

Agenda Item Summary

To: CRCOG Policy Board, CRCOG Transportation Committee

From: Rob Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning

CC: Matt Hart, Executive Director

Meeting Date: June 26, 2024 (Transportation Committee: April 22, 2024)

Subject: Resolution endorsing the Greater Hartford Mobility Study

Background: The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) has released the final documents for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS) on December 18, 2023. These documents are available at hartfordmobility.com. This Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study assessed an array of alternatives aimed at addressing transportation issues within the Greater Hartford area. CRCOG staff reviewed the final documents and prepared summary documents to assist our member municipalities in understanding not only how recommendations within the study could impact individual communities but also how the recommendations could impact the region as a whole. The study recommendations and summary documents were discussed at the February, March, and April 2024 Transportation Committee Meetings, including a [presentation by CRCOG staff at March 2024 Transportation Committee](#). The summary documents are available on the CRCOG website, with the following three documents also attached (following the resolution) for further information:

1. [GHMS - CRCOG Staff Review Memo](#): This 2/26/2024 memo describes and links the Staff summary documents.
2. [GHMS – Primary Projects Analysis](#): Table of the nine primary projects making up the GHMS’s four core components and their alignment with the goals and deficiencies of CRCOG’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
3. [GHMS - CRCOG Comments and CTDOT Responses](#): CRCOG Comments from Staff and Transportation Committee Members were collected and shared with CTDOT.

Benefit to Member Towns/CRCOG: CRCOG staff reviewed the core components of this study and found the overall study recommendations to be in alignment with the major deficiencies and goals identified in the CRCOG’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan and regional sustainability and equity priorities. Supporting this study will encourage these projects and their expected benefits to advance in our region.

Financial/Operational Impact: The GHMS and its core components are managed by CTDOT and their Consultants at no direct cost to CRCOG and member municipalities.

Project Schedule: The GHMS PEL study was published on December 18, 2023. Pace of project advancements will depend on discretionary funding awards. Discretionary funding has already been sought for three independent components/projects. The first major project to be advanced of those that do not receive discretionary funding is expected to be the Route 2/I-91 Direct Connection.

Recommendation: CRCOG staff is seeking the Board's approval to recommend advancement of the four major components of the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (see attached resolution) and welcomes any feedback the members may have.

Attachments:

- Draft Resolution for Endorsement of the Greater Hartford Mobility Study
- GHMS - CRCOG Staff Review Memo
- GHMS - Primary Projects Analysis
- GHMS - CRCOG Comments and CTDOT Responses

RESOLUTION FOR ENDORSEMENT OF THE GREATER HARTFORD MOBILITY STUDY

WHEREAS, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) has been designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Capitol Region, and the CRCOG Policy Board serves as the MPO; and

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) conducted the Greater Hartford Mobility Study, a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, “to create a vibrant, equitable, and accessible regional transportation system by redefining transportation infrastructure to prioritize safety, convenience, and accessibility for all residents and visitors in the Greater Hartford region”; and

WHEREAS, CTDOT and the Consultant team met with CRCOG staff throughout the study effort to provide updates and opportunity for input; and

WHEREAS, CTDOT and the Consultant team worked with community stakeholders and the public throughout the study through engagement strategies such as an interactive website, bilingual communications, and targeted outreach to historically overlooked communities; and

WHEREAS, CRCOG staff reviewed the core components of this study and found the overall study recommendations to be in alignment with the major deficiencies and goals identified in the CRCOG’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan and regional sustainability and equity priorities; and

WHEREAS, CRCOG staff presented to the CRCOG Transportation Committee the reviewed information, comments on the study from CRCOG staff and Transportation Committee members, and comment responses from CTDOT; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Capitol Region Council of Governments does hereby endorse the advancement of the four major components of the [Greater Hartford Mobility Study: Planning and Environmental Linkages Study](#) dated December 2023 to the NEPA/Preliminary Design Phase and the advancement of the early action and mid-term recommendations of the Implementation Plan to the STIP/TIP process.

CERTIFICATE

I certify the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Policy Board at its meeting held on June 26, 2024.

BY: _____ DATE: _____
Jason Bowsza, Secretary

To: CRCOG Transportation Committee
From: Rob Aloise, CRCOG Director of Transportation Planning
Date: February 26, 2024
Subject: Greater Hartford Mobility Study Staff Review

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) has released the final documents for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS). This Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study assessed an array of alternatives aimed at addressing transportation issues within the Greater Hartford area. The final documents are available at <https://hartfordmobility.com/>. In addition to the Final PEL Report, Appendix L outlines the Implementation Plan for the recommendations, and Appendix J details and analyzes the alternatives that were considered as a part of this effort.

