

**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAY DESIGN – PROJECT DEVELOPMENT UNIT
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING - REPORT OF MEETING**

PROJECT NO.: PP063-0015

ROUTE: U.S. Route 44 at Main St, High St, and Ely St

TOWN: City of Hartford

DATE: September 24, 2024

LOCATION OF MEETING: Community Room, Wilson-Gray YMCA, 444 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT 06120

TIME OF MEETING: 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

SUBJECT OF MEETING: Proposed Improvements at the Intersection of US 44 and Main Street/High Street/Ely Street

CTDOT REPRESENTATION

Michael N. Calabrese, P.E. – Office of Engineering, Division of Highway Design
Kevin J. Burnham, P.E. - Office of Engineering, Consultant Design – Major Highways
Marissa L. Pfaffinger, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit
Andrew J. Correia, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit
Shraddha Joshi, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit

CITY OF HARTFORD REPRESENTATION

Grace Yi – Department of Development Services – Planning and Zoning Division, City of Hartford

SUMMARY OF MEETING

An in-person public information meeting for Proposed Project PP063-0015 was held on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, at 6:00 pm at the Wilson-Gray YMCA in the City of Hartford. This proposed project is an early action recommendation from the Greater Hartford Mobility Program (previously Study). The meeting was held to solicit feedback and comments regarding conceptual designs to address vehicular and pedestrian safety concerns and improve traffic operations at the intersection of US 44 and Main Street/High Street/Ely Street in the City of Hartford. A conceptual design was presented that proposes to realign the intersection to provide a smoother horizontal alignment between the eastern and western legs of US 44 along with the replacement of traffic signal equipment. The concept proposes to decrease pedestrian crossing distances at the intersection and proposes a combination of bicycle lane, buffered bicycle lane, and shared use path on different approaches of the intersection. It also includes reconstruction of existing sidewalk throughout the corridor, relocation/replacement of illumination poles, and formalizing the existing parking lanes with pavement markings and signs. Also included in the concept is the replacement of the traffic signal equipment and installation of new crosswalks at the intersection of Main Street and Belden Street, as well as the modification of the traffic signal at the intersection of US 44 and Pleasant Street to provide head-to-head left turn lanes. The conceptual plan was developed and refined with input from various departments in the City of Hartford over monthly coordination meetings ahead of this public information meeting.

Michael Calabrese, Marissa Pfaffinger, Andrew Correia, and Shraddha Joshi represented CTDOT as the project team from the Division of Highway Design. Kevin Burnham, represented the CTDOT Greater Hartford Mobility Program. The formal presentation was approximately 30 minutes long, formal comment, question, and feedback session was approximately 30 minutes long followed by another 30 minutes of informal conversation period. Approximately 18 people were in attendance from the general public including several members from the Voices of Women of Color, and one representative from the City of Hartford’s Department of Development Services, Grace Yi.

There were questions and comments regarding streetscape, crashes, bicycle lanes, intersection operation, funding, opportunity for locals in the construction project, and several questions regarding City’s Parking rules/changes in and outside of the proposed project area. Some of these questions were fielded by Grace Yi as they were City of Hartford’s

matters, not CTDOT staff. There was a comment noting that bicycle lanes are not supported in this area due to high speed of vehicles and vulnerability to bicyclists riding next to the traffic. It was mentioned that a feedback survey performed for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study reflects this view. There were no comments directly opposing the proposed improvements except suggestions to explore other options for bicycle safety.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS FOLLOWING PRESENTATION

The questions and comments asked by the public and the responses provided by the design team during the meeting are as follows:

Have recent 2023 and 2024 crash data been analyzed, because 2020 and 2021 might have been affected by the pandemic?

The crash analysis was performed earlier in 2023 but crash numbers from years starting at 2017 had been compared to see if there were any decrease in numbers during the pandemic. The data did not show lower numbers during 2020 or 2021, hence those years were included. The Design Team will look at crash data from most recent years when the design phase starts.

Will the streetscape in this area match the upper Albany Avenue area?

