Virtual public workshop

# Virtual Public Workshop Summary

# June 11, 2020

# 7:00 – 8:00 PM

## Project Team Attendees: Kristin Hadjstylianos and Todd Fontanella (Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG))

## Marcy Miller, Parker Sorenson, Nick Campbell, Rory Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.)

## Attendees: 25

# Team Introductions and Workshop Format

Marcy Miller introduced the virtual workshop and gave a brief overview of the meeting format, describing the ways in which participants could provide feedback during the workshop. She said that the virtual workshop recording will be posted on WestCOG’s website and will be translated into Spanish and Portuguese. M. Miller introduced the Project Team, explaining that WestCOG is guiding the Study in partnership with the City of Danbury and Town of New Fairfield. Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc. (FHI) is conducting the technical analysis, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is sponsoring the Study.

# Overview of the Study

M. Miller provided a general overview of the Study, reviewing project objectives, community engagement process, and deliverables. She explained that two virtual public workshops are planned for this week, the Existing Conditions Technical memorandum has been submitted, and three Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings will occur during the Study process. The goal of the virtual workshops is to gather feedback from the public to provide recommendations for the Study. Marcy explained that the main goal of the Study is to assess multi-modal transportation options. She emphasized that this is not simply a traffic study.

M. Miller and Parker Sorenson presented an overview of existing conditions findings. They discussed traffic counts, crash data, commuting patterns, and pedestrian and bicycle amenities. Additionally, P. Sorenson described the three distinct segments of the corridor in more detail, including the roadway geometry and pedestrian amenities on each segment. Throughout the discussion of existing conditions, questions were presented to attendees. A summary of the questions and answer discussion is presented on the following pages.

# Questions and Answers

Questions discussed during the workshop included:

1. **Are you surprised that traffic has been stagnant in the corridor?**

Most attendees were surprised, comments are presented below:

* This is probably due to the 2008 recession.
* I am surprised but I have not seen an enormous change.
* Have you or are you going to compare the pattern by month and by day of the week? ***Answer: We have looked at AM, Mid-day, PM, and Weekend peak hour traffic counts which are published by CTDOT.***
1. **Do you agree that the LOS (or traffic delay) in the corridor is acceptable?**In general, most attendees did not feel that traffic delay was acceptable in the corridor. Comments included:
* There are often delays and it is not acceptable many times during the week.
* Surprised that the Golden Hill intersection got a C, since it backs to the middle of the next intersection seems to an outsider that's not passing (e.g.: going south 7:30-9 AM weekdays and weekend midday) Other than that - yes acceptable in the corridor.
* The summer months tend to be difficult as are the weekends and during the end of school times with longer wait times. The buses contribute to the issues and the moms say goodbye to kids on the bus.
* Golden Hill Road and Jeanette Street is the most congested.
	+ At morning rush hour, the southbound direction bottle necks after Padanaram Road.
	+ The 3 PM bottle neck is the students with cars, the busses, not so much about kids walking.
	+ Drivers will speed up East Pembroke Road onto Pembroke Terrace avoid traffic delays and congestion.
	+ The condition is not acceptable.
1. **Do you have ideas on how to improve pedestrian safety in the corridor? Where should these be?**

Most attendees felt pedestrian improvements were needed in the corridor, particularly in the area near Golden Hill Road to accommodate foot traffic from students. Ideas included:

* CVS opposite Golden Hill Road is the most convenient store for Danbury High School. Better pedestrian amenities are needed in this area.
* Sidewalks are needed as there are very few in the corridor.
* I've noticed people crossing the street to/from Burger King often, seems dangerous.
* The new project at Stacy Road is accommodating for bike lanes. A sidewalk expansion on the road south of this project will help.
* The senior center in New Fairfield needs a flashing cross walk.
* Kids gather at the Barnum Road area for a school bus and there is no lighting.
* Even if certain areas are not crossed often, elaborate crosswalks may help drivers pay more attention as these are busy areas.
1. **Do you support a trail around the Margerie Lake Reservoir?**Most attendees were strongly in favor of a trail around the Reservoir. Comments included:
* Yes, we want it. It is a quality of life issue. It will encourage walking and will link Danbury and New Fairfield.
* Yes. I want the trail. It would be great!
* Yes on the trail, the neighbors have wanted it for 16 years now!
* You have Bear Mountain in the area that leads to Candlewood why spend the money? It doesn’t seem practical.
* Yes, a safe place to walk and run.
* A trail would be great - it would need to have a place to park and easy access.
* We have had strong input from the New Fairfield town officials who have supported its development.
* A bike lane along Route 37 would be nice with pedestrian access.
1. **Where should the trail go? Should this trail be located closer to the Reservoir or closer to Route 37?**In general, most attendees believed that the trail should be located along the Reservoir if possible. Individual comments included:
* Trail should be along the reservoir - bicyclists may be able to use it for safer transit and hikers can get out and enjoy.
* Closer to the Reservoir to capture the beauty x2.
* I think it would be nice to see a trail there if there is adequate parking. By the Reservoir would seem to make more sense.
* Closer to the Reservoir and the Connecticut Department of Health likes the idea.
* Close to water would be better, but not as practical.
* The road noise to users on a trail adjacent to Route 37 option would be significant. It would not be a pleasant walk. ***Answer: M. Miller agreed that yes, road noise would be a factor if it were located near the road.***
* If it can be nearer the Reservoir, it will then be attractive to walk on. If it is close to the road, cannot walk and talk.
1. **Does parking need to be included if a trail is constructed? If yes, where should it be located?**Attendees believed that yes, parking should be included. Ideas for suitable locations included:
* Parking on Peck Road near dog park may work.
* Park near Good Shephard.
* Parking could be located near the Bear Mountain Road intersection.
* It will have to be close to the road in the southern area where there is less green space. Also, there is parking in New Fairfield and also south of the Reservoir on what looks like Reservoir land.

