffic volumes are expected to result in increased congestion.
- Opportunities for bicycling, both for transportation as well as recreationally
- Alternatives for introducing transit services, either as a *CTTransit* operated route or operated by the Town

Mr. Hardin noted that, based on the preliminary analysis, widening Route 5 to two lanes in each direction throughout the corridor does not appear to be necessary. Localized widening improvements, both for through and turn lanes will be explored. He then summarized preliminary alternatives for the northern, central and southern segments of the corridor including:

- Operational improvements at the Route 140 and I-91 ramps / Newberry Road intersections
- Capacity improvements to address traffic congestion between Thompson Road and Tromley Road
- Adding turn lanes at signalized intersections
- Adding a two-way left turn lane throughout the corridor

Mr. Hardin concluded the presentation by offering to take questions and comments from attendees.

## **I. Question & Answer**

Mr. Hardin fielded several questions and comments from attendees as summarized below. Answers or responses by the study team are noted where appropriate.

- Two lane road becomes four lanes at Southern Auto Auction, and then goes back to two lanes, only to become two northbound lanes again at Thompson Road. Merging and widening is dangerous. Concepts should be developed with a consistent lane arrangement (either 2 or 4) not going back and forth as it does today.
- The broken loop detectors are a big problem. Can these be fixed quickly, or does the Town have to wait until the study is completed?
  - The Town is actively working with CTDOT to address the deficiencies caused by defective signal infrastructure.

- What is the status of the truck diversion plan into East Windsor?
  - According to a member of the CTDOT has changed their plans for the Route 140 / Route 159 intersection and is no longer planning to route trucks across the Connecticut River into East Windsor to turn around.
- Is development site 7 going to move forward as the previously proposed residential development (nearly 500 units)? This plan shows it as light industrial.
  - A residential development could still move forward at this site. The expected trip generation volumes for either type of development would be similar.
- Utility poles should be relocated as far back as possible, even in areas not being widened to avoid future relocations if the road is widened again.
- How are individual components of the project prioritized?
  - The study team will work with the advisory committee and the public to develop and prioritize improvements.
- This roadway has been studied for over five years. It is time to actually do something!
- Is the ability to do improvements based on availability of state funding?
  - The ability to implement improvements is tied to available funding. However, there are funding opportunities that are not entirely dependent on the State.
- If tolls are put on I-91, can they be used to fund this work? Especially since traffic will divert to Route 5.
  - If tolls are implemented, a study of potential diversion will be required. It is unlikely that toll revenue generated on I-91 could be used on Route 5.
- How much Federal Funding is available?
  - Typical Federal-aid roadway improvement projects in Connecticut are funded with either 80% or 90% Federal funds. The balance is supplied by either the State or the municipality.
- There is frequent diversion of traffic from I-91 due to crashes. Does this study take this increased traffic into account?
  - The study takes into account diversion from I-91 due to typical daily congestion.
- Google is a big problem because it tells motorists to divert to Route 5 in the case of an incident on I-91.
- Traffic on Route 5 makes it impossible to get out of private driveways – takes 10 to 15 minutes at times.
- In Massachusetts, the breakdown lane can be used to mitigate congestion during peak periods. Can this be done here?
  - This study team will evaluate this concept in the areas where peak-hour congestion is a concern.
- Congestion pricing is used successfully in other places, such as Washington DC. Is there an application for this here?
  - The study team is not involved with discussions of tolling within the State. It was acknowledged that congestion pricing can be a successful tool in managing demand.

- Many residential houses are very close to the road. Will the widening require taking their front yards?
  - There will likely be some property impacts where widening is required. The next phase of the study will assess this in detail.
- Better pavement markings are needed between the northbound double left turn lane at Newberry Road and the right hand northbound I-91 entrance ramp.