



**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Division of Highway Design**

MEETING MINUTES

Project No.: 151-331
 Project Name: Reconstruction of Interstate 84/CT Route 8 Interchange (the Project)
 Date of Meeting: May 23, 2022 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
 Location of Meeting: Zoom Teleconference
 Subject of Meeting: New Mix Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting No. 3C

Attendees:

PAC Members	
Name	Organization
David Simpson	City of Waterbury Department of Public Works
Clifford Brammer III	City of Waterbury Planning Department
Robert Nerney	City of Waterbury Planning Department
Maria Vaccarelli	CTtransit Waterbury
Martin Begnal	Friends of Riverside Cemetery
Brian Peterson	Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Julia Rogers	Housatonic Valley Association (HVA)
Dana Elm	Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC)
Mark Nielsen	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
Ken Stanco	Office of the Mayor
Stephanie Valickis	Saint Mary's Hospital
Joseph McGrath	Waterbury Economic Development
Arthur Denze Sr.	Waterbury Neighborhood Council
Martin Spring	Waterville Community Club
Tomas Olivo Valentin	Working Cities Challenge

Project Team	
Name	Organization
Michael Calabrese	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
Nilesh Patel	CTDOT
Scott Roberts	CTDOT
Jonathan Dean	CTDOT
Joe Belrose	CTDOT
Kevin Fleming	CTDOT
Consultant Team	
Jacob Argiro	HNTB
David Schweitzer	HNTB
Christopher Fagan	HNTB
Naomi Hodges	HNTB
Katie Theis	HNTB

Distribution: All Attendees

1. Meeting Purpose

The New Mix Project Team (Project Team) provided an opportunity for PAC members to ask the Project Team questions regarding the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study's (the Study) Universe of Alternatives (UOA) and introduced the Study's Level 1 screening criteria. *PAC members were polled with regard to which alternatives PAC Members are interested in seeing with visualization and with more explanation. PAC members were asked to pick up to three alternatives. Poll results are provided at the end of this report of meeting as an appendix.*

2. New Mix PEL Study Project Advisory Committee Meeting Presentation

A. Project Advisory Committee Meeting No. 3C Summary

- a. Alternative No. 18 (Modern Crossover Interchange) was presented in detail as an example for the PAC. An open discussion of the UOA followed. *PAC Members were provided a package with graphics and descriptions of all alternatives within the UOA to review ahead of PAC Meeting No. 3C.*
- b. Presentation of the Level 1 screening criteria to the PAC.
 - i. Introduced draft *PEL Process Alternative Screening Methodology* document.
- c. General questions and discussion.

B. Questions and Comments on the Presentation and New Mix

The following questions and comments were received during the PAC Meeting No. 3C presentation.

- Mark Nielsen (NVCOG, Assistant Director) inquired about how extensive the improvements would be to the frontage road system that parallels Route 8 (south of I-84) and expressed concern with the potential relocation of Exit 30 as shown in the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative. Mr. Nielsen mentioned that the existing frontage roads, South Leonard Street (one way northbound) and Charles Street (one way southbound), go through active neighborhoods and commercial areas located within Waterbury's Brooklyn neighborhood. With changes to Exit 30's interchange spacing, additional traffic could be added to already congested streets. Mr. Nielsen also expressed concerns with existing detours on Route 8 Northbound and Route 8 Southbound and is of the opinion that the detours have led to an increase in delays, heavy truck traffic, and conflicts with the low clearance railroad bridges in this region. Mr. Nielsen expressed concern with the potential for acquisitions of businesses and homes along Charles Street and South Leonard Street as both streets are nearly fully developed. David Schweitzer (HNTB, Deputy Project Manager) responded that the Project Team acknowledges these concerns and aims to minimize land acquisitions where possible. The Project Team aims to improve access to, not remove, these existing homes and businesses as practicable. Mr. Schweitzer added that the Project is in its preliminary planning stage and that Mr. Nielsen's concerns regarding potential impacts to Waterbury's residential neighborhoods will be taken into consideration as the PEL Study progresses and further evaluated during the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) phase of the Project. Presently, the Project Team is analyzing ways to improve interchange spacing that would require minimal land acquisitions. If the Project Team determines that it is

unable to improve the frontage roads, other processes and alternatives would need to be further reviewed.

