

Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #5

Thursday, February 4, 2011

10:00 AM- Noon

Wilton Town Hall Annex, Room A

Wilton, CT

Attendance

Study Advisory Group Members and Public who signed in:

Sue Prosi	South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)
Lou Schulman	Norwalk Transit District
Betty Brosius	Town Of Ridgefield Planning
Bob Nerney	Town Of Wilton
Sam Gardener	Corridor Resident
Ray Rauth	SC3C
Dave Hannon	HVCEO
Jon Chew	HVCEO
Craig Lader	SWRPA (Project Manager)

Consultant Team:

Susan VanBenschoten	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI)
Carol Gould	FHI

This meeting was the final Technical Advisory Committee meeting for the Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study. The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Update the Technical Advisory Committee on the public meeting that was held in November,
- Review any final modifications to the plan resulting from public comments and receive any remaining comments from the Committee on plan changes,
- Review the implementation plan (which was provided to the committee in advance of the meeting and summarized at the meeting),
- To discuss the final Project Pamphlet,
- To provide an update on the Access Management and Curb Cut plans, and
- Wrap up the Advisory Committee meeting process for the study.

Review of Public Meeting

Susan informed the group about the results of the previous public meeting. Key points include:

- Open house format with short presentation and Q&A session
- Fairly low turnout – About 20

- Draft plan generally well received
- Concerns related to:
 - Precision Brake property in Branchville
 - Protections for Norwalk River
- Strong support from:
 - Bike advocates
 - Ridgefield EDC

Plan Modifications Resulting From Public Meeting and Input From Committee

Susan reviewed the changes that would be made to the draft plan based on public feedback. The Committee also suggested a few additional modifications to the plan. All is summarized below:

- Park-and-ride lot in Ridgefield Gateway – the committee noted that there is a park and ride lot a bit north (about 3 miles) of the Ridgefield Gateway area and two lots are probably not warranted. There was discussion that finding another property in the Gateway neighborhood could be problematic. As such this will be dropped from the plan.
- Modify curb cuts in Branchville to better serve Precision Brake parcel (Option 1)
- Resolve floodplain/wetland issues in Branchville Plan
- Better illustrate mobility hub will be added to the plan – there was some discussion about if this illustration would stir up more controversy unnecessarily. The group generally agreed that an illustration of the idea for a mobility hub was a good idea and that it should be left in the plan.
- More information on potential increase in SF in each focus area will be added to the plan
- Show Norwalk River on all maps (as appropriate)
- More emphasis will be added to the plan regarding protecting Norwalk River
- Ray R. suggested that the bike recommendations related to bike racks actually specify “sheltered” parking for bikes and that bike parking should be included in any parking structures at stations or in villages.
- The group wanted the plan to have a stronger reference to the use of technology such as real time ITS. The plan should have more emphasis on using Green technologies such as vehicle recharging stations at train stations.

Implementation Plan

Susan referred the Committee to the Draft Implementation Plan that was provided to the committee prior to the meeting.

- There was significant concern about the suggested implementation structure around 5 follow on committees for the various initiatives. The group felt that the initiatives themselves were organized well, but that the champions should rely on institutional mechanisms already in place.
- As such SWRPA and HVCEO committed to do an annual “check in” on the various initiatives in the plan with respect to their progress. This would be an annual review initiated by the regions, which have a long and strong history working together in this corridor.
- The group felt that the plan should identify some “early wins” and that the overall plan would be implemented on ‘baby steps’ over time. Susan asked that member of the committee please send her their ideas about what the “early wins” should be.
- The group generally liked the resource guide distributed for the land use and regulatory recommendations. It was requested that hyperlinks be added to the digital version of the resource guide for referrals to other websites.
- There was some discussion about this preliminary cost estimates and many felt that the construction cost numbers were low (for example the estimated cost for the Wilton Center foot bridge should be closer to 500K). Susan agreed and will be modifying for the final report to provide more contingency cost to many items. Lou S. of the NTD felt that the transit study that is recommended was too high and should be 50K.
- Sue Prosi asked that the final study should emphasize that \$250 million has been spent in the corridor over the past 10 years and that the estimates in this study illustrated that ‘it would not be too expensive to finish the job’.

Project Pamphlet

Susan referred to the draft project pamphlet that was also provided to the Committee prior to the meeting. She explained its purpose and asked for reactions.

- Objective: Summarize plan and serve as advocacy publication
- Provides information on how to stay involved and where to get information
- In place of final public meeting
- Present preliminary project costs

In general the Committee like the draft pamphlet and understood that it would be modified to reflect the revised approach to implementation (where the Regional Planning Agencies would coordinate to do annual reviews of the status of plan elements rather than the follow on committee proposal).

Access Management and Curb Cut Plan Status

Susan informed the Committee that the access management and curb cut plans were complete for one final review by the planners. When complete they will be provided to each town. Representatives from Clough Harbor Associates (CHA), who prepared the plans as a subconsultant to FHI on this study, would be contacting the Town Planners to review the plans at regular Planning and Zoning meetings in the spring if desired by the Planners. Planners should expect to hear from Jeff Parker from CHA to set up these appearances – Jeff had attended and presented to this Committee at the previous meeting.

Next Steps

Susan noted that the next steps were to revise the Project Pamphlet, Implementation Plan and Assemble final report with modifications to plan as discussed here. All will be provided to the Committee when complete, with one more opportunity to comment. FHI will be available to present the final plan to each MPO in the spring. Susan agreed to meet with the Ridgefield Board of Selectman to present the plan as well when requested by Betty Brosius.

Susan thanked the Committee for their time and guidance during the conduct of the study.

The meeting ended at 3:00 PM.