CRCOG staff has reviewed the final documents and has prepared summary documents to assist our member municipalities in understanding not only how recommendations within the study could impact individual communities but also how the recommendations could impact the region as a whole. These documents are as follows:

- **[GHMS Project List \(.xlsx\)](#)**: Table of all projects from the Implementation Plan (Appendix L). Sortable by a variety of attributes including mode, timeline, municipality, and order of magnitude cost. The corresponding page in Appendix J is noted for each project for those interested in viewing project details. **NOTE:** CRCOG staff has questions about the highlighted cells in this table. These questions can be found in the list of comments linked below.
- **[Primary Projects Analysis \(PDF\)](#)**: Table of CRCOG staff's assessment of how the primary long-term projects address (or do not address) the major modal issues and deficiencies identified in CRCOG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as regional priorities related to sustainability and equity.
- **[CRCOG Staff Comments \(PDF\)](#)**: Questions and comments from CRCOG staff that will be submitted to CTDOT and the GHMS study team for response. **NOTE: *If any Committee members have questions or comments that they would like shared with CTDOT, please send them to Anaka Maher at amaher@crcog.org by March 4.***

CRCOG staff will prepare a draft resolution of support for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study to be reviewed by the Transportation Committee at its meeting on March 25. This resolution will be modified as needed based on Committee input and will be brought to the Policy Board for action.

