



Report of Meeting

Date & Time: December 8, 2008 - 6:00 P.M

Location: TD Bank North Conference Center, Springfield, MA

Subject: Public Scoping Meeting

Attendees: See Attached List

Transactions and Determinations:

Ralph Trepal of Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) introduced himself and reviewed the agenda for the Public Scoping meeting. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) staff members present introduced themselves. Mr. Trepal stated that it was important for the public to comment on the scope of the project so that all aspects of the project impacts are covered. He stated that it was important to build a consensus to generate public support for the project. WSA will be determining the impacts of the proposed Start Up and Full Build Alternatives and then develop ways of mitigating those impacts. During the course of the presentation and subsequent comment period, the following was discussed:

- The project impacts have not been determined at this point in the analysis. There is a list of different kinds of impacts that WSA is studying as a required part of the process.
- The No Build Alternative slide stated that Amtrak is operating six trains each way. A member of the audience stated that it was really 11 trains each way. Mr. Trepal stated that he received the information from Amtrak that indicated six trains each way, but would look into it.
- A member of the audience stated that the Windsor Station is really not an operating station. You can stand and get on the train, but it should not be considered a station, as it does not have ticketing or a place to wait out from the weather.
- The public bus service in Massachusetts should be included, as well as, private bus service. A significant number of people from Massachusetts currently park in the Windsor and Enfield lots and take the bus to Hartford.

Mr. Trepal replied that WSA will be coordinating the bus and the train service in order to maximize their efficiency.

- A person attending the meeting stated that there are more than freight trains operating per day than shown on the slide. He estimated that there are four or five trains on many days and more than that when including short runs. It was noted that the chart referred to services and not numbers of trains. A discussion of the difference between service and train ensued.
- The question of whether the stations shown on the Start up Service slide were really stations or stops. Mr. Trepal responded that right now they should be considered as stops; however, this is preliminary and WSA would be discussing the need for stations as the program develops. A discussion on stations versus stops followed with the consensus that stations were preferable to stops. It should be noted that nothing currently being proposed would preclude the incorporation of ticketing kiosks at each stop to provide passengers with the opportunity to purchase their tickets.
- It was stated that the at-grade crossings for vehicles will not change and there are no plans to look into establishing grade separated crossings at roadway locations. A concern over traffic delays by the increased service was raised.
- There are currently no plans for structured parking. The ridership numbers will determine what is required for parking spaces and whether surface lots will be sufficient.
- Several audience members stated that a lot of Massachusetts riders will travel to Enfield or other stations along the line and park in those lots rather than going to Springfield. Springfield is considered less convenient and it is likely that the numbers of Massachusetts passengers using Connecticut stations will be substantial. This may result in underestimating the need for parking at the Enfield and northern Connecticut stations.
- It was stated that there is a conflict between recommendations in the Enfield Transit feasibility study that was just completed and the preliminary findings in the EA. The recommendation for the first two of four phases for the Transit project are for single tracks in Enfield, at least until the year 2016. In the same area, the EA currently recommends the need for double track. Stephen Delpapa (ConnDOT), stated that they are aware of the study and are coordinating with the Town of Enfield. It was mentioned by the public that there is a need for 450 spaces at the Enfield Station.
- The garage project in Springfield will result in 450 parking spaces, however, this fact is not taken into account as part of the Environmental Assessment.

The project is funded and should be included in the analysis. Cynthia Holden of ConnDOT indicated that the purpose of this process was to gather input from the public and this information would be considered in the review.

- The impact of the new train service on the private bus business was discussed at some length. Several audience members felt that it was not appropriate to build something with public dollars that might result in a private bus service going out of business. It was stressed that the process should look at the integration of bus and rail so that both services support each other and each benefit. Tim Brennan referred to recent proposal to integrate the Downeaster train service with bus service. He suggested that this be looked at. A representative from Peter Pan Bus Line stated they were very open to integrating their bus service with the train service and felt that the study should be looking at all modes of transportation, not just train services. He felt the Downeaster Service that is being integrated with bus lines made sense at six trains per day. The number of trains being proposed by this project may make integration efforts more difficult.
- The question of free or fee parking at the stations was raised. Mr. Trepal responded that those kinds of decisions would be reviewed as the process develops.
- The question of how ridership is determined was raised. Mr. Trepal responded that the State model is used. It is a computer model that has information measuring home based work trips and mid-day trips. It is based on the requirements dictated by the United States Department of Transportation and is used for modeling impacts for all state transportation projects.
- The idea of conducting the environmental assessment process consecutively with design rather than sequentially in an effort to shorten the timeframe was put forth. Several people commented that they would like to see the project started right away. Mr. Delpapa (ConnDOT), stated that the study has been underway since the beginning of 2008 and that there are only 14 months remaining until the anticipated completion of the Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation.
- In response to a question on equipment, it was stated that the ridership numbers will dictate what WSA will be proposing for rolling stock. Several different types of units including diesel mobile units (DMU) are being reviewed. There are no plans to electrify the line at this point.
- It is currently planned to have the trains terminate in New Haven; therefore, passengers will still have to change over from a diesel engine to an electric

engine, which takes about 20 minutes. It was suggested that electrification of the line be considered so that a passenger can go from Springfield to New York City without changing trains.

- It was stated that the study should look at integrating a full system capable of service to Montreal, Boston, Chicago, etc. The need to shorten the process was again mentioned. The Pioneer Valley Action Council has nearly 1,000 signatures supporting the project and encouraging the service to begin sooner.
- The need to do an environmental review on an expansion project was questioned. The rail bed is already there and there should be no impact. Ms. Holden responded that the process was being mandated by the Federal Transit Administration in advance of any funding possibilities.
- Tim Brennan stated that the Ridership projections in the first round (Implementation Study) were seriously flawed. He wanted to make sure that they are being redone in a manner that is accurate. He said this was of particular concern since the ridership projections dictate the type of rolling stock, the parking requirements, magnitude of impacts, etc. Mr. Brennan requested that the ridership projections come out sooner rather than later, so that people would have a change to review them. Mr. Trepal said that the numbers are due out next month.
- It was mentioned that there is a cemetery under the tracks near Windsor Locks. If any work is done in that area, the “poor Irishmen” who are buried there should be dug up and reburied somewhere else.
- A bike/hike trail from Windsor Locks to Enfield on the bridge is a good idea because you cannot get across the river now. This would help with ADA compliance.
- The Windsor Locks station should be located near the downtown area.
- A request was made that no diesel trains run on this line and that they all be electric. This is the only way they should be accepted.
- It was stated that the project is being done in anticipation of federal funds being used. The representative from Peter Pan Bus stated that looking at only two train options as alternatives was insufficient and that another alternative, such as bus service should be added. An objection to the EA may be raised on this point.
- Mr. Trepal stated that he was confident that the environmental assessment would be completed on time.



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

- One person commented that a more thorough look should be taken at restoring a comprehensive system including trolleys, inter-urban lines, rather than simply the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield line. Mr. Delpapa responded that this was beyond the scope of the project. Mr. Trepal said that if the scope of the project keeps expanding, it will never come together and the project needs to have closure in order to go to the next step.
- A question regarding alternative public participation models was raised. It was suggested that to get the process moving faster consideration should be given to modifying the Public Participation Plan. It was noted that the process was already decided with Connecticut DOT.
- The method of integrating the train stations with the outlying areas was raised. This would make it easier for people to get from their houses to the stations. Mr. Delpapa responded that local bus service will be at every station along the line and will be coordinated with the train service.
- The impact of increasing the number of riders and activity at the train stations on adjoining property was raised. It was noted that TOD issues are being investigated as part of this study. It is anticipated that there will be positive economic impacts as there have been in similar situations in other communities.

Submitted by:

Wilbur Smith Associates

Bruce Hyde
12-9-08

Connecticut Department of Transportation:

Approved by: _____

Date: