

**Department of Transportation
Project No. 102-269
Reconstruction of the Routes 7 and 15 Interchange and Route 15 and Main
Avenue Interchange
Norwalk**

**February 18, 2009 7:00 PM
Norwalk City Hall**

Minutes

Present:

ConnDOT:

Richard Armstrong
Andy Fesenmeyer

Purcell Associates:

Jeffrey Koerner
Michael Fisher
Steve Ulman

LADA:

Terri-Ann Hahn
Chris Korbel

Stakeholders and Members of the Public:

Joanne Ferrara -Resident
Jo-Anne Horvath -Resident
Alan Kibbe - Silvermine Community Assoc.
Alex Modica - NASH
Leigh Grant - NASH
David Olson - Silvermine Community Assoc.
Keith Simpson - Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Jill Smyth – Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Sue Prosi – SWRPA
Alan McLean – Silvermine Resident
H Neaderland – Silvermine Resident
David Kooris – Regional Plan Association

Presentation:

In response to the group's request at the last meeting, a number of handouts were provided to the meeting attendees. A draft Environmental Report for the subject project was provided which details the existing condition of the inland wetlands, water resources, and habitat of the area. A document explaining the definition of the various types of Federal and State wetlands was provided to give the meeting attendees a better understanding of the requirements for an area to be considered a wetland. A third handout which explains the development of the Environmental Document was also provided for the benefit of the meeting attendees.

Mr. Jeff Koerner presented Alternates 21 and 21C. The primary difference between the two alternates is the ramp configuration on southbound side of the Merritt Parkway in the vicinity of Main Ave. Alternate 21 utilizes one exit ramp from the Merritt Parkway separated from the mainline by barrier curb. The single exit ramp then splits into a single lane ramp serving Creeping Hemlock and a single lane ramp that crosses over Main Ave. and the Norwalk River to feed the loop ramp system.

Alternate 21C utilizes two separate exit ramps from the Merritt Parkway for the two movements. Alternate 21C will achieve similar if not better level of service than Alternate 21 with a smaller footprint than that of Alternate 21. Alternate 21 also requires additional barrier curb to separate the slower moving ramp traffic from mainline traffic.

In response to the group's request at the last meeting, LADA developed 6 additional "existing condition" and "proposed condition" views of the project looking from Creeping Hemlock and Perry Ave. Ms. Terri-Ann Hahn presented the 6 new views created by LADA.

Public Comments and Questions:

- A question was posed regarding the possibility of additional shortening of the Alternate 21C exit ramp to Creeping Hemlock. Mr. Koerner stated that due to the DOT required separation distance between successive off ramps, the ramp would have to remain the length shown on the plans.
- A question was raised regarding the benefit of Alternate 21C. Mr. Koerner stated that the primary benefit is aesthetic in nature. Alternate 21C will require less pavement and less barrier curb than Alternate 21. In addition, by separating the two off ramps on the north side of the Merritt Parkway additional storage will be available for vehicles exiting to signal controlled Creeping Hemlock intersection.
- A question was asked regarding the architectural treatment of the proposed retaining walls supporting the ramp adjacent to Creeping Hemlock. Several people voiced their dislike for formliner type walls because they look "fake". Another person suggested a treatment similar to the abutment walls on Main Avenue. Mr. Armstrong stated that the DOT is committed to working with the stakeholders as the project develops in regard to aesthetics, architectural treatments and landscaping.
- Differing opinions were expressed regarding the architectural treatment of the proposed bridge over Perry Ave. Two people stated that the new bridge should match the existing bridge over Perry Ave. One person suggested that, since the new bridge will never match the existing

parkway bridge exactly, the new bridge should be a modern style. The DOT will work with the stakeholders as the project moves forward.

- A question was raised regarding the potential for adding an architectural treatment to the bridge on the north side of the parkway over Perry Ave. The DOT will investigate possible treatments for this bridge.
- One person asked for the bike path to be shown in the photo renderings wherever applicable. Ms. Hahn said she would add typical signage for a bike path.
- A question was posed regarding the type of material to be used for the bike path. The bike path has not been designed to this level of detail. However, it was suggested that the material may be recycled pavement millings.
- A concern was raised regarding the potential for excessive clearing of trees for the purpose of creating construction staging areas in the vicinity of Perry Ave. Mr. Koerner stated that due to the relative location of wetlands in that area additional clearing of trees would not be allowed by the permit.
- A question was asked regarding the need for the very large overhead sign supports. Mr. Ulman stated that the large overhead sign supports are required by AASHTO 2002 due to wind loads.
- Stakeholder recommendations for the Public Informational Meeting presentation were:
 1. Focus on the safety of the new design and the fact that it is much less intrusive.
 2. Discuss the approximate time frames and construction cost.
 3. Explain the steps that are necessary to make this project a reality.
- The DOT discussed the possibility of developing a 3-D computer model of the project once the design has reached the required level of detail.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of the meeting a vote was taken of all stakeholders resulting in a unanimous decision that Alternate 21C is the favored option to be presented to the public at the Public Informational Meeting on 2-25-09.

Mr. Armstrong expressed DOT's sincere appreciation for the stakeholders' involvement and hard work. He restated that the original purpose of the stakeholders' meetings was to thoroughly explore the project issues with the

hope and expectation that the group would reflect the perspective of the greater public. With that in mind, the next step is to conduct a larger public meeting to present the results of the group's effort.

Mr. Armstrong pointed out that the environmental document phase also includes public involvement opportunities.

Mr. Armstrong stated that CT DOT will continue to work with the stakeholder group as the project further develops, especially with respect to the bike/pedestrian issues; the landscaping; aesthetic issues such as the architectural treatments on structures and walls; illumination; and any other issues of concern to the public.

For a Public Information Meeting to be held in February 25, 2009 CT DOT will develop the following:

- Enhance the photo renderings of the project as necessary to depict Alternate 21C as the preferred alternate including the bike path where applicable.
- Develop a summary document of the Stakeholder process that developed preferred Alternate 21C. Included in this document will be an outline of the next steps and the NEPA process.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM