

Route 5 Corridor Study Advisory Committee- Minutes

9/16/2020 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 C. Tartsinis – Sofia’s Plaza LLC
Joe Sauerhoefer – Public Works Department

Additional Attendees

Pramod Pandey – CRCOG	Maureen Lawrence – CTDOT
Casey Hardin – TranSystems	Steve Bruno – CTDOT
Nick Mandler– TranSystems	Tyler Roth – CTDOT
Patrick Zapatka- CTDOT	Fred Kulakowski – CTDOT
Erika Lindberg– CTDOT	Caswell Smith – CTDOT
William Champagne - CTDOT	Rob Aloise -CRCOG

The Meeting Started at 1:30 PM

1) Introductions and Schedule

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) Corridor Discussion

Casey Hardin outlined the presentation. He noted that new video detection has been installed at several signals within the corridor during the spring. He invited Len Norton to summarize initial feedback on their functionality. Len noted that the new detectors have been up several months, and that he has heard positive feedback. Larry Tribble, AC member and owner of Southern Auto Auction (SAA), says traffic flow has improved since they were installed.

Casey explained staffing changes at TranSystems; Pat Padlo is no longer with the firm and Nick Mandler will take her place as lead engineer. There has also been a change in East Windsor’s Planning Department as Ruben Flores-Marzan has moved on. The Town has an interim replacement in-place and will share the video of this meeting with them.

Casey summarized the status of the study. The team is concluding the assessment of future conditions and moving into alternatives analysis. He expects to schedule a technical coordination meeting with

CTDOT once more-detailed plans have been developed. Then the team will present final alternatives to the AC to approve and move forward.

Casey explained the recent changes needed to the future conditions analysis. Modifications to the traffic forecasts were necessary due to a change in Build development scenario. The redevelopment of the East Windsor High School (EWHS) was replaced with an industrial park proposal north of Tromley Road. The team also increased emphasis on the use of trip generation to forecast traffic for the developments in the Build scenario rather than using the CRCOG travel demand model. Altogether, these changes resulted in a 15-20% increase in volumes, especially in the segment between Thompson Road and South Water Street. The increased volumes resulted in changes to traffic operations along Route 5. Four signalized intersections would now operate at Level of Service (LOS) F during at least one peak hour. Casey emphasized that these results reflect an aggressive development scenario. Improvements of the scale required by these operations would likely not be needed for some time and would be dependent on the land use changes taking place.

Jason Bowsza asked whether the revised forecast includes the 250,000 square foot East Windsor Logistics Center recently proposed by the Silverman Group. Casey noted that this new proposal is not specifically included, but it is very similar to the Sardilli Distribution Center that is included in both the Base and Build scenarios. The Sardilli development ultimately fell through but is of the same scale and on the same parcel.

Casey explained that transit demand forecasting was completed as part of the future conditions assessment. Both necessary and trips-by-choice for demand-response transit trips were evaluated for the design year of 2025. The results indicated that there is about one small vehicle's worth of trip demand (65/day). There is a low demand for new commuter services beyond enhancing connectivity with the Hartford Line rail service in Windsor Locks.

Casey presented a draft vision statement for the study based on supporting continued economic growth in the corridor. He presented two goals supporting the vision. He also discussed a series of objectives designed to test how well the study alternatives succeed in addressing the vision and goals. The vision, goals and objectives were distributed to attendees following the meeting for additional review and comment.

Caswell Smith asked about LOS at intersections and why there are two objectives, one for the overall intersection (LOS D) and one for Route 5 approaches only. Casey noted that since LOS is averaged across intersection, this is particularly important at the major intersections where there is significant volume on the intersecting road.

Rob Aloise asked which forecast scenarios the alternatives will focus on addressing and whether alternatives will address existing conditions. Casey noted that the study team will outline phasing and implementation plans to address existing and future deficiencies. Rob noted that funding request to implement improvements to address 2040 traffic forecasts would likely not compete well against funding request with projects to address existing conditions.

Casey discussed potential improvements to the Route 5 / Route 140 intersection. He noted that a second northbound left turn lane is proposed as part of the MMCT casino off-site improvements. Therefore, it is

included in the future conditions analysis. The study team will evaluate other potential capacity improvements to bring the intersection to LOS D overall. A second southbound through lane may be most practical due to available land on that side of the road. The study team will evaluate the potential costs and benefits of other improvement strategies.

