



Report of Meeting

Date & Time: December 2, 2008 - 10:00 am
Location: Conference Room C, 4th Floor West, Union Station, New Haven
Subject: Agency Scoping Meeting

In Attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Association</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Stephen DelPapa	ConnDOT-Env. Planning	860.594.2941
Cynthia Holden	ConnDOT-Env. Planning	860.594.2922
Desmond Dickey	ConnDOT-Env. Planning	860.594.2945
Keith T. Hall	ConnDOT-Env. Planning	860.594.2926
Andy Davis	ConnDOT-Intermodal Plng	860.594.2157
Peter LaBouliere	ConnDOT-Rail Operations	203.789.7189 x131
Jon Foster	ConnDOT-Rail Operations	203.789.7189 x119
Peter Richter, Jr.	ConnDOT-Rail Operations	203.789.7189 x123
Craig M. Bordiere	ConnDOT-Rail Operations	203.789.7189 x126
James E. Fox	ConnDOT-Rail Operations	203.789.7189 x118
Scott Howland	Amtrak Ops	203.773.6109
Len Elwin	Amtrak	617.345.7507
Tom Moritz	Amtrak	215.349.7044
Peter Cohen	Amtrak	212.630.6373
Catherine Kauffman	FRA	202.493.6347
Dave Fox	DEP	860.424.4111
Judy Gott	SCRCOG	203.234.7555
Sandy Fry	CRCOG	860.522.2217
Donald Burns	FTA-Region 2	212.688.2203
Dana Roscoe	PVPC	413.781.6015
Karl Wagener	CEQ	860.424.4000
Maya Loewenberg	DECD	860.270.8055
Jean Stimolo	Rideworks	203.777.7433 x131
Robert Hammersley	OPM	860.418.6297
Francis R. Pickering	CCRPA	860.589.7820 x18
Tim Brennan (By Phone)	PVPC	413-781-6045
Dave Stahnke	Wilbur Smith Associates	203.865.2191
Ralph Trepal	Wilbur Smith Associates	216.875.2000
Anoosheh Jannesarri	Wilbur Smith Associates	518.783.1887
Bruce Hyde	Wilbur Smith Associates	203.865.2191
Valerio Oricchio	Wilbur Smith Associates	404.936.5852

Transactions and Determinations:

Stephen Delpapa, Transportation Supervising Planner, began the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves. Mr. Delpapa explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the 2005 Implementation Plan findings and to receive comments on the current Environmental Assessment being done for the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail line. Cynthia Holden, Transportation Assistant Planning Director, stated that she appreciated everyone's cooperation and welcomed input on the process.

Ralph Trepal from Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) began his presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. During the course of the presentation the following was discussed:

- Judy Gott, Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) questioned why AMTRAK can't change its schedule so that one train would get into Hartford around 8:00 A.M. rather than 10:00 A.M. as it does now. A representative from AMTRAK responded that the current schedules are integrated with New Haven schedules for connections from there. AMTRAK is having ongoing discussions with ConnDOT concerning modifying the schedule, but no decision has been reached. A comment was made that such a simple step as revising the schedule would make a huge difference for commuters.
- Analysis by Wilbur Smith Associates has determined that 23 miles of double track will be needed for the Start-up Service (5 miles more than the 2005 Study indicated) and an additional 15 miles of double track will be needed under the Full- Build Alternative.
- WSA is recommending 23 miles of additional track rather than the 18 miles recommended in the 2005 Implementation Plan because both the passenger train and freight train schedules have changed and the additional information was taken into account when making this recommendation. Additional detail was requested on this point and WSA will provide additional information.
- The delay on the double track shown for the Full Build Alternative Modeling Scenario slide is longer than the existing delay and the delay for the Start Up Service, because the double track Full Build Alternative includes 15-minute headways and longer service during the day versus the 30-minute headways and shorter times for the Start Up Service.
- Peter LaBouliere, ConnDOT Rail Operations, stated that the interlock mechanism for the double track is very expensive and their location and usage should be

- carefully selected including consideration to using the existing crossovers. He stated that you could do a significant amount of double track for the cost of an interlock. He also cautioned that a minor change in scheduling based on customer demand could change the location of the interlocks. He stated that it was good the consultant found the need for additional track as the more double track, the better.
- David Stahnke from WSA pointed out that the rail bed is existing and adding double track will not significantly impact the environment since the bed once was fully double tracked. Environmental impacts are most likely to be as the result of work near the stations.
 - The overall delay shown on the modeling scenario slide is based on the weighted average of the freight and passenger trains. Passenger trains run about five times as many miles as freight trains and this required a weighting of the averages. However, by doing this, the average understates the freight delay. The freight delay was reported as a separate number in the presentation.
 - There has been a limited investigation of passing sidings to reduce the freight delay; however, the main problem in the delay of the freight trains appears to result from some trains occupying a significant number of locations on the main line for long periods of time. Trying to resolve this issue operationally is the most efficient way of dealing with it. In addition, there may be a right-of-way problem with respect to providing additional track.
 - No freight trains currently operate overnight. WSA will be having discussions with the freight operators and the Federal Railway Administration to determine if such a revision is possible. It was noted that all operators will have to sign-off on any new configuration and schedule before it can be implemented. It was stated that there may be a preference for running the freight trains at night as the consumers would rather have these types of operations done prior to the workers coming in the morning; however, the schedule for freight operations must be integrated with freight continuing westward from Springfield to Albany, etc. It was also noted by Peter Cohen of AMTRAK that there may be community concern about operating the freight trains at night.
 - Using a 15-minute headway on the Full Build scenario was questioned, given the concern over traffic congestion at the at-grade crossings. Cynthia Holden said that all options are being looked at as part of the process. It is possible that the Start Up service will be sufficient to meet the demand. Judy Gott stated that the Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments voted to not support the Full Build Alternative. They felt that the Minimum Build Alternative was not enough and that the Maximum Build Alternative was not physically possible (would tie up traffic at the at-grade crossings; therefore, they endorsed the Start Up service. Peter Richter (ConnDOT Rail) stated that the Start Up service has

30-minute headways during the peak hours and that the Full Build Alternative with 15-minute headways needs to be studied as an alternative in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

- The projections for increased freight traffic were taken into account in the modeling process. It is expected that there will not be more trains, but more train cars, if the freight volume increases.
- It is anticipated that AMTRAK will be stopping at every stop along the line. A concern was raised that this may throw off the regional service and this will have to be looked at.
- The modeling did not include the current operations on the Northeast Corridor mainline. It was assumed that there is enough track in the New Haven Station to mitigate any conflicts. It was noted that this assumption may not be correct and deserves further investigation.
- It was mentioned that more modeling needs to be done for both New Haven and the Mill River interlock to New Haven Station, as well as investigating platform availability in New Haven. The need for the State Street Station to have double platforms was confirmed.
- Stephen Delpapa (ConnDOT Env. Plng.) said that the Flatbush Avenue Station needs to be included in the modeling.
- The study is considering transit integration on connectivity to the other rail lines. Part of the study includes collecting data on who rides Metro North and where they come from. The Statewide Model will help with this issue. The Offices ConnDOT Rail and Policy and Planning are coordinating this issue and will make it a component of the study.
- In response to a question, Stephen Delpapa (ConnDOT Env. Plng.) stated that an issue at any particular rail station would not hold up the entire project. The improved commuter rail service on the mainline could be implemented and the station improvements or new stations could be phased in afterwards.
- The plan for and the location of the maintenance yard was questioned. Ralph Trepal responded that the ridership volume is necessary to determine the type of rolling stock needed which will determine the scope of the maintenance yard facilities. Peter La Bouliere said that currently, the New Haven Maintenance Facility has the capacity to service diesel engines. Any facility in Springfield will help take the pressure off the New Haven Yard. A Springfield yard is likely to be a layover facility, where minor repairs and maintenance can be done rather than a

full service maintenance yard. A facility in Springfield will also help resolve the deadheading problem.

- Peter Richter, ConnDOT, suggested that the presentation slide concerning the economic development review be moved up front to coordinate with the section on station development for the upcoming Public Scoping meetings. He also suggested that there be more balance in the slides for the Full Build Scenario and the Start Up Scenario. There was a discussion concerning the way of approaching this so that more balance was given to the report. He also suggested that the presentation slides showing discontinued bus service be reworked so that it is shown as a reconfiguration rather than a discontinuation.
- A question was raised regarding the Review of Project Alternatives slide and whether or not the cost benefit results were based on quantitative or qualitative information. They are based on qualitative information and it was suggested by Robert Hammersley (OPM) that it should not be included, because there was no quantitative backup. Wilbur Smith Associates agreed to remove it from the presentation to the public.
- Peter La Bouliere, ConnDOT, said that the freight operators on the Hartford Line have significant amount of flexibility, unlike the passenger operators. They can take customers off of one train and put them on another if need be. The freight train operations are not cast in stone and he suggested that they be contacted to see what they can do to change schedules. A significant amount of money could be saved if they are flexible.
- There was considerable discussion regarding the scope of work and whether it was sufficient to be used for SUMMIT. Unfortunately, the Statewide Travel Demand Model is not refined enough to support FTA's SUMMIT program input requirements and, therefore, ConnDOT will not be able to apply for FTA New Starts funding for this project. Several people commented that they encouraged a level of study that would allow for the next phase of the project to move forward quickly. Concern was raised over the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration being more onerous than those of ConnDOT with respect to the level of preliminary design and whether or not this study would reach a level to qualify for funding.
- Robert Hammersley, Connecticut Office of Policy and Management said that the Bradley Airport Community should be included. He suggested advertising in the Airport News and contacting Mark Daley from ConnDOT.
- The difference between the 2005 study and this study was questioned. Ralph Trepal stated that the current study is being based on new numbers, the addition of stations and also will comply with the NEPA/CEPA process. The former study



**New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS)
Commuter Rail Environmental Assessment**

was an implementation plan that only contained minimal environmental analysis, so it did not comply with NEPA/CEPA requirements.

- The deadline for Agency comments was questioned. Steve Delpapa stated that the comment period is open for 30 days after the final public meeting, so ConnDOT will take any agency comments up until January 15, 2009; however, if agencies do have comments, they are encouraged to get them to ConnDOT sooner rather than later.
- Concern was raised over the document being written as an Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Evaluation. This may create the impression that the decision not to pursue an EIS has already been made and the discussion should be reframed to say that the work is being done to reach a conclusion of a FONSI or pursuing an Environmental Impact Statement.

Submitted by:

Wilbur Smith Associates
Bruce Hyde
12-08-08

Connecticut Department of Transportation:

Approved by: _____

Date: _____