

Report of Meeting

Date and Time: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 6 PM

Location: Microsoft Teams Online Meeting Platform

Subject: GHMS Live Online Discussion #1

Attendance

GHMS Live Online Discussion #1 was attended by 14 participants from the public and 13 members of the GHMS Study Team.

GHMS Study Team

Connecticut Department of Transportation

- Mike Calabrese
- Kevin Burnham

Consultant Team

- Casey Hardin, TranSystems Corporation
- Nick Mandler, TranSystems Corporation
- Dave Stahnke, TranSystems Corporation
- Mayuresh Khare, AECOM
- Stephen Gazillo, AECOM
- John Hapkiewicz, AECOM
- Rich Ravit, AECOM
- Tim Ryan, AECOM
- Mike Morehouse, FHI Studio
- Marcy Miller, FHI Studio
- Laura Parete, FHI Studio

Public Participants

- Rich Armstrong
- Isabelle Brown
- Tom Carson
- Richard Deluca
- Wade Gibbs
- Peter G.
- Greg
- Ron Parlante
- Bonnie Potocki
- Jon R.
- Tyler Smith
- Jay Stange
- Kevin Sullivan
- Luke Zielinski

Summary

Mr. Mike Morehouse, of FHI Studio, and Mr. Mike Calabrese, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed attendees to the first GHMS Live Online Discussion. Mr. Morehouse provided an overview of how to participate in the Live Online Discussion, introduced key members of the project team, and gave a brief introductory presentation about the GHMS.

Following the presentation, Mr. Morehouse, and Mr. Casey Hardin, of TranSystems Corporation, facilitated a discussion and encouraged members of the public to provide comments and ask questions about the study. This discussion is summarized below.

Mr. Morehouse concluded the meeting by thanking everyone who attended and saying that the study team wants people to be a part of the process to help identify potential improvements. Mr. Morehouse encouraged participants to attend future Live Online Discussions and to continue providing feedback to CTDOT to inform the study.

Discussion

Q – What is the goal of the GHMS?

A – The GHMS team has established a vision to improve mobility by planning an integrated, resilient, multi-modal transportation system in the Greater Hartford Region thereby enhancing the quality of life, economic vitality, and opportunity in the region. The following goals have been identified to support the vision:

- *Improve the movement of people and goods*
- *Increase transportation options, accessibility, reliability and safety*
- *Accommodate future needs and emerging technologies*
- *Prioritize social equity*
- *Minimize environmental impacts*

Q – Will the I-84 Hartford Project Public Advisory Committee (PAC) be part of a new PAC for the GHMS?

A – The I-84 Hartford PAC was the advisory group for the I-84 Hartford Project. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) decided to take a step back and holistically look at the I-84 Hartford Project in conjunction with other transportation initiatives in the Hartford area to align them with a broader vision shaped by stakeholder input. The resulting effort is called the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS). PACs can be most effective with a specific project definition, and the GHMS is still very broad in scope. As such the GHMS study team is not continuing its formal collaboration with the I-84 Hartford Project PAC. The study team is currently gathering data and identifying broad regional needs for the GHMS. In the next phase of the GHMS, the study team will consider creating several smaller focus groups to discuss specific initiatives. The team is developing a long-term plan for the region, but also wants to be identify near-term projects that can initiate addressing exiting mobility deficiencies.

Q – What is the study schedule?

A – The GHMS is anticipated to continue through 2022. Phase 1 of the study, focused on existing conditions analysis and identifying alternatives, is anticipated to be completed by the Summer of 2021. In Phase 2, anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022, detailed analyses will be done to identify potential projects to be included as a part of an implementation program.

Q – How will the GHMS consider Hartford 400?

A – The GHMS will look at what is recommended as part of the Hartford 400, a visionary effort. Several of the Hartford 400 recommendations could potentially be incorporated into the GHMS. The study team will consider many ways to address the needs of the Greater Hartford Region and evaluate the potential of the Hartford 400 initiatives along with other potential improvement opportunities to meet those needs.

Q – How likely is the possibility of Acela service through Hartford?

A – The study is focused on mobility within the Greater Hartford Region. The study team will collaborate with both CTDOT and FRA to ensure that recommendations are consistent with broader passenger rail planning efforts. The FRA recently completed the [NEC Future](#) plan for rail throughout the Northeast Corridor. CTDOT is currently updating the State Rail Plan, which will be released in 2021.

Q – What is the preferred method to provide comments and ideas for inclusion in the study?

A – Comments can be submitted to the [GHMS](#) project team through the [GHMS Collaboration Portal](#), [interactive map](#), [website](#), and via [email](#). Email comments may be directed to [Mike Calabrese](#) at CTDOT or [Marcy Miller](#) at FHI Studio.

Q – How were the most recent CTDOT I-84 Hartford Project repairs funded?

