

Meeting Summary | Advisory Committee Kick-off Meeting

Date/Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013, 9:00 a.m.

Location: Riverfront Community Center Conference Room, 300 Welles Street, Glastonbury

Purpose: Introduce the study to the Advisory Committee and obtain initial input on goals, design considerations, and other opportunities/constraints for the project area.

Attendees: Attendee sign-in sheet attached.

Summary of Meeting Discussion:

1. Dave Head, CTDOT's project manager, opened the meeting at approximately 9:05 a.m. Advisory Committee (AC) members, CTDOT staff, and CHA (CTDOT's consultant) provided introductions.
 2. Jeff Parker, CHA's project manager, presented an overview of the study including the study purpose, study area, scope of work, and anticipated schedule. Several key points included:
 - The role of the AC was defined to include helping guide both the study process and the development of recommendations.
 - Milestones at which AC meetings will be conducted were identified. It is anticipated that up to five meetings will be conducted depending on the need.
 - One public meeting will be conducted and it is anticipated for May 2013. CHA noted the importance of holding the meeting prior to the beginning of the summer season in order to maximize potential attendance.
 3. A *Resource List* was distributed outlining the documents and other data that have been collected for reference in development of the study. CHA requested the AC review the list and provide input on whether there are other relevant resources available. No input was immediately provided.
 4. CHA reviewed the *Preliminary Planning and Design Goals* for the project, which include: maximize transportation and recreational utility; minimize impacts; and facilitate implementation. CHA noted that these goals were developed based on CHA's understanding of the project and requested AC input on the specifics of the preliminary goals.
 5. CHA presented the general design considerations for the project, including the AASHTO definition of a shared use path/trail, design standards, and relevant examples of shared use paths/trails (such as Farmington Canal Trail, Smith School Greenway, Quinnipiac River Linear Trail, Charter Oak Greenway, and I-890 Shared Use Path in Schenectady, NY). CHA requested the AC provide input on features of other paths/trails they have used and that they like or dislike. No input was immediately provided.
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6. The following comments and questions (in italics followed by responses or additional discussion, where applicable) were provided in response to the preliminary goals and other design considerations:
- *Are the trail connections intended to be truly multimodal?*
 - The connections will be planned according to AASHTO standards for shared use paths and the intent is to accommodate a variety of users including bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, skaters, etc.
 - *Will the path/trail need to be maintained year round?*
 - The intent is to promote year-round use. This could be accomplished by planning/designing for ease of maintenance with consideration to equipment access and direct sun for natural snow melt.
 - *Who will be responsible for maintaining the trail connections? A conversation about this early in the process will be helpful. Will CTDOT maintain within the State right-of-way?*
 - CTDOT indicated that maintenance responsibilities will have to be defined, but it is anticipated that the municipalities will generally be responsible for seasonal maintenance; maintenance of some physical infrastructure, like retaining walls, could be eligible for CTDOT assistance.
 - *What is the plan for collecting public input? Will there be a charrette process?*
 - The primary outreach mechanisms of the study are AC meetings and a public meeting. It is anticipated that the AC will provide insight for the town/group/entity that they represent. The public meeting format has been preliminarily defined and could include a formal presentation of one or more alternatives, preceded by an open house session, and followed by a question/comment and answer period. CHA noted that this format can be changed if the AC believes that a different format would be more effective in their communities.
 - D. Head suggested that CTDOT could host a lunchtime web meeting to broaden the community outreach effort. The meeting would provide an overview of the study and solicit input on the goals, design considerations, and other opportunities/constraints in the study area.
 - *Will potential phasing and funding of trail improvements be considered? Funding opportunities need to be taken advantage of as they come up.*
 - The study report will include guidance on potential funding sources and recommendations for project phasing.
 - *Will the trail connections be paved the entire length?*
 - A paved surface has been assumed at this time; this assumption is consistent with the goal of maximizing utility by accommodating a variety of users. It was noted that other surface materials such as crushed aggregate or concrete could be evaluated on the basis of durability, cost, and accessibility.
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- *Will the trail connections be paved the entire length? (continued)*
 - Potential phasing could include initial construction of a crushed aggregate surface with a paved surface provided in the future.
 - CTDOT noted that eligibility for Federal funding could be contingent upon the trail being paved and ADA-accessible.
 - *What will be the width of the Putnam Bridge walkway?*
 - The full width will be 6'-8", but reduced to 6' adjacent to light poles.
 - *Preferences for potential path/trail termini in Glastonbury could be different for commuters and recreational users.*
 - Specifically, bicycle commuters may be more comfortable with connecting to the street network as near to the bridge as possible so that they can make their own choices about which pathway to take along the streets.
 - Recreational users, particularly pedestrians, might prefer a terminus that is more proximate to an origination/destination (such as a parking area, employment center, etc.).
 - *What are the regional bike commuter travel patterns that the project is intended to accommodate?*
 - It was noted that the termini in Glastonbury should consider how users will be connecting to/from the north (East Hartford) and south, as well as to/from the east.
 - It was noted that bike traffic counts could be useful in understanding potential user demand and travel patterns.
 - CRCOG maintains a bike/pedestrian counting program for the region and can check into the availability of counts for the study area.
 - *Potential conflicts between user groups need to be considered, particularly near termini, where direction of travel to adjacent sidewalks or on-street bike facilities could cause user paths to cross creating safety concerns.*
7. CHA summarized some of the key design considerations as they are currently envisioned by CHA, including: location of the future Putnam Bridge walkway on the northbound/south side of the bridge; connectivity, safety, trail amenities, and parking accommodations at termini; and path/trail alignment relative to Keeney Cove crossing opportunities, floodplain/wetland/property constraints, constructability, and user experience considerations.
8. The AC was prompted to consider the following for discussion after a brief break at 10 a.m.: other opportunities and constraints in the project area; other local conditions or considerations that CHA/CTDOT should be aware of; and individual or community priorities for the project.