# Other Comments and Discussion

The following comments were submitted in the Question + Answer pane:

* Exit 6 and Stacey Road is dangerous, lots of competing interest.
* People are fatigued by construction, any recommendations should include things that are truly needed, not just another project and disruption. The benefits should outweigh the short-term delays/annoyances.
* Regarding the trail along the Reservoir: Margerie Lake Reservoir is a drinking water supply. How would you ensure that your suggestion does impact water quality? ***Answer: Appropriate permits would need to be taken out with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environment as well as health departments and others if the trail moved forward.***
* Passive recreation is the best for all. You can park at the dog park in Danbury at the base of the Reservoir. and the city of Danbury owns the land around the Reservoir.
* I don't know how best to do it, but I definitely would like to serve walkers and bicyclists as much as possible.
* Do you have a ranking of Crash locations? Where do you have the most?***Answer: The highest crash volumes are located in the southern end of the Study Area near the I-84 interchange. This is the location with the greatest number of intersections, curb cuts, and highest traffic volumes so therefore it is not surprising that this area sees the highest number of crashes.***
* I suggested that Barnum continue on to Stacey and utilize the traffic control signal. We were told that was not doable because that area is wetlands. They did it anyway and spent a ton of money trucking all the fill in and only to be removed at the end of the contract. There will be 2 bottlenecks 1 at Stacey and 1 at Barnum.
* The trail needs to have CTDOT fix the storm drains on 37 as that dump in the Reservoir and the trail could provide a buffer.
* Thank you for taking the time to do this. It was very informative. I hope people keep open minds as it is clear this has nothing to do with past or present construction, which is understandably a sensitive item for those in the area. It was clear that this study was very much separate and encompassing from I-84 into New Fairfield. Thanks again.
* The trail can be used as a way for people to walk to downtown New Fairfield businesses.
* I like this platform. It allows me to jump on, even if I have another meeting that bumps up to it. Thank you for presenting.
* Will contact Todd Fontanella, would also be great to sign up on the website for regular email updates.
* Concerned by lack of sidewalks in Danbury near the Condos as your photo depicts.
* My family has lived on Pembroke Terrace since 1955 and agreed regarding my suggestion of one light one intersection to eliminate the backups.
* So, let me ask why does the DOT have public hearings and takes absolutely no input from the public?
* Why did the DOT state at the public hearings NO DETOURS yet the commercial traffic is horrendous within the residential street, East Pembroke, Pembroke Terrace?
* FYI, I have made it very clear to the state and ponied up with hundreds of neighbors and most are disgusted with the how the state ignored all of the input. So the state senator and the state representative are also not pleased with the performance and the activities in the general construction area. The state does what the state wants to do. It is not a good feeling when common sense is not considered. I am very frustrated as you can see, living here and seeing what is unfolding....bill.katzing@gmail.com FYI to get in touch with me. I'd love to hear from someone. I have another commitment. I can fill your ears trust me.

# Discussion of Stakeholder Input to Date and Next Steps

M. Miller summarized several items that the Project Team has heard to date from stakeholders in the Study Area. She said that business owners and residents are fatigued by the ongoing construction, so future recommendations should be mindful of this and should truly be needed. Additionally, congestion at peak times of the day is problematic in the corridor and has been exacerbated by the ongoing construction. Beautification of the corridor, especially around New Fairfield Center is desired. A multi-use path around the Margerie Lake Reservoir would benefit the Candlewood Valley Land Trust and residents in the area.

She closed the meeting by presenting the project’s next steps. These include drafting transportation improvement alternatives, a preliminary report and concept plan, a final report, and public presentation.