- Martin Begnal (Friends of Riverside Cemetery, President) remarked that Riverside Cemetery views alternatives that move Route 8 east of the Naugatuck River as desirable. Mr. Begnal also asked about the configuration of Route 8 within the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative. Mr. Schweitzer responded that this alternative would consist of unstacking Route 8 so that the structures are positioned approximately at the same elevation as existing Route 8 Southbound. Mr. Begnal asked what the Project Team envisions for the Naugatuck River Greenway (the Greenway) within the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative. Mr. Schweitzer responded that the Project Team is evaluating potential alignment options for the Greenway such as constructing it west of the Naugatuck River. Mr. Begnal noted that Riverside Cemetery would view this location as favorable for the Greenway. Ms. Hodges added that the Project Team must consider elements of the local context, such as the Greenway, when screening the UOA. Additionally, while alternatives are expected to be dismissed through the screening process, favorable features of dismissed alternatives that are compatible with alternatives that advance through this process could be incorporated into the advancing alternatives as complementary features as practicable.
- Dana Elm (NVCC, Interim Dean of Administration) asked for the Project Team to describe the conceptual changes to Exit 18 within the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative in more detail. Mr. Schweitzer explained that the existing Exit 18 is a five-legged service interchange that is tightly spaced near the core of the Mixmaster. The configuration of Exit 18 has created conflicts for vehicles traveling along I-84 Eastbound and Westbound due to the limited spacing for weaving maneuvers across several lanes. With adherence to current industry interchange spacing guidelines, the Project Team has considered moving Exit 18 further west to create proper spacing between existing Exit 18 and Exit 17. The increase in interchange spacing would allow for proper spacing of signage, merges, weaves, and diverges between both exits. Mr. Schweitzer noted that Exit 18's I-84 Westbound entrance and exit ramps would be relocated on Chase Parkway, opposite of NVCC. Exit 18's I-84 Eastbound entrance and exit ramps would be relocated opposite of Country Club Road. This reconfiguration of Exit 18's I-84 Eastbound entrance and exit ramps would impact some properties but could provide proper interchange spacing along I-84, which could produce better traffic operations and safer driving conditions. Ms. Hodges added that the feasibility of moving Exit 18 is under review. As these are conceptual ideas, the PAC was reminded that the reconfiguration of Exit 18 is being evaluated and is not final.
- Julia Rogers (HVA, Senior Land Protection Manager) asked what will occur after the UOA is presented to the PAC and inquired about when the public would see the UOA. Ms. Hodges responded that after the UOA is presented to the PAC and the PAC has provided feedback on Level 1 evaluation criteria, the Project Team will begin to preliminarily screen alternatives through the first level of screening. This screening will be preliminary as the perspective of the public as well as input from both Federal and State agencies is required before decisions are finalized. As far as the dissemination of

information, the PAC is ahead of the public as the PAC informs the Project Team's approach to presenting the PEL Study and the Project's progress to the public. With regard to the public process, the first public meeting will cover the information presented through PAC milestones 1 and 2. The topics covered under PAC milestone 3 are anticipated to be presented to the public at the second public meeting. At all public meetings, members of the public will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