**Greater Hartford Mobility Study
MPO COG COMMENTS
Updated 4/17/2024**

#	Project/Program	Comment	CTDOT response
1	Main Street Complete Streets, East Hartford	The "Main Street Complete Streets, East Hartford" project (Early Action) appears in the Implementation Plan but is not in Appendix J. It would be helpful to have more details about this project. "Complete Pedestrian Facilities along Main Street, East Hartford" does appear in both the Implementation Plan and Appendix J, but it is unclear if this is a separate project or was combined with the Complete Streets item.	"Main Street Complete Streets, East Hartford" was developed in response to a request from the Town after the publication of Appendix J. The Department's PDU is administering this project and coordinating with the Town. "Complete Ped.... Main Street, East Hartford" refers to the segment of Main Street west of Route 5, which becomes Ellington Road. This section on Main Street does not have sidewalks despite reasonable transit ridership. It is about .5 to 1 mile north of the limits for Main Street - Complete Streets.
2	Station Parking Redevelopment to Further Support TOD	Appendix J notes that this Early Action item was "combined with the Bus alternative." It's unclear which project this is referencing. Please clarify	This refers to Support for TOD (Rail and Bus) listed in the Bus Alternatives.
3	Reconfigure Off-Street Parking	The Implementation Plan notes that CRCOG is the Sponsor for "Reconfigure Off-Street Parking" in Hartford. This appears to be an error and should be corrected to the City of Hartford to align with Appendix J.	Noted.
4	Regional Traffic Calming Framework	This Early Action item is listed in the Implementation Plan but does not appear in Appendix J. It would be helpful to have more details about this project or clarification if it appears as a subset of a different project in Appendix J.	This recommendation was inadvertently omitted from Appendix J.
5	Route 5/15 (Berlin Turnpike) Bike and Pedestrian Facilities	We were surprised that this project from Appendix J was not included in the Implementation Plan. Please confirm if this was an error or supply rationale for its exclusion. CRCOG is pursuing a RAISE Planning Grant for this project with the support of CTDOT.	This recommendation was inadvertently omitted from the Implementation Plan.
6	General	It would be very helpful to have a clearer understanding of the relationship between the projects described in Appendix J and the projects included in the Implementation Plan. Please provide a list of all projects from Appendix J and their outcome (included for implementation, excluded, combined with another project, etc.). It will be important for our municipalities to understand not only what projects are included for them but also which are not being moved forward (and why).	This will be provided.
7	General	The names, the projects included, the interdependencies between projects, and the study areas of the four core components (City Link West, City Link East, River Gateway, Founders Gateway) change between Appendix J and the PEL Report. Clarity and consistency in what is included in the four core components would be helpful.	This will be provided.
8	General	The capital costs of each of the four core projects should be shown, with a breakdown of what portion of costs go to the individual projects.	Programs overlap and costs are most accurately represented in overall figure
9	General	Appendix J should contain a clear listing of numerical performance measures (costs and benefits) of each project such as: Level of Service, VHT, VMT, and ROW acreage. Recommend a table format, similar to the attached document, even if performance measures are qualitative.	The model wasn't run for each project in Appendix J. The GHMS team will work to summarize programmatic KPIs from Appendix K in a more comprehensive manner to provide a more quantitative assessment of the recommendations.
10	Hartford Rail Viaduct Realignment and/or Reconstruction	The potential benefits to regional rail service that could be seen by adding double tracking through Hartford seem to be under-emphasized in the study documents. It would be beneficial to emphasize and expand upon the benefits that this project could have for regional rail. Additionally, it should be labelled clearly as a part of City Link West in Appendix J.	This is consistent with feedback received at the East Hartford public meeting. We can strategically revise the report and Appendix J to strengthen discussion of these.
11	I-84/I-91 Interchange Relocation	In Appendix J the "I-84/I-91 Interchange Relocation Project" is identified on page cxiii with the note that "This alternative has been further divided into City Link, City Link East, and I-84/Route 2 Interchange Improvements, with independent detailed documentation." However there does not seem to be additional detail on the interchange under any of these categories. It would be helpful to have more details about this project and on what configurations are being considered for this interchange.	This will be provided via Appendix J.
12	City Link West	CTfastrak realignment is mentioned and included in mockup illustrations alongside the lowering of I-84 and the realignment of the Hartford Rail Viaduct. However, the alignment is inconsistent between the mockup images on pages 36-37 and 62-63 in the PEL Report and there is no detail on what options were explored for this potential realignment in Appendix J: Alternatives Screening. Alternatives for CTfastrak realignment should be detailed in the documents, particularly in Appendix J.	Clarification on the disposition of CTfastrak will be added in Appendix J, with additional reference in the report and Appendix L.
13	City Link East	Mockup images in the PEL Report for Walnut Street (pg 42-43), and Albany Avenue (pg 44-45) do not include bicycle facilities, and the Bulkeley Bridge (pg 46-47) appears to show an on-street, unprotected bicycle facility. If this represents the actual recommendation, provide details on why as it seems to be contrary to CRCOG's Complete Streets Plan and the study goal to "provide multi-modal choices for safe and reliable transportation" (PEL Report, pg 26).	The renderings will be revised to meet the recommendations of the CRCOG CS plan.
14	Cap I-91, Hartford	Draft images in the PEL Report and Appendix J show the I-91 cap as approximately 1 mile long, starting just south of the Whitehead Highway and extending north to the Riverside Park Overpass. We ask that in the upcoming NEPA phase to not limit the extent of the capping to these boundaries and to explore potential for a longer cap on I-91.	Noted.
15	General	A member comment from the March 2024 CRCOG Transportation Committee Meeting is that there should be consideration of how an equal expenditure on mass transit would benefit the region. What would that do for the region and what would that provide? While the GHMS plan does a lot for transit and it does a lot for mobility, it still relies on a bus system in this region that may not be the best form of transit that will allow us to compete with all the other regions in the country.	Noted. GHMS reviewed alternative transit modes to bus in several corridors and found that the lack of land use density within the region is a barrier to cost-effective heavy transit.
16	Bulkeley Bridge	A member comment from the March 2024 CRCOG Transportation Committee Meeting is that with the large amount of space that could be reclaimed from the Bulkeley Bridge, there could be an opportunity to add a light rail connection that would provide more types of transit options to our region. It seems like as a country we're really far behind in transit options. Transit would be more applicable than bike ped components for people traveling long distance.	The recommendations include a proposed dedicated transit facility across the Bulkeley Bridge.
17	Enhance Airport Service along CTtransit Route #30, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Expansion: North Corridor	A member comment from the March 2024 CRCOG Transportation Committee Meeting is that there needs to be a direct, relatively high speed, transit link between Downtown Hartford and the Bradley International Airport. There isn't a region that's progressive and active in the world that isn't putting a direct, non-automobile link between its center and its major airport. Both for the benefit of Bradley and the benefit of Hartford and the region.	This option has been discussed and analyzed within the study. Based on the unique catchment area and regional land use, the effectiveness of such a connection would be limited. Effective improvements to the bus service, including the North Corridor BRT recommendations, combined with the new Hartford Line connections represent a more cost-effective version that better serves all users of the airport. Notably, many lower income residents of North Hartford that work in and around the airport. This is another example where the routing flexibility of BRT provides a more cost effective option to light rail.