Decisions about specific streetscape features will be made during the design phase of the project in coordination with the City of Hartford. At this early conceptual phase, the specifics are not yet known.

Were crashes at other intersections in the City like the Walnut Street, etc. looked at?

Those areas were not looked at for this project, but the Greater Hartford Mobility Study looked at a wider area covering several streets in the City. This proposed project focuses only on this intersection and is one of the early action implementations of the locations identified as needing improvements in the Greater Hartford Mobility Study.

What will be CRCOG's involvement in this project?

CRCOG is already aware of the Greater Hartford Mobility Program as a whole and will be notified of this as an upcoming project in their area if it moves forward to the design phase.

The bicycle lanes start at the Pleasant Street intersection, how are people going to get up to there? There are no connections to the parks or other things.

The bicycle facilities shown on the plans are what can be provided within the proposed project's limits. The City of Hartford has a Bicycle Master Plan for the entire city that has outlined the desired routes and connections. The city-wide network is unlikely to be constructed all at once, but projects like this are an opportunity to provide improvements consistent with the plan, where possible.

Is the area/fence in front of the Keney Tower being impacted?

There are no anticipated impacts to the area/fence to the Keney Tower. The proposed realignment will remove paved area in front of the Keney Tower and there may be added space available for landscaping, if desired.

Can a separated bus bay/lane in front of the school be provided to separate the school bus/parents pick up/drop off area from rest of the traffic. Currently, the pickup/drop off area interferes with the traffic flow.

There is not enough width to provide such separation without either reducing the sidewalk in front of the school or encroaching into the school property. The area in front of the school is proposed to be used as pickup/drop off area during school hours and as a bicycle lane during other times.

Will the intersection operate fine in the future as well?

Yes, along with the traffic analysis for the existing conditions, traffic analysis for the design year was performed as well, which is about 2048. The results of the traffic analysis shows that it will operate at acceptable levels for urban areas. The existing traffic signal does not have a vehicle detection system which results in wasted time; namely when the queue has

already cleared on High Street approach. The new signal equipment will optimize the signal times and will operate more efficiently.

What do you mean by formalized parking? Will parking meters be added?

Formalized parking simply means adding pavement markings and signs to mark parking spaces. Often times people do not park properly which reduces the number of spaces available for parking. This area of Route 44 and Main Street already has parking meters, additional parking meters are not being proposed as a part of this project. Grace Yi from the City of Hartford provided additional clarifications regarding the parking meters in and outside of this proposed project area as well.

Will bicycle racks be provided?

Streetscape amenities like bicycle rack, benches, trash cans can be provided, that will be decided by the Design Team during the design phase in coordination with the City of Hartford.

Will there be competition with other projects for funds needed for this project?

This proposed project is not funded currently, but the CTDOT management team is aware that this is in the pipeline and is a priority project within the Greater Hartford Mobility Program and has support to move forward.

Will there be opportunities for the locally owned contractor businesses in the construction project?

CTDOT follows State and Federal guidelines for the bidding process.

A representative from the Voices of Women of Color organization noted that during the public outreach program for the Greater Hartford Mobility Study, the community expressed their concern with on-road bicycle lanes. Vehicle speeds, parked cars (car doors), and the varied ages/mobility of likely users was cited as some of the reasons for concern. The representative suggested exploring additional options for bicycle facilities within the project limits.

The shared use path provided on the east side of Main Street will provide separation for bicyclists from traffic. These suggestions will be forwarded to the Design Team who will work with the City of Hartford to explore other options for bicycle facilities in this area.

How long is it going to take for/until construction?

The construction project itself will take 1 to 2 years but the design phase leading to it will take 3 to 4 years. There are several activities that need to be completed when performing preliminary and final design before construction can begin.

A comment was made that the Clay Arsenal Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) has the Community Development Corporation designation. (This proposed project area is partially within the Clay Arsenal NRZ).

There were several questions related to new parking meters in other areas of the city, changes regarding parking on one side of street on certain days, and other parking issues in areas of the city outside of this proposed project's limits.

Grace Yi from the City of Hartford answered some of those questions and mentioned that she would check with the Hartford Parking Authority for rest of the questions.