

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

MEETING MINUTES

Project No.: 151-331
 Project Name: Reconstruction of Interstate 84/CT Route 8 Interchange (Mixmaster)
 Date of Meeting: November 19, 2021 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM
 Location of Meeting: Zoom Teleconference
 Subject of Meeting: New Mix Program PAC Meeting #1

Attendees:

PAC Members	
Name	Organization
John Touri	Bender Plumbing Supply
Roy Cavanaugh	City of Waterbury Bureau of Engineering
David Simpson	City of Waterbury Department of Public Works
Joseph McGrath	City of Waterbury Economic Development
Ken Stanco	City of Waterbury Office of the Mayor
Clifford Brammer III	City of Waterbury Planning Department
Robert Nerney	City of Waterbury Planning Department
Nadine Amatruda	City of Waterbury Police Department
Barbara Kalosky	Connecticut Association for Community Transportation
Maria Vachareli	CTtransit Waterbury
Emilie Holland	Federal Highway Administration
Martin Begnal	Friends of Riverside Cemetery
Betty Bajek	Greater Waterbury Transit District
Erik Hazelton	Housatonic Valley Association
Carl Rosa	Main Street Waterbury
Joseph R. Sculley	Motor Transportation Association of Connecticut
Dana Elm	Naugatuck Valley Community College
Mark Nielsen	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Stephanie Valickis	Saint Mary's Hospital
Tracie Borden	UConn Waterbury
Kevin Taylor	Waterbury Bridge to Success
Thomas Hyde	Waterbury Development Corporation
Jeremy Rodorigo	Waterbury Hospital
Arthur Denze Sr.	Waterbury Neighborhood Council
Martin Spring	Waterville Community Club
Tomas Olivo Valentin	Working Cities Challenge

Department of Transportation	
Name	Organization
Carlo Leone	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
Michael Calabrese	CTDOT
Nilesh Patel	CTDOT
Scott Roberts	CTDOT
Jonathan Dean	CTDOT
Joe Belrose	CTDOT

Consultant Team	
Jacob Argiro	HNTB
David Schweitzer	HNTB
Christopher Fagan	HNTB
Naomi Hodges	HNTB

Distribution: All Attendees

1. Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to initiate the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings. This presentation reviewed the role of PAC members in the New Mix Program, the New Mix Program, the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study process, and the New Mix Program Goals and Objectives.

2. New Mix Program Project Advisory Committee Meeting Presentation

A. Project Advisory Committee Meeting No.1 Presentation

Naomi Hodges (HNTB Environmental Lead) began the meeting by thanking PAC members for their attendance and being part of the PAC. An overview of Zoom accessibility and troubleshooting followed. The meeting’s agenda and introductions for the leadership team occurred. The PAC purpose and composition portion of the presentation included information on the organizations the PAC members represent and the intentions behind creating a PAC. A PAC member roll call and introduction followed. The role of the PAC members, their responsibilities, and PAC procedures and guidelines were reviewed. This included the importance of PAC participation and attendance. Additionally, it was explained that PAC members were assembled to serve as a link to the community and to represent the interests of the organizations the PAC members belong to.

An overview of the New Mix program was provided, which included touching on the project study area, reasons to improve the Mixmaster, potential timing and breakout project schedule and the general nature of anticipated projects (Early Action, Near-Term, and Long-Term projects).

A poll was then presented to the PAC on the frequency that members utilize the interchange system. The following results were generated:

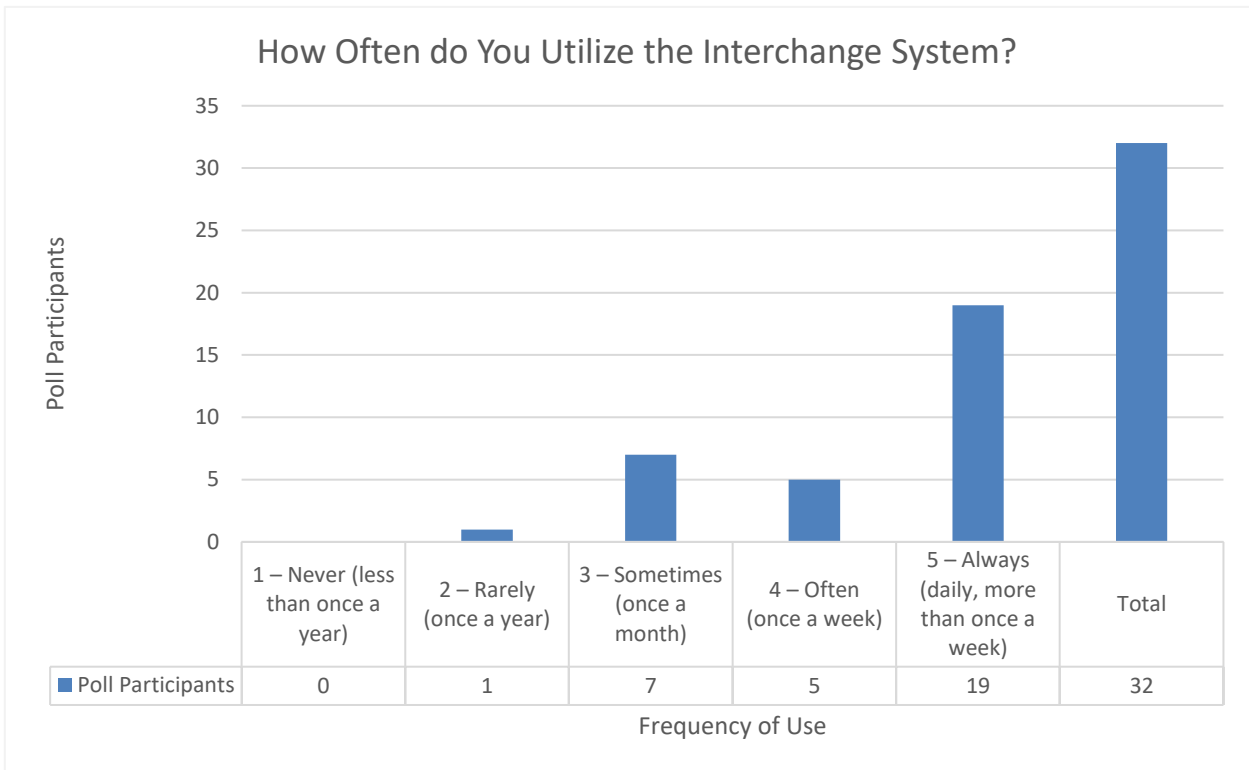


Figure 1- Poll Results: How Often do You Utilize the Interchange System?

Christopher Fagan (HNTB Project Engineer) covered a PEL Study Overview, discussed the relationship between PEL and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), and explained what PEL is and why it is used, the New Mix PEL study desired results and schedule, and the function of the PAC within the PEL process. Mr. Fagan also denoted New Mix outreach methods that are or will be deployed.

Ms. Hodges presented on the New Mix program goals and objectives, which included the CTDOT’s visioning statement for the PEL Study, and other transportation-related goals and objectives.

A poll was presented to the PAC: “On A Scale Of 1-5 What is Your Level of Satisfaction with the Mixmaster and Surrounding Transportation Network in the Study Area?” The following results were generated:

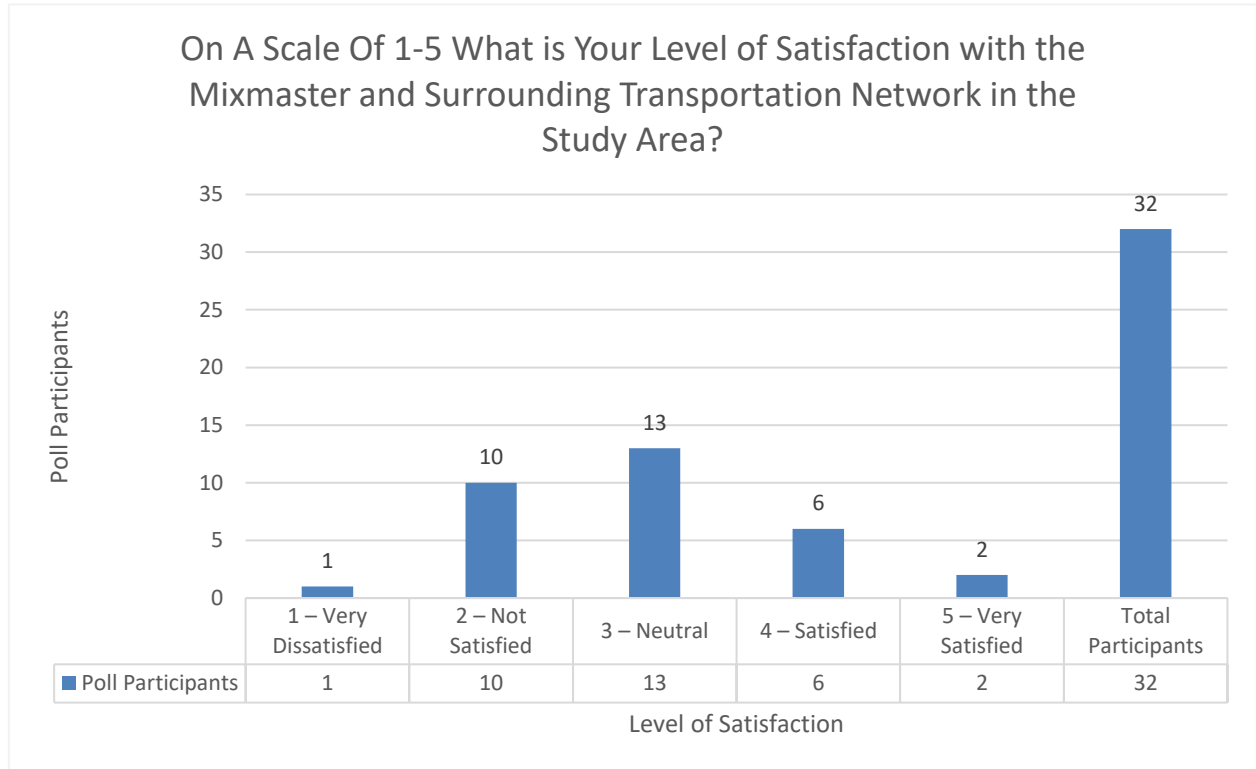


Figure 2 - Poll Results: On a Scale of 1-5, What is Your Level of Satisfaction with the Mixmaster and Surrounding Transportation Network in the Study Area?

Following the poll, PAC members were asked to provide their input on the problems they are facing while utilizing the Mixmaster Interchange and the associated transportation network. Comments followed and included the following concerns:

Dana Elm (Naugatuck Valley Community College, Interim Dean of Administration) stated that leaving the I-84 Westbound mainline using Exit 18 is dangerous for commuters who are coming from Route 8 Northbound; there is a left-handed system movement between Route 8 Northbound and I-84 Westbound that requires three lane changes in a short distance to reach Exit 18. Ms. Elm understood that many commuters coming from Route 8 Northbound will overshoot Exit 18 to avoid the dangerous condition, instead preferring to backtrack from Exit 17 to reach Naugatuck Valley Community College or that section of Waterbury.

Mark Nielsen (Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, Director of Planning / Assistant Director) indicated that there are many closely spaced on and off ramps that cause a lot of weaving.

Betty Bajek (Greater Waterbury Transit District Chair, Board of Directors) noted the general conditions of the roads as a concern.

Martin Begnal (Friends of Riverside Cemetery, President) echoed the concerns of other PAC Members and added that the Riverside Cemetery is in the shadow of the Mixmaster and as a result, there is noise and vibration from the highway. Mr. Begnal believes that the highway’s

proximity to the cemetery is causing structural damage to its chapel, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Begnal also noted that the Mixmaster makes it hard for visitors to find the cemetery.

Joseph Sculley (Motor Transportation Association of Connecticut, President) stated that the recurring traffic congestion experienced on the Mixmaster over the past several years could be attributed to the ongoing I-84 Rehabilitation project. Mr. Sculley further stated that he was looking forward to the New Mix program development, highlighting the need to alleviate traffic and to improve freight travel through the area. Ms. Hodges responded that although the current I-84 Rehabilitation Project is not part of the New Mix Program, the program team is taking the traffic operations into consideration. Once the I-84 Rehabilitation Project construction is complete, traffic flow is anticipated to improve.

Tomas Olivo Valentin (Working Cities Challenge, Project Director) highlighted inner city traffic as an issue.

Eric Hazelton (Housatonic Valley Association, Southern Valley Conservation Projects Manager) indicated that the Mixmaster feels more dangerous compared to other stretches of I-84.

Stephanie Valickis (Saint Mary's Hospital, Media Relations/Communications Specialist) shared that she cannot use the Mixmaster for her commute due to temporary exit closures and has to navigate through the city.

Arthur Denze Sr. (Waterbury Neighborhood Council, President) described how travel from Route 8 Northbound onto I-84 Eastbound (Exit 31) and the subsequent exits, (Bank Street and Downtown Waterbury: Exits 21 and 22) is extremely dangerous due to cars crossing over to exit. This concern was also echoed in the Zoom chat by Ms. Elm.

Ms. Hodges thanked the PAC members for their input and presented the PAC Identified Issues Board for the issues experienced on Mixmaster Interchange (Figure 3). This board is a graphical summary of transportation and environmental issues that PAC members and stakeholders are experiencing on and around the Mixmaster interchange. Ms. Hodges stated that the board may be used to inform the Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement and perhaps other-transportation-related goals and objectives which would be further discussed at a subsequent meeting.

What are some of the issues you are experiencing on the Mixmaster Interchange and study area?:

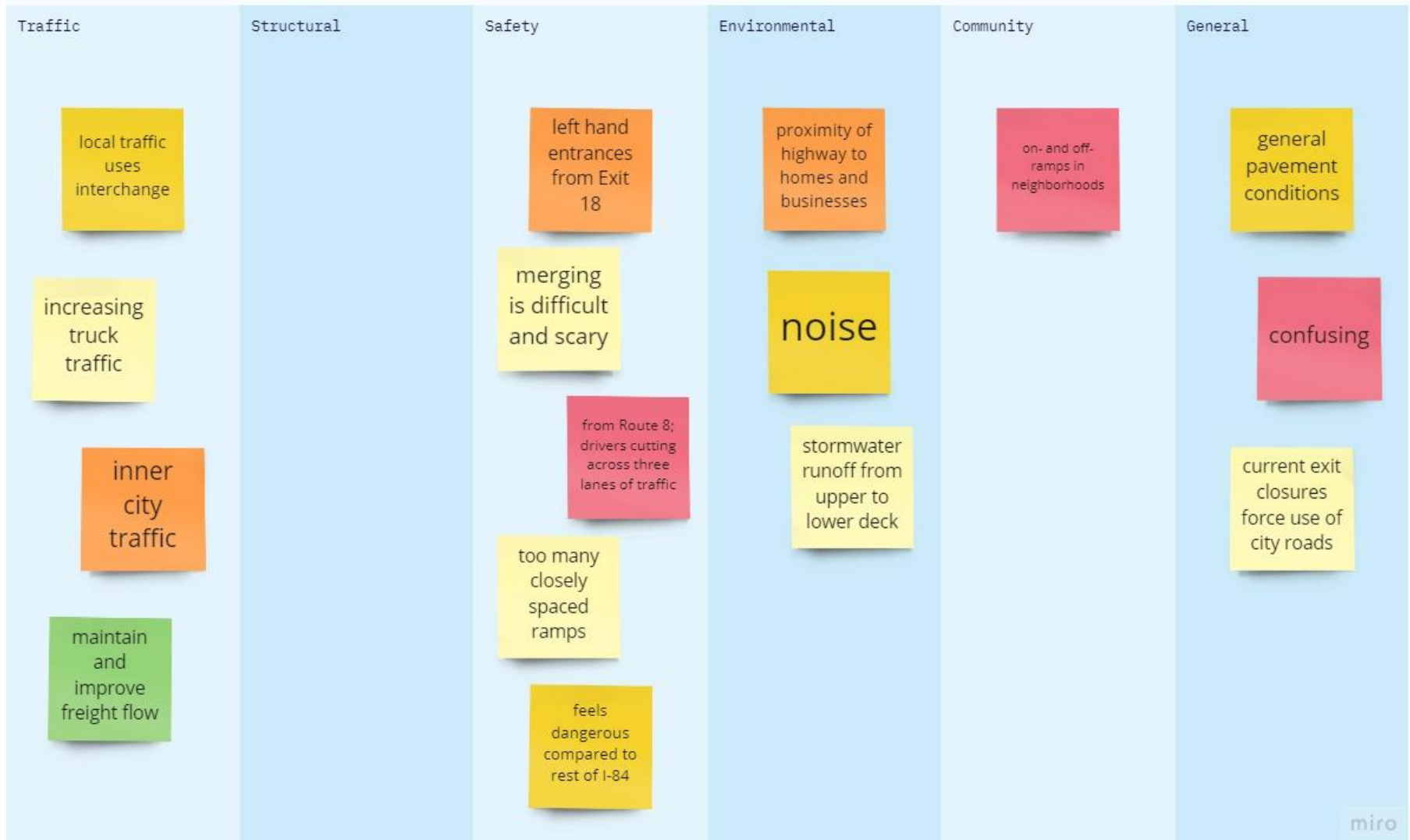


Figure 3 - New Mix PAC Identified Issues (11/19/2021)

The presentation continued with other transportation-related goals and objectives as well as how to use the New Mix PAC web application to add comments onto the New Mix study area map.

PAC members were then briefed about the upcoming meetings, future PAC agenda items, and objectives to have completed prior to the next PAC meeting. The presentation was then opened to questions and comments.

B. Comments & Questions on the New Mix Program

Ms. Hodges noted that an email with the PowerPoint presentation and necessary links would be forthcoming to keep non-Zoom users up-to-date. Meeting materials were provided to PAC members prior to PAC Meeting #1 and this practice will continue.

Mr. Nielsen asked about the infrastructure bill and what is anticipated for the immediate action projects, specifically asking if projects would be accelerated to take advantage of money or if they are on a fixed schedule. Scott Roberts (CTDOT, Project Manager) responded that despite the passed bill, the CTDOT cannot predict when the funds would arrive from the federal government. Mr. Roberts stated the CTDOT is anticipating some funding increases and are exploring advancing Potential Early Action (PEA) projects not only with the New Mix, but with other major CTDOT projects as well. The earliest that these may be initiated for construction would be towards the tail end of the 5-year bill due to the fact that many of these projects are in the early conceptual phase and have not been designed yet. Mr. Roberts stated that the CTDOT is also looking at using money to further study and potentially design short term/early action/near-term projects and that these will be defined more in subsequent meetings.

Mr. Nielsen added that he was looking more from the angle of local improvements. Mr. Roberts stated that the CTDOT is trying to avoid redundancy and throw away work. Any PEA would need to have independent utility and not predetermine an outcome of the PEL Study. These improvements would likely be designated Categorical Exclusions under NEPA and would advance quickly, such as projects on the local grid that could improve city movements.

Ms. Hodges noted that the meeting has extended over the hour and thanked those who must leave for their attendance. The questions and comments portion of the meeting then proceeded with a question from Mr. Begnal.

Mr. Begnal asked about the cost of the replacement and whether the State had the money to pay for it. Mr. Begnal also disclosed that in addition to being the President of Friends of Riverside Cemetery he also serves as an Assistant Managing Editor of the Republican American Newspaper. Mr. Roberts responded that a funding source for the program had not been identified, and that the most recent preliminary estimates were around \$5 billion in 2045 dollars. Mr. Roberts added that the project is about 20 years out before construction, so the CTDOT is trying to position itself to identify and program the funds for future improvements. Mr. Roberts also mentioned that the cost would take several years of capital budget. Neil Patel (CTDOT, Principal Engineer) added that this situation is similar for all of CTDOT's major projects that currently do not have funding identified, but those major projects are long term fixes that are years out. The infrastructure bill will help as the CTDOT moves forward, and as the CTDOT finishes its PEL studies. The funding associated with the infrastructure bill will allow for more programs to be developed and can also help fund the development of environmental

documentation, including NEPA documents and potentially some of the preliminary engineering.

The New Mix team thanked everyone for attending the presentation and for their participation.

Meeting adjourned.