- Mr. Nielsen noted he felt that Waterbury's City officials would not be in favor of alternatives that relocate I-84, such as the Washington Street Bypass and South City Bypass. As the Mixmaster has disconnected Waterbury into four quadrants, adding another interstate within Waterbury could result in further division. Mr. Nielsen also expressed concerns with the Route 8 Boulevard alternative's conceptual design, which features utilization of traffic signals on Route 8. Mr. Nielsen expressed that he does not view the Route 8 Boulevard alternative as favorable, as it is likely to create similar operational issues that other CTDOT State Projects are correcting by removing signalizations from the highway, i.e., the CTDOT projects located along Route 9 in Middletown. Ms. Hodges thanked Mr. Nielsen for his input and assured him that the Project Team has also considered the concerns Mr. Nielsen has broached. As part of the PEL Study, the Project Team must consider all alternatives and screen them as part of identifying the Range of Reasonable Alternatives. As the screening process progresses, the Project Team anticipates that several alternatives will be deemed unfeasible or fatally flawed.
- Arthur Denze Sr. (Waterbury Neighborhood Council, President) asked if the design of the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative would result in a change to the Mixmaster's elevation. Mr. Schweitzer responded that Route 8 would be at the same level as existing Route 8 Southbound, and I-84 would be at the level of existing I-84 Westbound. Some ramps may need to be elevated above I-84, but the Mixmaster's elevation as designed in the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative would predominantly be lower than existing. Mr. Denze noted that the Modern Crossover Interchange alternative would necessitate the Mixmaster's footprint to be wider than existing conditions. Mr. Schweitzer confirmed that would be the case in instances where the Mixmaster is unstacked. The Project Team is considering alternatives that are unstacked because the maintenance and upkeep for stacked structures is extensive and costly. Mr. Denze asked if a wider footprint would necessitate land and property acquisitions and Mr. Schweitzer confirmed that a wider footprint would likely necessitate parcel acquisitions.
- Ken Stanco (Office of the Mayor, Project Liaison) asked if the Project would impact the existing rail system south of Union Station. Mr. Schweitzer responded that the existing rail system has been taken into consideration as part of the creation of conceptual alternatives. As the railroad is elevated along Meadow Street, the Project Team conducted a study to assess the feasibility of placing the proposed east and west frontage roads under the existing railroad. In this instance, Meadow Street would be lowered to intersect with these proposed frontage roads. This feasibility study involved analyzing

the types of bridges that could provide proper vertical clearance for vehicles passing underneath the railroad while also remaining cognizant of the area being within the floodplain of the Naugatuck River. Mr. Stanco thanked Mr. Schweitzer and noted that there are plans to upgrade this system in the future, potentially adding an additional rail line.

- Martin Spring (Waterville Community Club, President) expressed concern for the safety of drivers utilizing the Mixmaster. Mr. Spring provided anecdotal experiences with regards to frequent crashes on I-84 Eastbound and Westbound within the Study Area. Mr. Spring also expressed concern for the safety of construction workers contending with high-speed vehicles, dangerous weaving conditions, and large volumes of tractor trailers in close proximity to work zones. Ms. Hodges responded that the Project Team is analyzing ways to improve safety and to reduce the crash rate along the Mixmaster. Safety remains an important consideration for the Project Team throughout this PEL Study process and future processes as well.
- Stephanie Valickis (Saint Mary's Hospital, Media Relations/Communications Specialist) noted she found it difficult to determine which of the alternatives within the UOA may or may not impact access to the St Mary's Hospital, highlighting that any alternative that impedes travel for emergency medical services (EMS), patients or hospital staff to the hospital would be of concern. Ms. Valickis asked the Project Team to consider any impacts on travel to Waterbury's hospitals throughout the screening process. Mr. Schweitzer assured Ms. Valickis that maintaining efficient and timely access to Waterbury's hospitals is a high priority to the Project Team. Nilesh Patel (CTDOT, Principal Engineer) encouraged Ms. Valickis to contact the Project Team with any insight into operations or areas that EMS may view as of concern. Ms. Valickis responded that she would connect with Saint Mary's Hospital's ambulance partners and follow up with the Project Team with any feedback received. Mr. Schweitzer added that elements of the Mixmaster that the Project aims to improve could make it safer and easier to access Waterbury's hospitals. Scott Roberts (CTDOT, Project Manager) also reiterated that the UOA's alternatives are presently high-level conceptual designs and will be further refined as the PEL Study progresses and throughout the NEPA processes. While the PEL study will result in identifying a Range of Reasonable Alternatives to move into the NEPA process, these potential solutions will still necessitate further refinement and improvement to accommodate the input received through public outreach.
 - After the meeting, Ms. Valickis communicated to the Project Team that St. Mary's Hospital's Director of EMS identified two concerns regarding the New Mix: (1) the proactive and timely communication of traffic impacts, and (2) the identification of viable/favorable alternate routes for emergency vehicles.
- Ms. Rogers shared that she also found it difficult to assess which of the UOA's alternatives' impacts were of concern. She expressed that she is hopeful that as alternatives begin to get screened out of the PEL Study, these impacts could be better understood, and thus PAC members, the public, and other agencies can more clearly see which alternatives have potential impacts that are of concern. Ms. Hodges acknowledged

