



NY – CT Sustainable Communities Consortium Public Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Holiday Inn
1070 Main St. Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604
Friday, March 14th, 2014

ATTENDANCE

Alanna Kabel (City of Bridgeport); Chris Canna (City of New Haven); Sarah Goldwyn (City of New York); Sean Sallie (Nassau County); Satish Sood (Nassau); Sarah Lansdale (Suffolk County); Virginia Picciotto (City of New Rochelle); Chris Jones (RPA); Gerry Bogacz (NYMTC); Brian Bidolli (GBVMPO); Amanda Kennedy (RPA); Chris Rappa (SCRCOG); Andy Freleng (Suffolk County); Brian Dennis (RPA)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Brian Bidolli greeted all attendees to the twelfth public meeting of the Consortium Steering Committee and proceeded to the roll call.

ROLL CALL

According to the Consortium MOA, a quorum for any steering committee meeting will be reached when two-thirds of the New York and Connecticut Steering Committee members are in attendance. The Consortium has nine steering committee members from New York and seven from Connecticut. Due recent political changes, the committee is missing formal designations from the City of Norwalk and Stamford. Therefore, the Steering Committee excluded those cities from the quorum count. Amanda Kennedy of RPA took roll call, and a quorum was reached with six members from New York and four members from Connecticut.

INTRODUCTION BY TIM SULLIVAN

Tim Sullivan, from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, attended the steering committee meeting to introduce himself as the new State Director of Brownfield, Waterfront and Transit-Oriented Development. Sullivan comes from Mayor Bloomberg's administration in New York City, where he served as the Chief of Staff to the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development until the Mayor's term ended on January 1. In that role, Tim focused on key areas of city policy including overall economic development, brownfield redevelopment projects, waterfront and maritime/port redevelopment. As the new state brownfields, waterfront and TOD director, Tim hopes to continue working with the Sustainable Communities Initiative to allow Connecticut projects realize their full TOD potential.

REPORT ON CONNECTICUT PROJECTS IN THE CONSORTIUM WORK PROGRAM-

Bridgeport Barnum Station Feasibility Study- Brian Bidolli, Greater Bridgeport Regional Council

The Barnum Station project sought to determine the feasibility of a new rail station close to downtown and also determine whether or not it would be operationally compatible with existing MNR and Amtrak services. The analysis showed that a new station can be built south of Barnum Avenue, west of Seaview Avenue on a 700 acre site. However, the station's configuration would be limited due to the size constraints. The 700 acre study area has the potential for up to 1,015 parking spaces and 350 housing units. The City of Bridgeport, with the help from the Connecticut State, is actively pursuing funding to undertake the design of the station.

Building from the momentum of the Barnum Station, the City of Bridgeport initiated a regional TOD pilot program to connect the Barnum study to several other projects in the region. The city has been working to assemble five federal grants to develop a coordinated TOD action planning initiative. The initiative will look at the Town of Stratford's existing zoning around their rail station, identify transportation strategies to support growth and develop public-private partnerships to support infrastructure investments.

New Haven Union Station- Chris Canna, City of New Haven

Union Station operates as a state-owned property leased to the City of New Haven. With the current lease expiring in the 2017, the City is working with the State of Connecticut to modify the management and governance structure going forward and to enhance Union Station as a destination and gateway for the city. The City also looks to promote transit-oriented development in the surrounding areas, and address the future parking demand.

The market analysis for use of the interior of Union Station will improve the service and convenience for daily commuters into New Haven. The marketing strategy itemizes two projects that will increase the retail space of station's interior and attract diverse offerings by vendors.

Expansion and maintenance of parking was a crucial factor to the project, as well. The study also proposed that parking should be expanded to allow district development. The options are parking with retail or parking with a liner building. The city and state have also developed legislation for a government authority that will assume control of Union Station once the current lease expires.

South Norwalk Transit Oriented Development Study- Susan Sweitzer, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

Several years ago, the City of Norwalk completed a TOD master plan around the South Norwalk Transit Station, and developed a number of recommendations. The study called for better pedestrian connections between the neighborhoods surrounding the South Norwalk Transit Center and strategies for activating the private investment community to invest in South Norwalk TOD master planning area.

The Consortium project focuses on improving the accessibility of two pedestrian access ways. Though they are both heavily used, the pathways are very uninviting. During poor weather conditions, they can become dangerous for people with mobility impairments.

The pedestrian access project plan is part of a layer of other project-based funding strategies to support the TOD master plan. The City received a Connecticut TOD pilot program which is funding the planning design and bid documents for a Complete Streets network around the railroad station. The Norwalk Redevelopment agency is funding the design and bid documents for a bus network development strategy, which will include bike paths. The city received a Transit Alternative Program funding to increase pedestrian amenities along the entire west avenue corridor. The funding and implementation of these

two projects will support funding applications for the Washington Village Choice Neighborhood Implementation grant and a TIGER grant application for April.

An application for pedestrian access funding to complete the stairway reconstruction will be submitted to the city's capital improvement budget. The two pedestrian access way projects will be completed by the end of the year, if the funding scheme materializes.

Nassau County: Cultivating Opportunities for Sustainable Development- Sean Sallie and Satish Sood, Nassau County

The project team assessed 21 Long Island Rail Road station areas to determine the desire of local communities for transit-supportive development and the readiness of station areas to support transit-supportive development from a regulatory environment and market perspective. The 21 rail stations are part of the Nassau HUB Regional Transit Study area, prescribed by New York Metropolitan Transportation on Council (NYMTC) as a desired growth area in its 2009 regional plan.

The project team convened three separate meetings to gather feedback and narrow their final choice to three station areas. In phase one, the project team narrowed the field of 21 communities down to seven short-listed communities with the highest level of readiness and desire. The second phase evaluated the short-listed station areas on their potential to have positive local economic impact and to provide useful case study information as a county-wide pilot project. The Villages of Valley Stream and Lynbrook and the Hamlet of Baldwin were chosen to receive a pilot study in the third and final phase.

Valley Stream: Valley Stream realized that there needs to be more mixed residential and retail use downtown in its corridor. The Village had made efforts to update their zoning to achieve TOD and mixed-use residential development downtown. Nassau County will work with the village to develop an RFQ/RFP process to realize the corridor work and Nassau County help find grants to support public infrastructure.

Lynbrook: Nassau County assisted The Village of Lynbrook with a broad market analysis that will give the village a comprehensive look at downtown. An initial market study proved that retail was strong in the area; there is a lot of office space in the downtown area. The pilot study recommends that the village create a branding study, explore different housing options and offer incentive programs to attract developers.

Baldwin: The Baldwin pilot study is a Complete Streets strategy around Sunrise Highway. This highway is very unfriendly to pedestrians and builds a divide between development activities on both sides. Nassau County worked primarily with the Baldwin Civic Association to conduct a traffic study along Grand Avenue to see how Complete Streets can be implemented in the station area. The County along with the Baldwin Civic Association will release a Request for Proposal for a Complete Streets study so that construction can begin in the fall of 2014.

Questions & Comments:

Have you considered using the EIS process to look at development area?

- The Valley Stream understands that an EIS will be a complete way to mitigate any environmental problems associated with the development. The County and the village will consider undertaking this process.

Does the report consider human-centered design elements?

- Valley Steam's pilot study is the best example of considering human-centered design. Although it's not noted in the plan, the village will have no issue adding it to the proposal.

Have any of the other station areas advanced any of the principles coming out of the three pilot studies?

- The NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program has encouraged some communities located around Sunrise Highway to explore TOD in their areas.

Can you speak to the models and quantifiable outcomes of the pilot study?

- The County looked at how Complete Streets improvement affects economics of the community. The Hamburg, NY case study assessed the performance of retail during the recession period and found that TOD retail was more resilient to economic downturns. The Hamlet of Baldwin was struggling with this same issue along Grand Ave and thought that Hamburg’s tax infrastructure practice would be useful to Baldwin.
- The City of New York offered to share their catalogue of best practices around Complete Streets Infrastructure with Nassau County.

Is there a Sustainability ordinance in Nassau?

- Sustainability ordinances in Long Island are local and not at the county level. Valley Stream presents an opportunity, since we are helping with Valley Stream’s RFP, and they’ve been pretty receptive of sustainable principles in their planning and design. If it becomes successful, we can codify the model and replicate it throughout the county and region.

Was there resistance to the idea of structure parking as has been experienced elsewhere? What about the project changed the perception of parking structures?

- There was no opposition to structured parking. Project managers were not sure why there wasn’t opposition in these cases, but they were clear about detailing the exact plans and renderings of how parking would look. There has been a change in receptivity lately. Rauch foundation has done great work with mocking up compelling visions of parking schematics on Long Island.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEMS

The approval of the February 21st, 2014 Steering Committee meeting minutes was motioned by Andy Freleng representing Suffolk County and seconded by Gerry Bogacz of New York Metropolitan Transportation Council. The minutes were adopted unanimously by the Steering Committee.

The adoption of Steering Committee Resolution SC01-2014 – Nassau County Infill Redevelopment Feasibility Study was motioned by Andy Freleng representing Suffolk County, and seconded by Sarah Goldwyn of the City of New York. The resolution was open to approval contingent on the inclusion of comments heard during the meeting on the incorporation of information related to human-centered design; fair and affordable housing; and access to opportunity in the final deliverable product to be forwarded to HUD. Additional typo changes were requested. Amanda Kennedy motioned for approval while Sarah Goldwyn of New York City seconded. The resolution passed unanimously.

DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

Execution Plan for Regional Sustainable Development- Chris Jones

Chris Jones reported that the execution plan was in progress and that a draft would be distributed to Consortium members by the following week. The NYMTC/RPA team is working on the Barriers to Implementation and remaining sections of the FHEA.

Regional Fair Housing and Equity Analysis- Chris Jones

The NYMTC and RPA team request comments and reactions to the recommendations from Consortium members.

NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA

The next public Steering Committee meeting will be April 11th NYMTC. A discussion of the consortium beyond the SCI grant will be added to that agenda.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 11:55