



**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Division of Highway Design**

MEETING MINUTES

Project No.: 151-331
 Project Name: Reconstruction of Interstate 84/CT Route 8 Interchange (the Project)
 Date of Meeting: February 18, 2022 1:00 PM – 2:45 PM
 Location of Meeting: Zoom Teleconference
 Subject of Meeting: New Mix PAC Meeting #2C

Attendees:

PAC Members	
Name	Organization
David Simpson	City of Waterbury Department of Public Works
Robert Nerney	City of Waterbury Planning Department
Maria Vaccarelli	CTtransit Waterbury
Martin Begnal	Friends of Riverside Cemetery
Kurt Salmoiraghi	Federal Highway Administration
Betty Bajek	Greater Waterbury Transit District
Erik Hazelton	Housatonic Valley Association
John DiCarlo	Main Street Waterbury
Joseph Sculley	Motor Transportation Association of Connecticut
Sonia Fonseca	NAACP of Greater Waterbury #2015
Dana Elm	Naugatuck Valley Community College
Mark Nielsen	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Ken Stanco	Office of the Mayor
Kevin Zak	PAL River Brigade
Stephanie Valickis	Saint Mary's Hospital
Kevin Taylor	Waterbury Bridge to Success
Thomas Hyde	Waterbury Development Corporation
Joseph Violette	Waterbury Regional Chamber
Martin Spring	Waterville Community Club

Department of Transportation	
Name	Organization
Nilesh Patel	CTDOT
Scott Roberts	CTDOT
Jonathan Dean	CTDOT
Joe Belrose	CTDOT
Michael Calabrese	CTDOT
Kevin Carifa	CTDOT
Kevin Fleming	CTDOT
Consultant Team	
Jacob Argiro	HNTB
David Schweitzer	HNTB
Christopher Fagan	HNTB
Naomi Hodges	HNTB

Distribution: All Attendees

1. Meeting Purpose

The Project Team recapped key elements of Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting No. 2B and conveyed the New Mix Project's (the program) revised Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study's (the Study) Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement (Preliminary P&N Statement) as well as the Study's other transportation-related goals and objectives, highlighting the influence of both PAC members and stakeholders on the Study's progress thus far.

The Project Team received questions from PAC members prior to this meeting. These questions were discussed at this meeting as well as formally responded to via email post-meeting. These responses can be found appended to the end of this Report of Meeting in Section 3.

2. New Mix PEL Study Project Advisory Committee Meeting Presentation

A. Project Advisory Committee Meeting No. 2C Summary

- a. The relationship between the New Mix Project's PEL Study and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
- b. The revised Preliminary P&N Statement and included other transportation-related goals and objectives.
 - i. The other transportation-related goals and objectives were identified by the Study Team and informed with input from PAC members, stakeholders, and other members of the public.
- c. General Questions and Discussion.
- d. PAC Member Email Questions Discussion.

B. Comments and Questions on the Presentation and New Mix program

The following questions and comments were received during the PAC Meeting No. 2C presentation.

- Erik Hazelton (Housatonic Valley Association, Southern Valley Conservation Projects Manager) asked if it was possible for the Project Team to state which questions from the list sent to the Project Team would be addressed and thanked the Project Team for addressing the email, adding that members of the PAC seek to both understand the PEL process and be understood themselves. CTDOT thanked Mr. Hazelton and other PAC members for their feedback and noted that the list of questions would be reviewed in its entirety.
- Mr. Hazelton asked if a separate Purpose and Need Statement (P&N Statement) would be produced for the NEPA process or if the Preliminary P&N Statement developed during the PEL Study would be utilized within the NEPA process. Ms. Hodges responded that the Preliminary P&N Statement which has been developed by the Project Team with PAC member input thus far is a PEL study P&N Statement. Ms. Hodges added that the Project's Preliminary P&N Statement could be refined as it is brought into the NEPA phase, and thus may not necessarily be utilized verbatim within the NEPA process. As alternatives get

developed further, there is the possibility that the Preliminary P&N Statement will be revised to better align with the Project's identified transportation needs.

- Mark Nielsen (Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, Director of Planning / Assistant Director) noted that the program should strive to reconnect neighborhoods split by the Interstate 84/CT Route 8 Interchange (Mixmaster). While the program could improve travel for people traveling through the area who will utilize the expressways, there is a need to focus on reconnecting neighborhoods cut off as a result of the interchange, as there isn't a way for people to go from east to west or north to south within Waterbury without difficulty. The Project Team responded that enhancing connectivity is a goal identified for the New Mix Project. The PAC will be introduced to CTDOT's vision for the enhancement and facilitation of connectivity within Waterbury as well as the manner in which it will be investigated as the Study progresses. Connectivity, including the manner in which potential alternatives can facilitate connectivity, and how the highway system impacts these neighborhoods is part of the analysis to be performed as the Study progresses.
- Martin Begnal (Friends of Riverside Cemetery, President) asked for clarification regarding if community, environmental and historical impacts do not belong within a P&N Statement but instead within a project's goals and objectives. The Project Team clarified by explaining that goals and objectives are part of a P&N Statement. The PEL Study's Preliminary P&N Statement will be compiled into a report entitled: *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement*. This report will include a purpose statement, need statement, project goals, and other transportation-related goals and objectives including community, environmental, and historical considerations. It was noted that the other transportation-related goals and objectives, in addition to other factors, will have criteria to define the manner in which the Study Team will evaluate potential solutions for the transportation system. These criteria further incorporate the communal, environmental, and historical concerns that are associated with the transportation system and will be analyzed during the PEL Study and further developed and investigated during the NEPA process.
- Mr. Begnal asked if the goals and objectives would be worked out with a context sensitive design. The Project Team affirmed that would be the case, and Mr. Begnal expressed that he sees incorporating these principles into the Project as important. The Project Team assured Mr. Begnal that the Project's guiding principles include creating a solution within the context of the community and environment, and that these principles will influence potential solutions and how they are developed and progressed throughout the PEL process. CTDOT added that community connectivity is regarded as an important aspect of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation that was recently passed. The CTDOT will be looking into positioning projects that focus on community connectivity to apply for federal grants where applicable.
- Mr. Hazelton asked when the Preliminary P&N Statement would be finalized, and when the deadline for PAC comments would be. The Project Team responded that the Preliminary P&N Statement can be modified as the PEL process develops. The Project Team has meetings with agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Federal Highway Administration, State Historic Preservation Office, and others to gain their insight and input on the Preliminary P&N

Statement including the other transportation-related goals and objectives so as to incorporate their concerns into the Project. Mr. Hazelton asked if comments received from these agencies would be public information that the PAC members would be able to see. The Project Team noted that the coordination with these agencies would be documented for incorporation into the Study.

- Mr. Hazelton also expressed concerns with not seeing verbiage that explicitly mentioned community connections or environmental impact within the Preliminary P&N Statement. The Project Team responded that while the elements that Mr. Hazelton mentioned may not be verbatim in the purpose statement or need statement, they are considered to be other transportation-related goals and objectives which is a part of the Preliminary P&N Statement and will be included in the *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* report. CTDOT added that the purpose statement and need statement both focus on the current transportation deficiencies and transportation related aspects of the Project, but aspects of the community and environment can and will be included as other transportation-related goals and objectives.
- Kevin Zak (PAL River Brigade, President) asked why elements such as community connections or the environment could not be included within the Preliminary P&N Statement, and what the harm would be to include it. CTDOT responded that the primary purpose of the Project is a transportation initiative, and would be to address the structural, geometric, and operational deficiencies of the Mixmaster; however, community connections and environmental considerations would be goals for the overall Project as well.
- Mr. Zak noted that as the Mixmaster has divided Waterbury into four quadrants, he believes the public will be interested in how the Project can do the best to reconnect these communities which were divided. Mr. Zak added that the Mixmaster interchange needs to be fixed, but it cannot be lost that the structure has been harmful to both Waterbury and the surrounding towns. PAC members want to make an impact on the aspects not included within the Preliminary P&N Statement. Mr. Zak emphasized that he sees environmental issues such as pollution and the disconnection of communities as a result of the structure. Mr. Begnal added that the environmental and communal aspects of this Project are what he feels himself and others are most concerned with. He also added that environmental aspects such as air quality, pollution within the rivers, and accidents on ancillary roads are all measurable. Mr. Hazelton noted in the chat that improved walking scores can be measured as well. The Project Team responded that the Team is actively incorporating goals as they pertain to the community and environment within the Study. As thousands utilize the interchange daily, it is important that these users can still access this transportation system and it is imperative that this system is maintained. The structural conditions need to be improved, but the Project Team must also figure out what the viable solutions are and how to incorporate community and environmental goals and objectives into the Project so that the solution can be supported by both the CTDOT as well as the members of the community. The purpose of the PAC meetings is to allow for discussions and development of an understanding of both the transportation Project's vision while also including the goals and objectives of the community. The presentation displayed the

other measurable goals and objectives aside from those addressing the transportation deficiencies. As the PEL Study progresses, the manner in which the Project Team can and will measure these goals will take the form of “evaluation criteria.” The details of the evaluation criteria for the measurement of the early conceptual alternatives will become more apparent as the study advances. As the project is very early in the process, there are no solutions identified and thus nothing to measure. Preliminary designs must be developed enough to be able to measure and incorporate the aspects of interest. For example, there are plans for the evaluation of potential noise pollution through the identification of noise-sensitive receptors, identifying mitigation opportunities, and more. Air quality and noise pollution analysis will be performed in more detail in the subsequent processes during the NEPA phase.

- Mr. Zak asked at what part of the PEL and NEPA processes should environmental and communal concerns be vocalized. He also stated that there are many ways to measure environmental impact. CTDOT clarified that while some aspects can be measured, many may not allow for the Project Team to narrow down conceptual alternatives to find a Range of Reasonable Alternatives, which is the desired outcome of the PEL. By including some of these items in the Purpose and Need, the risk of having all options fail or succeed increases. The Project has an urban planning component where urban planners are looking at overarching measures such as promoting better pedestrian and bicycle access and making the highway underpasses more user friendly. These elements are all being examined so as to find ways to make the street-level road user experience safer and more enjoyable. More detail on the urban planning component of the Study is slated for future PAC meetings.
- Mr. Begnal asked if the Project Team had landscape architects, urban planners, and environmental engineers working on the *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* report beyond civil and structural engineers. CTDOT confirmed that while the PEL Study is in its early stages, many disciplines are engaged and will continue to be throughout the PEL and into the NEPA processes. Mr. Begnal asked if it would be possible for the Project Team to share the names of the firms involved with the Project. The Project Team stated that they will disseminate the names of the firms involved in the New Mix Project.
- Mr. Begnal asked what was meant by the phrase “mitigate to the extent practicable” and what was involved in this. The Project Team responded that this could involve a range of circumstances. For example, if a goal were to “make the Naugatuck River drinkable,” this would not be practicable for the New Mix Project. In addition, soil conditions could prevent the installation of water quality basins or detention ponds; therefore, those solutions would not be considered practicable in that case.
- Mr. Hazelton asked if some of the introductory slides could be removed moving forward to allow for more time for dialogue. Ms. Hodges responded that some of the introductory slides could be truncated where possible.

A dialogue followed between PAC members and the Project Team addressing the questions and comments received via email by the Project Team from members of the PAC.

Members of the PAC received an email post-meeting containing written responses to these questions, which are also included below.

Following the question and comments portion of the presentation, the Project Team thanked all PAC members for their attendance and contributions throughout the meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

3. PAC Member Questions and Project Team Responses

Is the *Analyses, Needs, and Deficiencies* report available for public review and comment?

- This report is available in the New Mix document library for public review, comments, and questions at <https://www.newmixwaterbury.com/document-library/>. Also, the Program Team wants to emphasize that all planning products (such as reports) and decisions produced for or during the PEL study are intended to be open for PAC and public feedback. The PEL Study is still in its very early phases, and, to date, no materials or decisions have been produced that are strictly final. Many reports and concepts have been developed to a high degree, but it is our intent that all study materials and decisions will be open for PAC and public feedback during the PEL process.

What are the early action, near-term, and long-term projects that are within the New Mix study area?

- Many New Mix reconstruction concepts are being developed for evaluation during the PEL Study, and all of these belong to the “Universe of Alternatives.” The Program Team is eager to share the Universe of Alternatives with the PAC over the next few meetings, so please stay tuned! General descriptions for early action, near-term, and long-term projects can be found at [the following linked graphic](#) on the New Mix website. The CTDOT has identified several potential early action projects during the analysis, needs, and deficiencies phase of the PEL Study, and plans to share some of the most promising early action opportunities with the PAC at one of our next several meetings.

How are the PAC meetings related to each of various projects mentioned above?

- Potential early action projects identified thus far are much smaller in scope when compared with the reconstruction of the Mixmaster interchange and have minimal impacts to various elements like property, utilities and/or environmentally sensitive features. These smaller improvements are not envisioned to be a focal point of the New Mix PAC, but will be developed and progressed independently, following a typical project initiation and public outreach process. However, the Program Team understands that early wins can be exciting, and we do want to present early action opportunities that may be of interest to the PAC. Near-term and long-term projects are components of the alternatives that the future PAC meetings will cover extensively. PAC discussion and feedback on the Universe of Alternatives, development of evaluation criteria, screening decisions, and further alternative refinements are all aspects of future PAC meetings that will shape near-term and long-term projects.

When are we finalizing the preliminary mission statement?

- The “mission statement” for the New Mix will be documented as a report that is entitled *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement*. Finalization of the *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* report will occur after receiving input through coordination with various Federal and State Regulatory agencies that will occur later this spring. The report includes the single paragraph purpose statement (introduced at PAC Meeting #2B and refined at PAC Meeting #2C), a discussion of needs (PAC Meeting #2), and project commitments to other transportation related goals and objectives (introduced at PAC Meeting #2C). A copy

of the draft purpose statement and other goals and objectives is attached for PAC members' reference (20220218_PAC_Mtg_2C_PNGO.pdf).

- The PAC has helped shape elements of the *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* report thus far through feedback provided during and outside of meetings. The PAC will have additional opportunity to review and comment on the complete *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* report before it is finalized for use within the PEL process. That said, the *Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement* will continue to be a "living document" that can evolve and be refined as information is developed and more is learned about the project and study area.

Can we get a copy of the agenda a week before each meeting?

- Yes. While the agendas are summarized within each meeting's email invite, a more detailed agenda will be provided approximately one week before each meeting as requested. However, please understand that presentations are often being refined within the week that leads up to the meeting, therefore there may be slight deviations from the advance agenda.

Can we have more open-ended discussions at the beginning of each meeting?

- As discussed, for now, in order to remain productive and allow the Program Team to present information and then receive feedback through discussion, we will continue to follow the current format of open discussion immediately following the presentation. Opportunities for PAC members to ask questions and provide input during future presentations will continue to occur.

What will the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) cover? When will we see an EIS?

- A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) "class of action," (i.e. categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement) has yet to be determined for any of the future projects to occur under the New Mix Program. No matter the class of action, this process would not occur until the NEPA phase, which will follow the completion of the PEL Study. Any project developed will be subject to full review and compliance with all applicable environmental laws encompassed by the NEPA "umbrella." At this stage of the program, it is unknown if any alternative (which has yet to be identified) will rise to the level of an EIS.

Can PAC members be involved with the process for the public meetings?

- The Program Team will continue to rely on PAC members for sharing New Mix related information with the groups that they represent. This will include spreading the word about upcoming public meetings to ensure good representation. PAC members are also encouraged to attend the public meetings and participate as members of the general public.