the present quantity of alternatives within the UOA could make review of the UOA's alternatives challenging. Ms. Hodges assured PAC members that as the screening process progresses, the alternatives' impacts would become clearer. With each level of screening, documents will be produced detailing why alternatives advance while others are dismissed. Christopher Fagan (HNTB, Project Engineer) added that as the PEL Study progresses, additional detail with regard to conceptual alternatives will be presented at future PAC meetings and PAC member feedback will be obtained. PAC members will have the opportunity to understand why certain alternatives, due to being fatally flawed or impractical, are dismissed and therefore not evaluated further. The Project Team will also explain why alternatives that were not dismissed have advanced in the PEL Study.

- Mr. Begnal asked the Project Team about ways for stakeholders to stay engaged after the PEL Study. Mr. Begnal continued that he felt that community involvement will be critical in future phases as more granular details such as sidewalks and cross walks are designed. Ms. Hodges responded that the Project's website will stay live post-PEL Study and throughout the NEPA process. During the NEPA phase, the PEL Study's Range of Reasonable Alternatives will be further evaluated and will become increasingly refined and detailed. The NEPA process will have a public involvement process similar to that of the PEL Study. The public will be able to provide their input and comments to the Project Team throughout the NEPA process. Mr. Begnal asked if there would be a PAC during NEPA. Ms. Hodges responded that the Project Team will need to conclude the PEL Study and assess the Range of Reasonable Alternatives before they can determine whether the NEPA phase would include a PAC. Mr. Begnal noted that the Riverside Cemetery desires to continue to be involved throughout the Project's PEL and NEPA phases.
- Brian Peterson (Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church) asked if alternatives that are screened out could have features that could be preserved or salvaged. Ms. Hodges responded in the affirmative, stating that elements or aspects of the alternatives that fail to progress through a screening level could still be considered for incorporation into other alternatives that progress, if those elements or features are complementary, feasible, and do not fail to meet the screening criteria themselves. Some features of alternatives are linked to other features and thus cannot exist without the other. The Project Team would not consider these linked features to be complementary to other alternatives.

Mr. Fagan noted that if PAC members had any outstanding comments or concerns about the UOA or the Level 1 screening criteria that they could contact the Program Team with any of their comments or concerns. Ms. Hodges added that the draft *PEL Process Alternative Screening Methodology* document is available on the Project website and encouraged PAC members to review the document and provide the Project Team with any questions, comments, or additional feedback upon their review via email or through the Project website.

The Project Team then thanked all PAC members for their attendance and contributions throughout the meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

3. PAC Meeting 3C Appendix: Poll Response Data

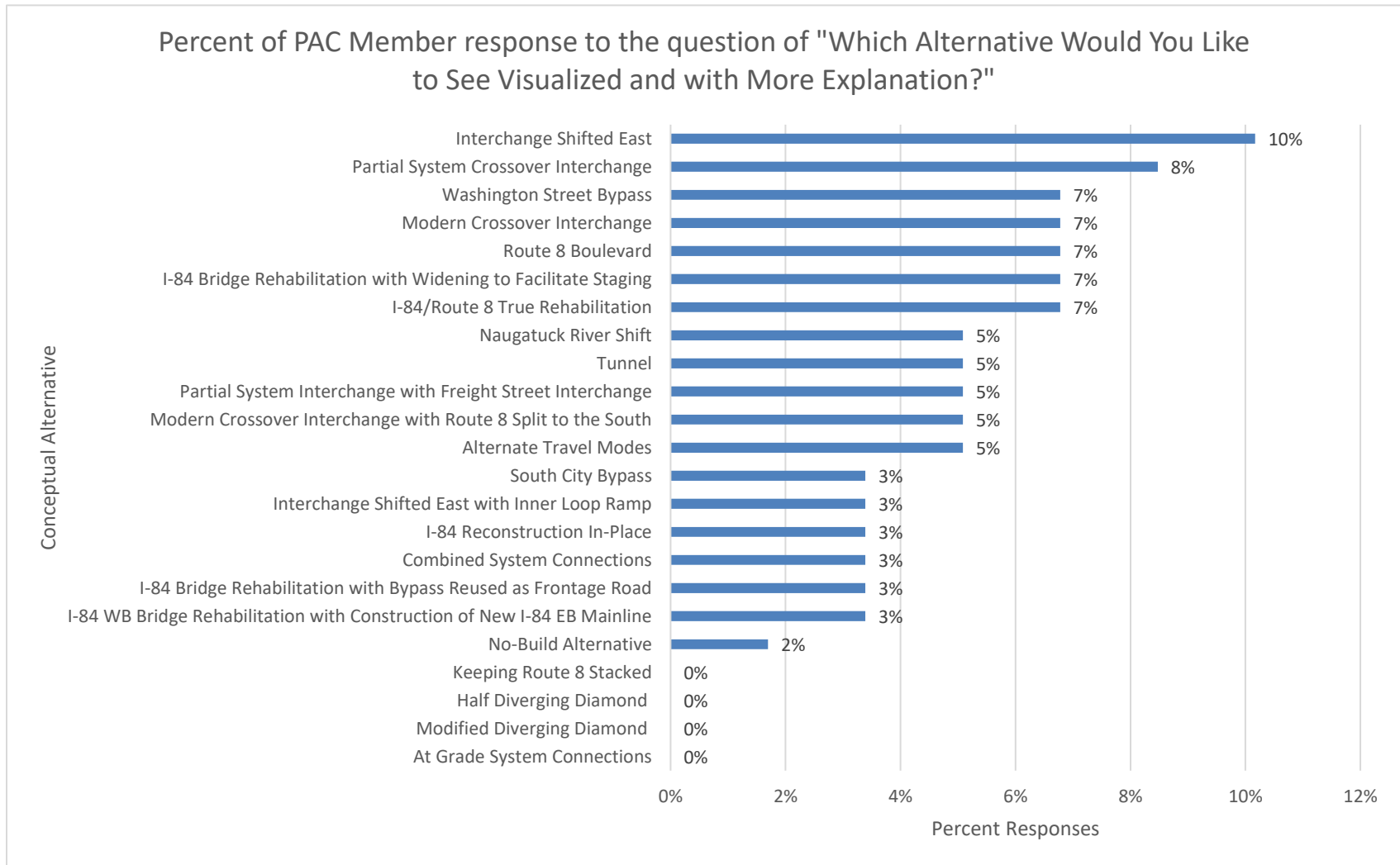


Figure 1: Poll results for "Which Alternative Would You Like to See Visualized and with More Explanation?" Up to three alternatives were able to be selected by the poll participants and results are presented from highest to least percentage of selection. A total of 59 responses were provided.