**CRCOG Staff Comments on Greater Hartford Mobility Study (03/25/2024):
Alignment with Major Deficiencies and Goals from Metropolitan Transportation Plan
and Regional Sustainability and Equity Priorities**

Color Key:

Substantial Benefit	Moderate Benefit	Neutral	Negative Impact	Not Applicable
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Core Component		City Link East			City Link West		River Gateway			Founders Gateway	Full Build
		I-91/Route 2 Direct Connection	Bulkeley Bridge Conversion	I-84/I-91 Interchange Relocation - Northern Alignment	I-84 Hartford - Lowered Highway	Hartford Rail Viaduct Realignment and/or Reconstruction	New Connecticut River Bridge - Charter Oak Avenue & East River Drive	Relocate Whitehead Highway	Cap I-91, Hartford	I-84/Route 2 Interchange Improvements	
Goal											
Highways	Reduce Fatalities	Improved operations and direct path would reduce risk of fatalities	Complete streets design on bridge would have improved safety for all users	Redesign will improve traffic safety	Redesign will improve traffic safety		Provides an additional local traffic crossing option which could relieve congestion and create slightly safer driving conditions. Prioritizing safety and complete streets in the design	Will improve safety at Pulaski Circle	Potential for crashes to increase in enclosed/dark area. Potential for increase in difficulty for emergency response and increase in hazardous materials incidents.	Improvements in traffic operations will lead to increased safety	
	Update Aging Bridge Infrastructure	New bridge, doesn't involve aging bridges	Upgrades bridge functionality but not structural infrastructure	Updates infrastructure, particularly "I-84 EB EXIT NO. 51" bridge which is in poor condition	Updates infrastructure. Allows for elimination of aging I-84 viaduct through Hartford	Will replace rail bridge over Asylum Ave	Creates a new bridge which provides redundancy in river crossings. There are two fair/poor condition bridges near the west base of this bridge-maybe potential to include upgrades		The portion of I-91 over the Dutch Point Viaduct already has an ongoing project that will repair this section.	Opportunity to make any necessary repairs and remove unneeded infrastructure	
	Reduce Freeway Congestion	Main outcome of this project	Reduces congestion for those traveling between Hartford/East Hartford	Better design and operations will reduce congestion	Better design and operations will reduce congestion	New rail station paired with access to the northern side of I-84 will increase use of passenger rail and move some vehicles off the highway		Local traffic will be able to avoid congested freeways by using this crossing	Will not substantially impact freeway congestion	Will not reduce congestion, continues to support same level of freeway travel	Will create more separation between local and through traffic, providing less congestion for all vehicles
Transit and Rail	Improve Regional Rail Connectivity				Supports the potential rail realignment.	Will allow for higher speeds and double tracking. Moving the station away from Downtown to the other side of the highway will decrease local connection to the station.					
	Enhance Crosstown Bus Service	Direct bus connection between Hartford/East Hartford		Will allow for better transit connections through the old intersection location, but would create a new area unfriendly to transit where the interchange would be moved to. The lowered highway is necessary to see a positive impact on transit through the project area	Will improve north-south connections across the lowered I-84. Supports the expansion of CTfastrak east		Will facilitate a new local bus connection across the river	Limited effect on transit	Capping I-91 opens up space for a north/south waterfront bus line	Opportunity to expand CTfastrak east	
	Need for expanded Service Span, Frequency, and Coverage	Potential for high frequency/service area transit and expansion of CTfastrak east				Will improve rail frequency through Hartford				Limited effect on transit	
	Opportunities for Flexible Service	Easier access across the Connecticut River will support all mobility choices			Easier access across I-84 will support all mobility choices. Mentions creating dedicated space for MaaS options	Will create dedicated space for MaaS options in new station					
	Focused Improvements in Priority Corridors	Supports transit mobility along the Burnside Priority Corridor		If not lowered, the new alignment of I-84 would cut off access along the Albany/Blue Hills and Main/Windsor priority corridors.	Supports transit mobility along the Farmington Ave corridor over I-84	Rail station connects to major transit corridors and is a regional transit priority	Does not connect directly to Transit Priority Corridors		Will improve multimodal access adjacent to priority corridors	Adjacent to Burnside Priority Corridor, investments will support transit infrastructure	
Freight	Truck Bottleneck at I-84/I-91	Reduced overall congestion will benefit truck bottlenecks nearby	This project would only be done alongside the I-84/I-91 Interchange Relocation as converting this to a local bridge would otherwise be a barrier to east-west mobility.	Better design and operations will reduce congestion	Better design and operations will reduce congestion		Local bridge connection, will not serve freight.		Will not affect operations and congestions	Will support the I-91/Route 2 Direct Connection and I-84/I-91 Interchange Relocation.	
	Last Mile Freight Connections										
	Freight Rail Facility Constraints				Will provide opportunity for rail reconstruction with improved facilities	Will provide opportunity for rail reconstruction with improved facilities					
	Increase Truck Parking/Facilities	No truck facilities included in concept designs		No truck facilities included in concept designs.							

