

Advisory Committee Meeting #2

Date/Time: July 30, 2020 1:00 Pm

Place: Virtual, Zoom

Attendees:

Mike Rutkowski, Stantec
Travis Ewen, Stantec
John Eberle, Stantec
Erica Ortman, Stantec
Dan Hemme, Stantec
Barry Kriesberg, Hartford Hospital
Aaron Gill, Frog Hollow NRZ
Anthony Cherolis, Transport Hartford
Caitlin Palmer, CRCOG
Cara Radzins, CRCOG
Frank Dellaripa, Department of Public Works
I. Charles Mathews, Department of Development Services

Randal Davis, Department of Development Services
Aimee Chambers, Department of Development Services
Sandy Fry, Department of Development Services
Mingo Gomes, Hartford Parking Authority
Jordan Polon, Hartford Business Improvement District
Josh Rickman, CT Transit
Lisa Rivers, CT DOT
Michael Curley, MDC
Michael Looney, Director of Public Works
Phil Shattuck, iQuilt
Priscilla Cotto, CT DOT
Jackie Mandyck, iQuilt
Lynn Ferrari, CSSCON NRZ
John Gale, Council member and Property owner
Transport Hartford Student Interns (approximately 12 individuals)

Key Takeaways

1. Principle #3 should address achieving a sense of safety through high-quality design and fostering an inclusive, accessible streetscape that increases activity throughout the study area.
2. The Preferred Access Plan correlates with pre-existing pedestrian uses of the corridor, particular with midblock crossings.
3. A general consensus was reached that Concept 2B was the preferable cross-section for the redesigned roadway.

The meeting convened at 1:06 PM with Travis Ewen welcoming the committee. Travis noted the time that had elapsed between meetings 1 and 2. He stated that the project team felt now was a good time to convene and present a summary of public engagement, the guiding principles, and the preferred access plan.

Summary of Public Outreach

Travis presented the engagement summary, with figures detailed in the slides. He noted that feedback on the online map was substantive. A high number of civic and institutional uses in the study area limits commercial and retail opportunities, which affects the high dissatisfaction with the corridor's commercial and retail choices in the online survey. Mike Rutkowski noted that the high number of pedestrians was an important statistic. He also noted the 17% study area population with limited or no access to a car. Lisa Rivers asked why having access to a vehicle was important in an urban setting, if the city had good transit. Travis replied that the statistic was merely stated as a fact and did not reflect priorities for this project. Tony Cherolis noted that Hartford's broader demographics show a higher rate of no car ownership, in excess of 30% in the city as a whole.

Discussion of Guiding Principles

Mike presented the guiding principles and opened the floor to feedback. Sandy Fry stated that the guiding principles were the product of substantial public engagement over the summer. Sandy asked whether the committee saw any missing items in the principles, or if there was misplaced emphasis on certain topics.

Discussion centered on Principle #3, dealing with renewed emphasis on safety and security. Tony stated concern with security and policing people in a space. Keeping certain people out of spaces is the opposite of the desired goal of a welcoming, friendly street. Jordan Polon and others noted that feelings of safety and discomfort are distinct concepts, and that her interpretation was that the Principle should reflect the sense of safety rather than the physical act of securing space. Sandy noted that many of these comments came from those living downtown, and added that the principle reflects redesigning the streetscape to get more people on the street. Mike agreed, and stated that creating a sense of safety includes better quality design and maintenance. Aimee Chambers stated that the team should be mindful of the present moment and reference CPTED principles in ongoing public communication. Jordan asked whether safety and security was a guiding principle, or an outcome of the design process. Mike stated that the team would revisit Principle #3 to reflect safety through design.

Aaron Gill asked whether Principle #1 was intended to encompass bicyclists as well as pedestrians. Mike stated that this was the case and the principle could be reworded, but that the intention was there. Sandy stated that Principle #2 also addresses bicyclists. Josh Rickman noted that all users of transit are, at some point, pedestrians, and that he felt Principle #1 addressed all modes through this perspective. Lisa noted that she sees a number of pedestrians engage in dangerous behavior on the street.

Design Themes

Mike presented the project's design themes, a product of the Visual Preference Survey. Travis noted that green streetscaping may be aesthetic, but the improvements bring attractive qualities to the pedestrian experience and environmental aspects of stormwater management and heat effect. Mike noted that bicycle themes strongly emphasized protected bicycle lanes.

Preferred Access Plan

Mike presented the Preferred Access Plan. Mike noted that with this design, there's not a single section of the corridor that can't be crossed at a high-quality intersection or crosswalk within 60 to 90 seconds. Midblock crossings cater to the transit locations as well.

Tony noted the value of activated alleyways to the downtown in New Haven. He noted that the midblock crossing by Park Street actually had been identified by one of their interns. The midblock crossing between Pearl and Gold Streets was already frequently used without an official crossing and was a significant safety concern. He also noted that informal paths at Barnard Park indicating midblock crossings were also closely located to the proposed crosswalks. Mike agreed and noted that the team tried to match where people were already making these crossings but focused on transit stops.

Aaron stated a concern with signal timing; that having lights timed during off-peak hours would invite people to drive fast in off-peak times. Mike noted that pretimed signals currently created long delays, and that progression-controlled signal timing would be planned for peak and off-peak hours to limit speeding. He also noted that creating a sense of enclosure and better design would reduce

travel speeds. Aaron approved, and stated that better would reduce police interactions due to traffic enforcement.

Travis presented the concept cross-sections. Travis noted that moving the curb dramatically increase project cost, so conceptual designs work within the curblane.

Tony stated that center medians brought numerous benefits for all users and stated a preference for Option 2B (including a center median). Other attendees concurred with Tony. Caitlin Palmer stated a preference for either Options 2A or 2B due to opportunities for pocket parks along the west side of the corridor, with which John Gale concurred. Jackie Mandyck noted the 2B design would prevent U turns into the middle of Main Street. Discussion ensued about the two-way cycletrack and separated one-way cycletrack options. Tony stated that the two-way design could be less convenient for users who needed to access establishments on the opposite side of the street. Phil Shattuck asked whether it would be confusing for pedestrians who were not accustomed to looking for traffic coming from both directions. Jordan asked whether, in the absence of a clear preference, any research existed to demonstrate the impact of either design on businesses. Several attendees stated they were unaware of any such research.

Josh stated that the cross-section design for bus lane width was likely not compatible with typical bus widths of 108" including mirrors. He also stated the design would need to consider the traffic re-entry from the shared parking lanes. Lisa also noted that the buses have all-door boarding and this includes 60 ft. articulated buses.

Caitlin asked about the interaction between separated cycletrack on both sides of the street and potential pocket park installations. Caitlin noted that businesses on the west side are more likely to take advantage of that feature at present, because there are currently areas which are unable to offer outdoor dining. Aimee concurred. Mike stated that we were considering a parklet demonstration project that could potentially provide an answer. Tony noted that the two-way cycletrack would help facilitate pocket park usage because it didn't put the bike lane between outdoor seating and the restaurant.

Lisa stated that the final design must have visual and tactile warnings for pedestrian crossings.

Travis presented alternative designs for the block between Pearl Street and Gold Street, for a potential central bus hub. Two designs were presented, a central bus way and a side boarding island stop. Travis presented the Park + Main proposed roundabout.

Next Steps

Travis presented the upcoming charrette, with a goal of hosting 9/1-3. Sandy objected to use of the term charrette and stated a preference for referring to it as a design workshop. Mike presented the design workshop strategy and schedule. Mike emphasized the need for representatives to aid in design process, and stressed the importance of committee interaction during the 5-6:30 pinup.