A – The recent repairs were funded by a combination of state and federal funds.

Q – Are the alternatives identified in I-84 Hartford Project still considered in the GHMS?

A – Yes, the alternatives identified in the I-84 Hartford Project are being considered as part of the GHMS.

Q – What type of modeling will be used to estimate demand and modal split?

A – The study team will use industry standard method of travel demand modeling using the regional planning organization's (Capitol Region Council of Governments – CRCOG) travel demand model. In addition, the project team is developing a scenario planning model, which is based on the CRCOG travel demand model. The scenario planning model will consider possibilities of traveler behavior change, land-use pattern changes, future policies, advancements in technology etc. and their impacts on mobility. These models will help identify features that can improve different types of mobility in the various future scenarios.

*Q – How will the pandemic affect future GHMS recommendations for the **CTransit** bus system?*

A – CTDOT has maintained service throughout the pandemic and has implemented many strategies to minimize the risk of spread of the virus. The study team is also closely following the pandemic impacts to bus and rail ridership. There have been recent rebounds in ridership as infection rates drop and vaccine distribution rises. It is still uncertain whether there will be long-term reductions in ridership on these modes. With the scenario planning tool, the study team will examine impacts of possible changes in travel behaviors.

Q – The I-84 / I-91 interchange has been raised as needing to be addressed in conjunction with the I-84 Hartford Project. Is the study team considering rerouting I-84 and returning the Bulkeley Bridge to the local street grid?

A – Potential realignment of I-84, both north and south of its current orientation, was preliminarily studied by CTDOT. Those options, as well as others, will be looked at in the GHMS as part of a comprehensive mobility solution for the region.

Q – What role will CRCOG have in this study?

A – The Capitol Region Council of Governments is the region’s municipal planning organization (MPO). All transportation officials from the 38 municipalities have been and will continue to be informed of and involved in the study’s efforts. The study team is also focused on having regular coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other appropriate federal, state and regional agencies considering the multimodal nature of the study as well as key stakeholders in the region.

Q – Is it within the scope or goals of this project to coordinate non-motorized infrastructure so that it is consistent between municipalities in the study area? Can this study help the local jurisdictions plan together for a better overall regional non-motorized system?

A – CRCOG recently completed a [Complete Street Regional Plan](#). It reviewed the walking and bicycling network within the region’s municipalities including New Britain, Hartford, and Manchester, aiming to address non-motorized connectivity. It also highlights opportunities to coordinate with CTDOT, particularly when a state road is due for maintenance. CTDOT continues to be interested in partnering in these efforts to help provide safe options for all modes. The active transportation system is incrementally improving because of the collaborative efforts of all agencies involved.

*Q – Are there any specific ideas related to improving and expanding CT**fastrak**?*

*A – Yes, there is discussion about expanding CT**fastrak** east of the Connecticut River. There is an opportunity to study an expanded the service as part of the GHMS, including better amenities for bus passengers and eliminating gaps in service. The study team will be assessing how long it takes to travel between various origins and destinations via car/bus and the competitiveness of each mode.*

Q – Will the study consider planning and reserving areas for electric car charging stations?

A – This planning level study will not get into this level of detail but will recognize the need for electric car charging stations as a component of the overall infrastructure need. Charging stations are typically sited by individual municipalities.

Q – How will the Governor’s Council on Climate Change report recommendations be interwoven into the GHMS?

A – CTDOT is aware of ongoing climate change initiatives and is doing its part to comply with state mandates. The GHMS Team will consider this report as the study progresses. The GHMS has environmental goals and performance measures and will measure how individual alternatives meet performance criteria in the plan. Some of the GHMS objectives include providing transit access to high density employment areas, improving equity, improving air quality and minimizing impacts to natural and built environmental resources.

Q – How will the study balance long-term projects with the immediacy of a potential new infrastructure bill?

A – During Phase 1 of this study the study team will identify short-term, mid-term and long-term concepts. The ones without any fatal flaws will advance to Phase 2 for more detailed evaluation. Funding opportunities will also be considered. While the scope for Phase 2 has not been completely defined, it is anticipated that the study team will seek to advance near-term concepts to a higher-level of engineering analysis to help advance their implementation quickly.

Q – Is the study team looking at reducing CO₂ emissions, including in concrete applications?

A – The study team has a performance measure related to vehicular emissions. As GHMS is a planning level study, detailed recommendations regarding concrete applications will not be a part of this study.

Q – The study team should consider Complete Streets in areas where local streets intersect with highway ramps and bridges. They are difficult for pedestrians, cyclists, and folks in wheelchairs to navigate. Sidewalks and bike lane are inadequate and slip lanes encourage speeding. The highways isolate neighborhoods and cut-off towns and cities from their neighbors. They disproportionately affect urban area and people of color.

A – Comment noted, and these types of recommendations will be considered.