Core Component		City Link East			City Link West		River Gateway			Founders Gateway	Full Build
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Goal											
Complete Streets	Space and Scheduling at Bradley										
	Signal and Sign Improvements		The bridge will be converted to have facilities for all users. Will make a welcoming connection across the CT River for bicyclists/pedestrians/local vehicles.	Opportunity to redesign intersections at the old location and at new ramps for Complete Streets	Creates easier connections over I-84 for all modes, removes current gap in bike/ped network where roads are narrow under the highway crossings. New road sections above I-84 will be designed for Complete Streets.	New rail station will require new facilities and access which incorporate complete streets design principles		Opportunity to modernize and improve design of the Whitehead Highway	Creates space for a new riverfront boulevard which will be built for complete streets and added recreational walking/cycling infrastructure	Opportunity to redesign intersections at ramps to the freeways for Complete Streets	
	Expansion/Improvements to Sidewalks and Bicycle Facilities	The connection will create additional barriers for bicyclists/pedestrians in East Hartford		Without lowering the highway, it will continue to be a barrier to bike and ped infrastructure				Will include non-motorized facilities. Initial plan shows a multiuse path alongside the bridge.	Opportunity to improve bike/ped facilities through Pulaski Circle	The reclaimed space will provide more opportunity for bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure connections in East Hartford	
Airport Access	Close Gaps in Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure						More direct bike/ped access will support multimobility along Silver Lane and connect to the East Coast Greenway.			The interchange will continue to be a barrier to bicycle/pedestrian mobility.	
	Improved Roadway Access	Better connection from Route 2 to the airport	Project doesn't connect to the airport	Ease of movement through I-84 to I-91 could support access to airport, but is not a primary outcome of this project					Project doesn't connect to the airport	Ease of movement through this interchange could support vehicle access to airport, but is not a primary outcome of this project	
	Improved Transit Service										
Sustainability/Equity	Improved Cargo Facilities										
	Reduce GHG Emissions	Continues to support vehicle traffic through the region.	Will provide additional multimodal options and shift emissions away from population centers	Continues to support vehicle traffic through the region. While it may reduce congestion, the longer route may increase VMT.	Improvements will encourage VMT growth even with multimodal improvements	Investment in rail will shift travel away from SOV		Continues to support vehicle traffic through the region. There is limited potential for mode shift	Continues to support vehicle traffic through the region	Continues to support vehicle traffic through the region, with a potential minor increase in VMT.	
	Reconnect Communities	Creates an additional barrier in the northern sides of East Hartford and Hartford	Creates a direct connection between East Hartford and Hartford	Without the lowered highway, will worsen connectivity between North Hartford and Downtown Hartford.	Reconnects neighborhoods divided by I-84 and allows for new development in the area to connect the communities	Will require property takings from low income residents. Need to ensure residents needs are met and station remains locally accessible.		Will improve connection between Hartford and East Hartford and supports investment in East Hartford	Will support the improved connections the proposed new bridge would make	Reconnects Hartford to the Connecticut River	Reclaimed space will improve East Hartford's connection to the riverfront and to Hartford
Sustainability/Equity	Mitigate Environmental Impacts	Creates a new freeway over the Connecticut River, impacting river and riverfront open space	Uses a current bridge, will not have to take additional ROW from natural resources	New interchange will impact the natural resources of the adjacent Riverside Park and the CT River	Area already developed. Does not significantly improve air quality or ongoing environmental impacts. Construction will impact EJ neighborhoods	Area already developed. Does not significantly improve air quality or ongoing environmental impacts. Construction will impact EJ neighborhoods		Construction and new infrastructure will impact the Connecticut River and Great River Park.	Area is already developed. Will not have new environmental impacts	Construction will moderately impact but the surrounding natural resources but is expected to be mitigable	Construction and infrastructure will impact open space areas and riverfront natural resources