Casey discussed potential improvements to the Route 5 intersection with the I-91 ramps and Newberry Road. He noted that the restoration of a second right turn lane on the I-91 off-ramps is proposed under the proposed MMCT casino off-site improvements. If those improvements do not move forward, the study team would recommend it as a near-term improvement. Casey noted that queuing on the I-91 ramps is due to the signal operation and weaving traffic patterns between the northbound and southbound ramps. He presented three potential options to address this issue: a realigned southbound off-ramp, a pre-signal between the two off-ramps and a reconfiguration of the interchange with a new local road connection between Route 5 and Main Street.

Joe Ouellette noted that the reconfiguration concept would restore a similar pattern to the previous interchange configuration at Main Street. Casey noted that no changes to the ramp terminals on I-91 would be needed so it would change the distance between adjacent ramps north or south on I-91. He added that the new local road could help with emergency response to and from Warehouse Point as well.

Casey discussed the area south of Thompson Road, where Route 5 transition from one to two lanes in each direction. He highlighted crash patterns in the merge area for southbound Route 5. He identified that the continuation of a second southbound lane past South Water Street could help address the crash pattern and operational challenges at the South Water Street intersection. This alternative would be considered with potential future widening in mind. Casey presented a series of locations where additional turn lanes will be evaluated on Route 5 and intersecting roadways.

Casey discussed connectivity with *CTrail* service at Windsor Locks. He indicated that there have been preliminary conversations with CTDOT about extending a bus route into the study corridor from the Windsor Locks train station. Such a route would connect the employment centers in the corridor with Warehouse Point and the rail service.

Casey summarized the study team's initial bicycle and pedestrian facility recommendations. These primarily consist of a shared-use path on west side of Route 5. This is recommended as the high speeds and volumes on Route 5 make on-street facilities uncomfortable for bicyclists. Pedestrian crossings would be added at signalized intersections, with a sidewalk network provided on the east side of Route 5 to connect to key destinations. The study team has also identified a preliminary routing for a recreational path parallel to Route 5.

Casey summarized the traffic needs based on the future conditions assessment. Operations would begin to degrade south of Thompson where there is only one through lane in each direction. He reminded the AC of the existing number of lanes around corridor. He highlighted the first potential capacity improvement as being in the segment between Thompson Road and Tromley Road. A second potential capacity project could be between Tromley Road and Phelps Road. This would leave a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile gap between Stoughton Road and Scantic Road with only one lane in each direction. The study team will develop a plan for that gap to maintain lane continuity.

The next steps for the study team are the development concept plans and preliminary estimates. Casey estimated that a draft final report should be completed by Thanksgiving. After that, a final series of meetings is scoped to conclude the study.

Jason Bowsza asked what impact COVID would have on public outreach. Casey explained that one more public meeting is scheduled as the part of the study. A virtual meeting could be held using a similar format to the AC Meeting but with more organization and restrictions on who asks and moderates questions. The final public meeting will be held once CTDOT and the AC have approved concept plans and when preliminary cost estimating is complete.

Patrick Zapatka expects CTDOT to be able to provide comments on the Future Conditions Technical Memorandum in 3 - 4 weeks. He asked that the study team refrain from submitting concepts to the general public before CTDOT has had chance to approve.

Rob Aloise noted that the concept of a new local road as part of a reconfiguration of the I-91 interchange could affect travel patterns beyond I-91 access. He asked if the study team had considered what these effects could be. Nick Mandler noted that the new local road connection would likely improve operations at adjacent intersections since it offers redundancy. This concept has not yet been through formal analysis.

Len Norton supported the concept, postulating that it could take traffic out of busy / awkward intersection with Main Street. Casey noted there would likely be property impacts to Sports World. He asked for input from the Town on a potential alignment for the connection. Len noted wetlands areas north of the proposed connection intersection with Main Street and that the entrance to Sports World was originally intended to serve additional developments that fell through.

Erika Lindeberg asked how the reconfigured ramps to I-91 would be laid out. Casey showed a schematic drawing, highlighting two new intersections. He noted that it is unknown whether the bridge over I-91 would be re-used. Casey committed to providing concept drawings one week prior to a meeting with CTDOT. Pramod thanked to attendees and proposed a meeting with CTDOT in approximately 1 month.

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:45 PM