



View of proposed transportation center in downtown New London. Master Plan also has an option of extending the elevated pedestrian footbridge to connect to the ferries and to the Water Street garage.

Regional Intermodal Transportation Center Master Plan is Completed

The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) has completed a Regional Intermodal Transportation Center Master Plan to upgrade facilities and make connections in downtown New London's transportation hub more seamless. The project was managed by SCCOG and prepared by a consultant team headed by TranSystems.

New London serves as the gateway to southeastern Connecticut for people arriving by trains, ferries and buses. No other New England city has so many transportation services located in close proximity to each other. Though close connections are a plus for travelers, trying to accommodate the needs of all in a very small space has drawbacks.

The master plan took over a year to develop. Existing facilities and current and future operational needs were evaluated. Various short term concepts and long term visions were explored. Over that time numerous meetings

were held with a Steering Committee that included representatives of transportation providers, businesses, the City of New London, State Department of Transportation and other stakeholders. Two public meetings were also held.

Feedback from the Steering Committee and the public directed the planning team to keep the transportation center where it is currently located and concentrate all services on the east side of Water Street. During the study, the Connecticut Department of Transportation said the expansion of Shore Line East service into New London would require a safe, separated passage over the railroad tracks so both a footbridge and tunnel were evaluated.

The final preferred design for the transportation center locates all facilities on the east side of Water Street and provides additional capacity for bus service to meet additional demand. A new bus terminal for both SEAT and Greyhound passengers and footbridge would be built. Im-

Improvements for pedestrians, automobile pick-up/drop-off and taxis are also part of this design, which was presented to the Steering Committee in early December 2009. After this meeting, the City of New London and owner of Union Station suggested the study team develop an additional alternative that would better utilize Union Station and be less costly. A scheme that houses more transportation services in Union Station and does not require relocating Water Street was then developed. This alternative does not provide additional bus capacity.

The preferred alternative

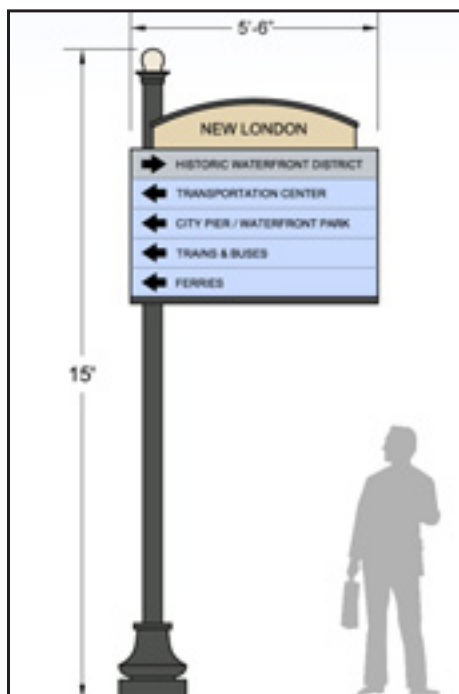
All transportation facilities remain, as is the case today, on the east side of Water Street. A new bus terminal building would be built adjoining the existing brick building used by Greyhound. The terminal would have a large, glass-enclosed waiting room with a view of buses.

Water Street would be relocated in a westward direction to provide space for additional SEAT bus parking. An over the tracks footbridge would connect to the bus terminal and could be extended westward over Water Street to the parking garage and eastward closer to the Block Island ferry. This alternative would require use of currently private property.

A better walking environment

Some two million travelers pass through New London each year. Many do not set foot in the city as their only destination is the ferries. But several hundred thousand make connections by walking between parking areas and the ferry, between the train and ferry or stroll into the downtown area for a bite to eat or shopping.

The study team identified several ways to improve street crossings and sidewalks for pedestrians as well as signage to improve wayfinding in downtown New London.



Recommended improvements include:

- Sidewalks/pathways on both sides of railroad
- Attractive fencing along tracks
- Use of pavers
- Quad gates/ rubber surfaces at railroad crossings
- Landscaping, trees along Water Street
- Gateway structures
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Canopies with lighting

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Besides looking at transportation facilities, the study team reviewed the potential for Transit-Oriented Development in New London. The enhanced transportation center along with the Parade project should serve as a catalyst to increased development. Parcels along the waterfront were initially considered for potential TOD. However, it was concluded that they are better used as part of a fully operating transportation center.

Presently, there are very few large undeveloped sites within walking distance of the transportation center. The most immediate opportunities lie in the vacant storefronts on Bank and State Streets, and small infill parcels. Although these sites could be rehabilitated or developed within the short term, they are too small to achieve a significant portion of the future land use program identified in the study's market analysis.

Most of the major opportunities for TOD around the transportation center are long term – in 20 or 30 years. One example would be the site of the Water Street Garage once it is past its useful life. Should development occur near the transportation center, the master plan envisions it would increase transit ridership, help transform the transportation center area and downtown New London into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, district.

Governance

The Master Plan recommends the State of Connecticut take a major role in the transportation center either through ownership or long term lease of the train station, bus terminal and pedestrian bridge. It also suggests the creation of a new association comprised of transportation providers, the City of New London and the Connecticut Department of Transportation to enhance operations and coordination of services.

For more information contact: Jim Butler, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, 860-889-2324, jbutler@seccog.org.