

NORWALK RT 1 CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN STUDY

Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting 2

September 10, 2024

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Microsoft Teams

Attendees

- City of Norwalk Transportation, Mobility, and Parking (TMP): Jim Travers, Garrett Bolella, Kyle Benjamin
- City of Norwalk Planning & Zoning: Bryan Baker
- City of Norwalk Parking: Bryan Lutz
- Norwalk Transit District (NTD): Matt Pentz
- CTDOT Planning: Josh Lecar, Kieran Lohman De Savornin
- CTDOT Project Development Unit: Shraddha Joshi, Andrew Correia
- CTDOT Strategic Planning: Heba Naqvi
- CTDOT Traffic Operations: Ethan Donecker
- WestCOG: Kristin Hadjstylianios, Kristin Floberg, Amal Malik
- FHI Studio: Michael Ahillen, Hannah Brockhaus

Meeting Summary

Kristin Floberg from the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) opened the meeting, thanking the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) for their attendance. Michael Ahillen (FHI Studio) introduced the members of the consultant team and led the presentation, which included the following topics.

- Engagement Summary
- Vision, Goals, and Valuation Criteria
- Existing Conditions Findings
- Discussion: Issues and Opportunities
- Next Steps

For further detail on the material shared, refer to the presentation. This document summarizes the discussion.

Engagement Discussion

- Matt Pentz (Norwalk Transit District) acknowledged the need for bus stop amenities along the corridor. He stated that the bench in the photo was installed by local advocates. He also noted that the Comprehensive Operational Assessment (COA) is moving ahead and the team is currently developing service standards.
- Representatives from the City TMP Department stated that several businesses noted the lack of alignment between transit schedule and their hours of operation, i.e. transit service ends

at 10:00pm, the store closes at 9:30pm and store recovery and reset would typically occur after closing time. WestCOG and TMP staff also noted that people driving the corridor even made comments about the need for pedestrian crossing improvements and infrastructure along the corridor.

Evaluation Criteria Discussion

- TMP suggested removing the distinction of reducing conflict points *at intersections only*.
- Jim Travers of TMP suggested that there may be a benefit to adding an evaluation criteria specifically focusing on optimizing the road space on the corridor – not expansion or shrinking of the road but rather using it as efficiently as possible.
- Representatives of TMP also noted that it is important to take a comprehensive look at the corridor, since various improvements that have been made over the last several years have been piecemeal based on traffic impact studies.
- Aligning with the safety goal, Garrett Bolella of TMP discussed the need to improve the perception of safety, specifically highlighting a lack of pedestrian lighting, the need for crosswalks, and the impact these have on the comfort of using the corridor as a pedestrian.
- Jim Travers suggested that the evaluation criteria should focus on the aesthetics of the corridor more. Hannah Brockhaus suggested that instead of focusing the aesthetics-related goal on the gateway to Norwalk, it should be corridor-wide. Jim noted the importance of an amenity zone for this discussion.
- Josh Lecar noted his suggestion from the previous meeting to consider designating pockets of pedestrian activity along the corridor to concentrate amenities that lead to a more attractive and comfortable environment. He suggested this may be a more achievable goal rather than distributing amenities along the full 2.9 mile corridor.
- Kristin Floberg of WestCOG suggested that language of community and belonging for alternative mode users might be added to speak to the desire for pedestrian-friendly spaces, in addition to attractive and pleasant gathering spaces.

Existing Conditions Discussion

- Jim Travers noted that although the intersection-wide segment delay is fairly good, there are individual movement concerns that this mapping hides. Marissa Tarallo acknowledged that there are over a dozen individual movements with delay, and the team is considering ways to highlight the more nuanced performance measures for the public. She also noted that overall travel time is not accounted for to date. The queueing analysis also shows several locations where queues do not clear at the signal. Moreover, she described the impact of short signal phases on these performance measures. Signals for this type of corridor are typically 120 seconds, versus many on the corridor are only 80 seconds. Another key item impacting operations is the pedestrian crossing time. Most signals on the corridor are not timed for automatic recall, and this means that when the pedestrian button is activated the traffic signal is disrupted. Large and skewed intersections can also contribute to poor operations. During the next phase of the study the team will think about the level of pedestrian growth that can be expected, and appropriately accounting for that within the signal timing.

- Matt Pentz agreed that there is a need for amenities on the corridor. He asked what next steps are, and if NTD could proceed with installation of improvements. He noted that the Comprehensive Operational Assessment (COA) is moving ahead and currently developing service standards for amenities. Michael Ahillen responded that a balance to be, because we do not want to install something which might eventually need to be moved in coordination with a bus priority measure. Responding to a follow up question from Matt Pentz, Bryan Baker of Planning & Zoning said that he has a contact for Target to share.

Issues and Opportunities Discussion

The following issues and opportunities were suggested:

- Signal timing can be adjusted to assist in realignment of the right-of-way for efficient use of the corridor. It was noted that unnecessary turn pockets can work really well for a transit queue jump.
- Delay for pedestrians causes frustration and can lead to safety issues when people run across without green pedestrian signal.
- Limit new curb cuts and improve access management and retrofit parcels to provide better multimodal access to the area.
- Completing the sidewalk network, and remove barriers to accessibility such as obstructions in the crosswalk and wheelchair limitations.