

Norwalk Route 1 Corridor Master Plan Study

Public Meeting #1 Summary

May 20, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm

Jefferson Elementary School

The meeting began with a presentation led by Mayor Harry Rilling, Jim Travers (Director, Transportation, Mobility and Parking), Garrett Bolella (Assistant Director, Transportation, Mobility and Parking), and Michael Ahillen (Project Manager, FHI Studio). The project team includes the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), the City of Norwalk, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). FHI Studio is the prime consultant. The project team provided an overview of the study area, which centers on Route 1 (Connecticut Avenue/Van Buren Avenue). They also discussed the planning context, project approach, upcoming engagement, and vision and goals. They encouraged ongoing participation and emphasized the importance of public feedback at the meeting.

Following the presentation, participants joined breakout tables for the following topics:

- Bicycle & Pedestrian
- Transit & Congestion
- Land Use, Aesthetics & Environment
- Economic Development & Business

Feedback Summary

The first public engagement meeting for the Norwalk Route 1 Corridor Master Plan Study highlighted several key concerns from residents and stakeholders. The Scribner Avenue and Richards Avenue intersections emerged as safety concerns from all table discussions.

Bicycle & Pedestrian

- Participants emphasized the need for better sidewalk and pedestrian facilities, especially near schools and bus stops. They cited a lack of continuous sidewalks, unsafe or missing crossings, and a challenging environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Suggested improvements include redesigned intersections, traffic calming measures, and reduced speed limits to enhance pedestrian safety.
- A participant highlighted the concept of transforming the current “stroad” (a street-road hybrid) into a more pedestrian-friendly boulevard. The current perception of the corridor as a fast road rather than a conducive street for urban activities was a recurring theme among participants.
- Biking infrastructure was a significant concern, with many participants expressing a desire for protected bike lanes and safer biking conditions.
- Participants suggested aggressive driving and speeding are common.
- Suggestions included building wider protected, grade-separated bike paths, reducing speed limits, and installing more bike racks and facilities.

- Concerns were raised about the lack of school zone signs and crosswalks near Jefferson Elementary School, and the need for better traffic signal coordination to accommodate cyclists.

Transit & Congestion

- Bus stop accessibility and signage were also highlighted, with calls for improved sidewalks, more visible bus signs, and improved bus shelters and benches.
- One participant suggested that neighborhood buses should not use Route 1 and instead should operate in South Norwalk, West Avenue, Wall Street, and Route 7.
- Participants noted that the layout of lots, including those along Route 1, often hindered transit access due to setbacks.
- Traffic congestion and safety concerns were prominent, especially around school zones and major intersections in the morning and afternoon and on weekends specifically at Scribner, Taylor, and Grandview. There were suggestions for better traffic signal coordination.
- A representative from Jefferson Elementary School noted that about 220 students arrive by car, 60 walk, and 42 ride the bus. About 100 employees drive and four take the bus.
- The elementary school opens earlier than any other school (7:30 a.m.) to mitigate congestion. There is back up at Bedford 7:30 to 8:20 a.m. and 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on school days.

Land Use, Aesthetics & Environment

- There is a strong interest in more green infrastructure, trees, and green spaces to mitigate the visual impact of concrete and asphalt. These elements could improve stormwater management and reduce the urban heat island effect as well.
- Participants raised concerns about overhead utilities being unsightly, which led to suggestions for putting utilities underground.
- Parking was another significant issue, with comments about the excessive amount of parking, the heat island effect from large parking lots, and the need for better layouts and shared parking solutions.
- Participants requested that new developments be closer to the street with better curb cuts.

Economic Development & Business

- Economic and business discussions centered on the importance of creating a conducive environment for shopping, and the need for a diverse mix of amenities within walking distance, improved access points to properties, and the integration of mixed-use developments.
- Affordability for workers was a concern, with many having to commute from outside Norwalk.
- A participant noted that there are vacant offices.
- There is a need for more engaging activities and destinations along the corridor







