

Project: Regional Intermodal Transportation Center Study
Date of Meeting: 1:30 PM, Tuesday, July 28, 2009
Location of Meeting: New London Public Library
Purpose of Meeting: Discuss Short Term and Long Term Improvement Alternatives
Meeting Attendance: Attendees listed on pages 6 & 7

Jim Butler welcomed attendees. He explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss various improvement options for the Regional Intermodal Transportation Center identified by the consultant hired by Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG). Jim set the record straight on several inaccuracies in a July 25 story that ran in The Day. He stressed that the consultant has not prepared a final report but rather a technical memorandum that was written to be reviewed by the Steering Committee and the public. After review and comment, the consultant will fine tune recommended options for further development. Jim said he hoped today's meeting would lead to consensus on improvement items that people could then get behind and help implement.

The following is a summary of comments:

Frank McLaughlin: I am pleased SCCOG is hosting this forum for people to communicate their views on what improvements are needed.

John Alexander: I think you should consider amending the scope of this project to include a potential seamless, non-stop train service between New York City and New London that could transport thousands of people coming to the casinos that are now using I-95 to get to the region. Jim Butler responded that an amendment was not possible and Andy Davis of Connecticut Department of Transportation (CONNDOT) concurred that was the case. Jim Butler also said that the Consultant is taking into consideration increased Shoreline East service to New London when identifying future parking needs.

Jim Martin: SEAT prefers integrating improved bus facilities into the existing train station building, adding more dedicated space north of Union Station that could co-house Greyhound and SEAT. He envisions a two-story building where a walkway can be constructed over the catenaries to a secondary building east of the train tracks. Escalators would move people quickly to the ferries, trains and buses. Sandra Chalk asked, where would all the buses go? Jim Martin responded buses would still park on Water Street. Tom Stone of Greyhound said a shared bus facility would eliminate security issues. Jim Martin believes the bus facility could be managed by the state, city or SEAT.

Molly McKay: Could you picture your (bus facility) proposal on the west side of Water Street? Jim Martin responded, no, the space in front of the garage would be a too tight a fit. He said not all buses are at the station at the same time – two Greyhound and 5-6 SEAT slots are needed in the future. Tom Stone agreed the space in front of the garage was problematic. He said maneuvering buses in and out takes up a lot of space and has

detailed his concerns in a memo to SCCOG. Buses like to avoid backing up. Andy Davis of CONNDOT said if you need more room for bus storage it's possible to realign Water Street, moving travel lanes up to ten feet west towards the garage. Jim Martin said he does not want people crossing Water Street to access SEAT buses.

Martin Berliner: How much interaction is there between buses? Would passengers need to cross the road?

Andy Davis: Yes, Greyhound passengers would need to cross the road and stated that the Department of Transportation is recommending that an up and over footbridge over the tracks be a component of any selected improvement option.

Frank McLaughlin: On the CONNDOT website there is information about federal TIGER Grants - \$1.5 billion will be spent by Sept 30, 2011 on capital improvements (bridges, public transportation, and ports). However, the deadline for application is Sept 15, 2009. Frank said (1) he is concerned this study won't be ready in time to meet the deadline and (2) who would apply for the grant program?

Jim Butler: CONNDOT has already put in a request for a Congressional earmark in the amount of \$7 million for upgrades to Union Station, up and over upgrades across the tracks as part of the SAFETEA-LU reauthorization. However, it appears Congress will delay reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act funds this October, thus delaying any earmarks that get approved.

Norm LaFleur: Overweight loads on our roads and bridges are a problem.

Mike Carey: I have noticed the removal of the elevated pedestrian bridge at the Water Street Garage as part of the parade project has made a big aesthetic improvement. It has opened up wonderful views of the water as you walk down State Street. Can't we get along without building another bridge?

Rusty Sargeant: I am an architect and have worked with the owners of Union Station. I've looked at the scheme where a bridge passes through the bus station and it would be aesthetically bad. Has there been any consideration to a controlled pedestrian crossing? Has there been any thought to making Eugene O'Neill Drive a two-way street as it would result in less traffic on Water Street? The train and the ferries must be an integral part of a transportation center and they need to stay put where they are. I don't have strong feelings about where the buses should be located.

Barun Basu: Have you considered the life and structural goodness of the Water Street Garage building? Perhaps we need to think of a bridge over the tracks as more than a walkway and perhaps combine with a ferry terminal. A larger structure could accommodate ticketing, Zip and rental cars, bike rentals. There should be more pedestrian orientation in this study. Jim Butler responded that the garage is structurally sound and details on its condition are in Technical Memoranda #2.

Barry Runyan: The New London Economic Development Commission has noted three concerns: (1) no short term options consider moving pedestrians across the track, (2) there are lots of owners involved, so who can implement an improvement plan, and (3) will the plan be explained in layman's terms and in brevity so that the public can understand and easily digest it? He urged there be a recommended design that best utilizes the assets together and a way to implement the plan. Jim Butler responded an executive summary of the plan will be made, supported by a large technical document. Jim said he is mindful of Tony Sheridan words, "we don't just need a study; we need a master plan."

Jim Butler then raised the issue of implementing the plan once the preferred options are agreed upon. He said in light of the fact that the transportation services are all provided by disparate entities, he asked those present: Do we need to organize some type of entity like a Transportation Authority to implement the plan? He said he has asked the consultant to examine what has been done around the country in terms of creating a governance structure comprised of various transportation providers working together.

Dennis Downing: A planned footbridge was previously shot down before because it cost a lot of money to build and maintain it and he thought a proposal to build an up and over bridge would generate a lot of opposition. Instead he suggested better crosswalks on Water Street preceded by speed bumps.

Tony Sheridan: It is critically important to come together as a region to support improvements, to make New London the hub of Southeast CT. He said: (1) SCCOG should be the entity to move a plan forward, (2) \$20 million has been put into New London's Riverfront Park but there should be a footbridge over the tracks from the Custom House to access the park. Bank Street (i.e., businesses on the east side of Bank Street) should be turned around to face the river and (3) a footbridge over Water Street is essential as two thirds of the people who use the ferry arrive from across the tracks. Bridges can be attractively designed and they don't flood. He said his board, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT, would support development of the plan; do the politicking needed but a prioritization of 2-3 items is needed.

Bob Christina: If Bank Street could be extended around the Mariner Square building and connect to Atlantic Street, this would remove a lot of traffic from Water Street.

Norm LaFluer: We could solve the problem of motorists not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks if we used cameras.

Kevin Cavanagh: We need to prioritize what we want to accomplish. A long term plan is needed though initial efforts may focus on short term items. Kevin said the City is (1) working to replace fence along Water Street, (2) recommending extending the taxi stand area to in front of Zavellas Restaurant on State Street, and (3) making adjustments to improve traffic flow in the taxi/ pick up/drop off area.

Penny Parsekian: New London Main Street is working with the Wronowskis and the City to put textured crosswalks in areas leading to Cross Sound Ferry as proposed.

Bill Morse: The number one priority should be to get people across the tracks. I see people dragging luggage through the dirt; it's a matter of time before people get hit. Has a pedestrian crossing across the tracks been considered? Sometimes the easiest solution is the best. Jim Butler responded that the consultant looked into an at-grade track crossing and it would take a congressional act to make that happen because it's national rail policy to reduce these crossings. Andy Davis of CONNDOT confirmed his department would not support another at-grade rail crossing.

Bill Morse: The sidewalk level at the southeast corner of the Water Street garage is a dead zone. If there were activity there better connections to downtown would occur.

Michael Caron, Director of Corporate Affairs for Pfizer: He said his company is interested in becoming part of the solution and does not have a position on the various options.

Dick Guggenheim and Jim Butler: Clarified information on why the elevated bridge did not get built a few years ago. The bids came in higher than the funding the City had available for the project and the money was re-programmed to the parade project.

Sandra Chalk: We should narrow the traffic lanes on Water Street and install a sidewalk wide enough on the east side of Water Street so people can comfortably walk. Jim Butler responded the consultants had looked at that and found only one pinch point where there is an out of service light pole. He said he also thinks such a sidewalk should be extended northerly up to the neighborhood park at the corner of Crystal Avenue to serve the neighbors of this area who walk to the SEAT bus stop.

Martin Berliner: Better signs are needed informing pedestrians leaving the parking garage of preferred routes to the train station and ferries..

Rusty Sargeant: It makes sense to have an up and over bridge on the north end of the garage and develop the south end of the garage for better linkages to downtown.

Jim Martin: The garage should be taken down and moved closer to the water. If we want people to stay in New London, we need to have sanitary facilities and lockers. Jim Butler responded that if you move the garage closer to the water, views will be cut off. Jim Martin replied the views now are of the ferry buildings and state pier.

Barun Basu: Has there been any talk with the casino people about parking? Jim Butler responded the casinos were invited to participate in this study and have not been actively involved. John Alexander said if there was non-stop train service from New York City to New London, interest by the casinos may dramatically increase.

Dennis Downing: A sidewalk should be installed on the east side of Water Street and Atlantic Street should be opened to two-way traffic. Jim Butler responded that there are several problems with making Atlantic Street two-way, including the fact that The Day newspaper needs to use Atlantic Street for its deliveries of ink and newsprint.

Bill Cutler: He said he spent many years in Chicago and was impressed by the visionary thinking of Daniel Burnham who he thought said, "Make no small plans. They lack the magic to move men's hearts." This type of thinking needs to work its way into this plan. There must be magic to come forth to inspire hope. With hope comes commitment.

Tom Stone: Greyhound could share a terminal with SEAT

Jim Martin: The bus station needs to be a continuation of Union Station.

Harry Smith: Could Water Street be relocated further west? Andy Davis responded he thought it could move about 10 feet closer to the garage.

Mike Carey: Can the first floor of the existing garage be used for retail space? Jim Butler responded that option was looked at and would be difficult.

Bill Morse: Does the City Council need to approve the plan? Jim Butler responded that this is a plan of the SCCOG, being done on behalf of the transportation providers and the City of New London. There is no requirement that the City of New London formally endorse the plan. Bill said he thought the plan would be an easier sell if both a tunnel and an up and over footbridge proposal were equally explored. Jim Butler responded that he would ask the consultant to at least compare the ease/difficulty of construction of both and the range of costs of the two alternative access improvements.

Dennis Downing: I would be OK with a footbridge over the tracks but opposed to one over Water Street.

Sandra Chalk: Let's use Union Station for the transportation center and concentrate complementary development there.

Martin Berliner: If we really need to improve pedestrian safety, then we need to concentrate on steps/activities besides the pedestrian overhead bridge.

Jim Martin: Can City Pier be extended (and make a better connection between downtown and the cruise ships) while not interfering with the ferries? Martin Berliner responded that this would require a lot of dredging and permits required may not be obtainable.

Sandra Chalk: The surface parking lots on Eugene O'Neill Drive are prime development sites which should include parking. Parcel J and Howard Street are also in close walking distance to the Regional Intermodal Transportation Center and should be where future development is directed

Bill Morse: Why was time and money used to study Fort Trumbull as a transportation center site? Jim Butler responded it was required by CONNDOT who is funding the study. Andy Davis said an alternative site exploration would be needed when seeking grant funds.

Jim Butler asked the group if it could come to some agreement on priority items. Consensus was expressed on the following points:

- The number one priority is improved, better, and safer pedestrian access between modes
- A pedestrian footbridge is needed over railroad tracks, and continuing it over Water Street to the parking garage should be evaluated
- Keep all transportation facilities on the east side of Water Street
- Use the existing Union Station building and annex to house transportation services to the fullest extent possible, and provide commercial facilities in the station that are supported by the travelling public
- Long term proposal to move bus facilities to Governor Winthrop Boulevard is not supported
- Long term proposals involving redevelopment of private properties (i.e. Radisson Hotel) and municipal properties (i.e. Police Station) are not supported

Meeting Attendees:

Steering Committee:

Tony Sheridan	Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT
Kevin Cavanagh	City of New London
Harry Smith	City of New London
Stan Mickus	Cross Sound Ferry
Tom Stone	Greyhound
Sandra Chalk	New London Landmarks
Frank McLaughlin	New London Main Street
Ella Bowman	SEAT
Jim Martin	SEAT
Martin Berliner	SCCOG, City of New London
Dan Steward	SCCOG, Town of Waterford
Michael Carey	Suisman, Shapiro, Wool, Brennan, and Gray
Adam Wronowski	Cross Sound Ferry

ConnDOT

Andy Davis	ConnDOT
Albert A. Martin	ConnDOT, Deputy Commissioner
Craig Bordiere	ConnDOT

SCCOG Staff

James Butler	SCCOG
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Dick Guggenheim SCCOG

Study Team

Jill Barrett Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Other

Bob Christina

John Alexander

Barbara Hample

Lawrence Hample

Jerry Sinnamon

Albert Sussler

Bill Morse

Penny Parsekian

Kathleen Wick

Molly McKay

Dennis Downing

Norm LaFleur

Tony Cronin The Day

Rusty Sargeant

Barun Basu

Barry Runyan

Ben Martin

Jack Doolittle

Michael Caron Pfizer, Director of Public Affairs

Bill Cutler

Submitted By: Jill Barrett, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Date: 07/30/09