9. After the break, CHA presented maps illustrating the key environmental resources in the study area including 100-year floodplains and wetlands. The following key points were noted:
- 100-year floodplain limits approximately follow the edge of the Route 3 roadway in Glastonbury.
 - Wetland soils are extensive throughout the study area and delineated wetland limits (obtained as part of the Putnam Bridge rehabilitation project) generally follow the bottom of the Route 3 embankment in Glastonbury. There are also delineated wetland areas within the I-91 interchange in Wethersfield.
 - CHA noted that it does not appear likely that floodplain and wetland impacts in Glastonbury could be completely avoided by a trail connection to the bridge.
10. CHA presented an aerial map of the project area that illustrated some of the key design considerations for the path/trail alignment and termini. The following comments, questions, and other considerations (in italics, followed by responses or additional discussion, where applicable) were discussed:
- *CHA noted that the path alignment from the bridge in Wethersfield will generally loop around to the southwest, parallel the Exit 25 off-ramp, and terminate at Great Meadow Road near the ramp intersection. Design considerations will include the grade of the path, resulting length, and potential wetland impacts.*
 - It was noted that the intersection is relatively low volume and that Great Meadow Road is an existing bike route.
 - There could be opportunity for some parking accommodations in this area.
 - The Town noted that the recommendations should be coordinated with, and not preclude, the potential for a future boat launch on the Connecticut River in this area. (Note: Provisions for a future boat launch were previously required by CTDEEP a part of any bridge *reconstruction* project. The boat launch is not required as part of the 2013 bridge *rehabilitation* project.)
 - *What are the considerations for possible termini in Glastonbury? CHA preliminarily identified Point Road, Naubuc Avenue adjacent to Route 3, Naubuc Avenue at Putnam Boulevard, and Glastonbury Boulevard at Route 3 northbound ramps as potential locations.*
 - CHA noted that terminating the trail on the west side of Naubuc Avenue adjacent to Route 3 would create a mid-block crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - It was noted that a mid-block crossing is not a preferred condition. CHA noted that visibility for a mid-block crossing in this area is good and that there is precedent in Glastonbury for mid-block crossings.
 - The mid-block crossing could be eliminated by extending the trail along Naubuc Avenue to the Putnam Boulevard intersection, if space allows. A crossing at Putnam Boulevard would be unsignalized.

- *What are the considerations for possible termini in Glastonbury? (continued)*
 - CHA noted that instead of terminating at Naubuc Avenue, the trail could continue along Route 3 and follow the northbound off-ramp to Glastonbury Boulevard. Sidewalk, signalized crossing opportunities, proximity to employment centers, access to transit service, adjacent parking opportunities, and the existing “gateway” were cited as positive features of this location. Naubuc Avenue could be crossed at-grade or via a future walkway adjacent to the Route 3 bridge over Naubuc Avenue.
 - AC members generally questioned the benefits of continuing the trail beyond Naubuc Avenue and generally agreed that the trail should connect to the street network as close as possible to the Putnam Bridge.
 - It was suggested that access to the trail via Naubuc Avenue would best accommodate bike commuters, providing a more direct route to points north in East Hartford and south to Main Street and Route 17 in Glastonbury.
 - *Should a path connection from the bridge to Point Road be ruled out as a viable alternative?*
 - It was noted that Keeney Cove waters flood over the Point Road bridge approximately one-third of the year, particularly during the spring, which would excessively limit accessibility.
 - Access through private property would have to be obtained for the connection.
 - The general consensus was that a Point Road connection should be eliminated from further consideration. CHA will document this decision as part of the study.
 - *How critical are parking accommodations at or near the trail termini?*
 - It was noted that driving to the trail should not be encouraged for health and environmental reasons, but access for some users should necessarily be discouraged by the absence of available parking.
 - If parking dedicated to trail use cannot be accommodated at a trailhead, it would be beneficial to have parking in adjacent commercial areas or in nearby park-and-ride lots be relatively accessible and convenient to/from the trail.
 - *Is there enough room on Naubuc Avenue to extend the path/trail to both Putnam Boulevard and Glastonbury Boulevard?*
 - This opportunity will have to be evaluated within the constraints of the Route 3 bridge over Naubuc Avenue and existing rights-of-way.
 - It was noted that provisions for sidewalk between the boulevards along the east side of Naubuc Avenue might be the most viable connection.
 - *CHA noted that recreational trail spurs to/from the main trail alignment could be provided to accommodate Connecticut River access or to connect to future Goodwin College trail network.*
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- *CHA noted that a trail alignment along the north side of Route 3 in Glastonbury could be a potential alternative. The trail would loop down from the south side of the Putnam Bridge and wrap around under the bridge to get to the north side.*
 - It was questioned whether environmental considerations would make the north side more desirable than the south side for the trail alignment. CHA noted that a trail on either the north side or south side would have similar constraints.
 - It was noted that there are existing farming roads under the bridge that would need to be considered and maintained. These were identified on the aerial map.
 - It was noted that the south side of the existing Route 3 embankment likely receives more direct sunlight than the north side, which could be shadowed by Route 3.
- *Other discussion items included:*
 - More outreach is needed to better understand bicycle and pedestrian user needs and preferences.
 - Steve Braun noted that the Smith School Greenway project in Glastonbury used a 10-year flood elevation as a minimum trail elevation for design purposes.
 - Glastonbury will provide record plans for the Point Road bridge, if available.
 - Deb Dauphinais suggested that Main Street in Glastonbury north of Hebron Avenue is not part of the “priority roadways” classification identified in the Glastonbury Bicycle Master Plan. D. Dauphinais will provide clarification on which sections of Main Street are intended to be “priority roadways.”
 - CHA noted that an adjacent land owner in Glastonbury has expressed concerns over the potential for the trail to encourage trespassing in the area. Specific fencing needs will be considered as part of the study.

11. CHA highlighted the next steps for the study including:

- The next AC meeting is anticipated for March 2013 and that a request for meeting availability would be sent to the AC in the coming weeks. The purpose of the meeting will be to review and discuss preliminary alternatives.
- CTDOT and CHA will organize a web meeting for February. CHA will be requesting AC assistance in identifying potential web meeting participants.

12. The meeting concluded at approximately 11:15 a.m.