

Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study

**Focus Area Workshop
Branchville Area
Thursday, May 13, 2010
6:30 – 8:30 PM**

Branchville Elementary School - Cafeteria
40 Florida Road
Ridgefield, CT

Attendance

Advisory Committee Members and Public who signed in: 23 in attendance

South Western Regional Planning Agency

Craig Lader Study Manager

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials

David Hannon Deputy Director
John Chew Director

Connecticut Department of Transportation Staff:

David Head Transportation Planning
Katharine Rattan Transportation Planning

Consultant Team:

Susan VanBenschoten Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Carol Gould Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Sam Eisenbeiser Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Francisco Gomes Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Welcome Activity:

As participants entered the workshop, they were asked to answer three questions. Below is a summary of questions and responses:

What do you value most about Branchville now?

- quaintness - scenic
- accessibility to 84 and Rte 7 –Wilton
- village feel
- businesses - shopping
- convenient stores,
- restaurant, RR station
- supermarket – other up and coming businesses
- The possibilities! ...the potential
- My property!

What would you most like to see change in Branchville in the future?

- Residential opportunities; affordable housing, rental units, elderly housing, workforce housing

- Pharmacy
- Create a village
- Better thought out, well planned business/commercial district
- Mixed use, TOD, better relationship to rail etc.
- Add gas station
- Traffic flow- fix morning traffic at Rte 7/102; turn lane on Rte 7
- More parking at rail station
- Safer better bridge to train station
- Clean up Branchville Road
- More amenities
- Easier walking to local business
- Keep it quaint – not over developed
- Complete streets – bike access
- Aesthetics – streetscape
-

List the top 2 reasons you come to or go through Branchville?

- Home – live here
- Shop locally
- Live nearby
- Work
- Commute to work
- To get to Landmark Academy
- Pass through on my way to work
- Getting to someplace else!
- Train
- Supermarket – shop at Ancona’s
- Travel to Norwalk
- Eat at Little Pub
- Bike trips
- Go to school
- Own business/property

Presentation

Susan VanBenschoten welcomed the audience to the first geographic focus area workshop looking at the Branchville area for the Route 7 Transportation and Land Use Study. She explained the purpose of the study and emphasized that this study will focus on Route 7 within Danbury, Ridgefield, Redding, and Wilton. ***The study will not evaluate the need for an expressway from Danbury to Norwalk, but will instead investigate ways to maximize the efficiency and safety of all modes of the existing transportation system.***

Ms. VanBenschoten then presented existing conditions in the corridor as well as the 2030 Corridor Vision developed by the project team and the Advisory Committee. She explained the purpose of the geographic focus area workshops being held for the areas around Route 7/Route 35 Intersection, Branchville, and Wilton Center. This first workshop is to gather input to better understand public issues and ideas or vision for each focus area. The second workshop will be to present for public comment a draft concept for the future form and character of the area to include in the overall corridor plan.

Ms. VanBenschoten reviewed preliminary Branchville focus area goals for audience comment.

The remainder of the workshop was devoted to small group exercises discussing these goals as well as identifying issues and opportunities for the focus area.

Public Question and Comment Period:

- One attendee asked “What is a village?”
- One attendee asked what the impact of the Georgetown rail station would be
- Susan responded that the trains might skip stops
- One attendee indicated that Branchville might be a lower density and still serve as a TOD. Susan agreed.
- One attendee wondered if Branchville and Georgetown were really two separate entities.
- One attendee indicated that the area was auto-oriented and that no one would walk ¼-mile.
- Jon Chew indicated that the Planimetrics plan was not approved because of the uncertainties surrounding the roundabout.
- One attendee indicated that at the time, the roundabout was seen as a viable alternative to widening to 4 lanes.

The following is a summary of the small group exercise findings.

FOCUS AREA WORKSHOP– Small Group Exercise #1

OBJECTIVE:

PLANNER FOR AN EVENING!

Imagine.....you are King or Queen of the realm, and also Chief Architect and Planner....you can wave your scepter and make it happenWhat would you envision for this special area for the future? Work with your planning team at your table and record your findings as we go along.....

The following summarizes the various group responses.

Branchville Group #1

- West Branchville Road (east of train station): Mixed Uses
- Parking Deck for train station (depends on design)
- Pedestrian crossing over tracks?
- New Street Parallel to Rt.7 on west side
- Need bike routes and pedestrian walks along west side of Rt.7
- Need pedestrian crossings of Rt.7 (bridge?)
- Safe crossings of Rt.7 needed at both ends of train station lot
- Get rid of nothing
- Enhance West Branchville Rd. with mixed uses.
- Intersection of Rt.7 & Rt.102:
 - Improve bridge to railroad station
 - Re-align difficult turn
 - Traffic light realignment
 - Roundabout?
 - Change crossing to Railroad

- Small building at north of crossing is a problem
- Improve access to train station
- Add parking for train station
- Expand parking to area south of train station
- Add another crossing for cars and pedestrians at south end of train station
- West side of Rt.7:
 - Don't want too many changes or too much density
 - Some stores below with apartments above in select buildings
 - Improve bike access and routes in this area

Branchville Group #2

- Remove existing housing on Rt.7
- Add retail, restaurants, multi-use buildings
 - Upgraded retail w/village look and housing above
- Connections (similar to Wilton Center)
 - Create new village on west side of Rt.7
 - New connector road to extend from Old Town Rd. to Ancona's Market and crossing Rt.102 behind little pub, Branchville Oil, and exit at Bandstorm Instruments.
 - Pedestrian Bridge: from Wilbridge across Rt.7 to train station
- "Workforce housing" on east side of train station
- Adaptive re-use of Precision Brake property
- Amenities:
 - Bus shelters
 - Parking deck @ train station
 - Turning lanes at Old Town Rd.
 - Widen bridge from train station to Rt.7/102
 - Include parking with new village concept
 - Bike racks to east of train station

Branchville Group #3

- Village on west side of Rt.7, south of Branchville Rd.
- 2 Pedestrian bridges over Rt.7 connecting to Branchville station.
- Enlarge parking without having to go with parking deck
- Multi-family housing at northeast corner, east of railroad tracks
- Riverwalk between river and Rt.7 with park/playground at southeast corner
- Parking behind commercial area on west side of Rt.7
- Denser housing behind commercial parking area on west side of Rt.7
- No parking on Rt.7
- Florida Rd. should be aligned to 90° at Rt. 102 with crosswalk
- Maintain bike paths
- Northeast: commercial and mixed uses
- Drugstore at Ancona's Market
- Gas station on Rt.7, north of Rt.102
- Choose one side and make it the village

- Density at train station & north on same side of Rt.7 (small shops)
- Path along Norwalk River (riverwalk) for bikers and walkers
- Residential north of Rt.102 on same side as train station
- Office/mixed-use north of Rt.102 across from train station
- Playground (like at Rec. Center)

Please view [Branchville Results 5-13-2010](#) for further summary of the attendees responses to area goals and visual preference survey.

The workshop adjourned at 8:30 p.m.