



NY – CT Sustainable Communities Consortium

Public Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday, June 26, 2013
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

ATTENDANCE:

Steering Committee Designees and Alternates

Rick Dunne (GBVMPO); Lynn Brooks Avni (City of New Rochelle); Chris Jones (RPA); Alanna Kabel (City of Bridgeport); Amanda Kennedy (RPA); Floyd Lapp (SWRPA); Eugene Livshits (SCRCOG); Jaime Martinez (City of Mount Vernon); Larry McAuliffe (NYMTC); Chris Rappa (SCRCOG); Sean Sallie (Nassau County); Sarah Lansdale (Suffolk County); Sarah Goldwyn (City of New York); Satish Sood (Nassau); Linda Puoplo (City of White Plains); Gerry Bogacz (NYMTC); Nicole Davis (SWRPA); David Kooris (City of Bridgeport); Susan Sweitzer (Norwalk); Brian Dennis (RPA)

Advisory Board Members:

Paul Beyer (NYSDOS); Zenobia Field (NJTPA);

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Gerry Bogacz and Alanna Kabel greeted all attendees to the eighth public meeting of the Consortium Steering Committee and then proceeded to the agenda.

ROLL CALL

Chris Jones took roll call. A quorum was present.

REPORTS ON NORTHERN SECTOR PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

TOD at Bridgeport's Barnum Station

David Kooris, Director of the City of Bridgeport's Office of Planning and Economic Development presented the final findings of the Barnum rail station feasibility study, which assesses the feasibility of a second rail station in the east end Bridgeport . The study reviewed a range of issues such as neighborhood context, operational and physical feasibility, and ability to catalyzed transit oriented development and economic development in the east end of the city. The study investigated several design alternatives. The study the existing rail infrastructure is capable of accommodating a new second station and would serve as an anchor to a TOD corridor of new development. The cost for Barnum

Station relative to other train station construction projects partially because of the ability to utilize surface parking that could later be converted to structured parking.

Questions

The question and answer portion began with a question on the phased approach to surface and structured parking. Mr. Kooris was asked to describe how the project will fund the surface to structured parking conversion over time. He responded that the city is thinking of strategies such as tax increment financing to facilitate the transition. The next step for the City of Bridgeport and Barnum Station is to work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to make sure that they recognize that the Barnum Station project is feasible with no adverse impacts. The City is also working to identify financial resources from the federal government by from the state. Potential funding sources will require additional analysis along with more robust transit stimulation. Bridgeport is in the process of preparing the site for development. They received a grant for 2.5 million dollars for demolition and they have begun the process in search for bids.

Stamford East Side Train Station Feasibility Study

Craig Lader, Senior Transportation Planner for the South Western Regional Planning Agency presented the process and findings of the Stamford Train Station Feasibility Study. Goals of the project, located on the east side of Stamford, were to create transit accessibility and spur economic development. The project looked at three potential station locations: The north, which could support a main and branch station according to Connecticut Department of Transportation standards but would place the station in a residential neighborhood with little TOD potential; a central location at East Main Street, but there would be an issue with track curvatures; and finally south, where a branch line could be constructed but main line service is currently infeasible due to the location of I-95 overpass columns.

Questions

Questions were asked on the impact this project would have on the neighborhood south of Post Road (Route 1/East Main Street). Development has not been proposed for that area so it is unknown how the neighborhood would be affected. Craig Lader also explained how long each phase of the project would take. He first made it clear that the property for bus shuttle will never be a terminal with permanent infrastructure. In the next 2-3 years, we can expect to see speculative development taking place. Funding for the railroad bridge replacement has not been identified and secured. This will likely happen in the next 5-10 years. A lack of funding will not preclude the project team from working to get a train station in place. In the next 10-12 years we could see the securing of funding for a branch line. I-95 is a constraint for a mainline train station since it would be costly to correct. In the long term, the renovation or replacement of I-95 could provide an opportunity to pursue a conversion of the station from branch line to main line.

TOD Master Plan Implementation for South Norwalk Station

Susan Sweitzer, Senior Project Manager, presented on the progress of implementing the TOD Master Plan for the South Norwalk Station. The work funded by the NY-CT Sustainable Communities Initiative focuses on improving pedestrian access to the Norwalk train Station. The Norwalk planning team is

looking to develop a final design, engineer and construction documents to move forward with seeking city capital budget funding. The plan will make the Golden Hill neighborhood in Norwalk accessible to transit service.

TOD Smart Growth Initiative at New Rochelle Station

New Rochelle Senior Planner Lynn Brooks-Avni presented progress on the TOD Smart Growth initiative, which is near completion. The study is reviewing various parcels with the city's center to identify areas of development opportunities within ½ mile of transit. It also looks to align with other key development initiatives around the city. For instance, a hospital recently received \$ 1.25 million dollars in grant funding to do landscaping and connectivity improvements that improve its pedestrian access to the rail station. The Smart Growth Initiative aims to support neighborhoods located around the transit by leveraging state and federal funding.

Question

Chris Jones asked about the community outreach process for this study. The Smart Growth Initiative conducts its outreach process as part of outreach conducted for New Rochelle's compressive plan update, currently underway. Eight public forums were held in the community in June 2012. The information used from the public forums helped to advance the Smart Growth initiative.

Repurposing of Office Park Developments in the I-287 Corridor

The I-287 Corridor project was a land use study initially envisioned to integrate proposed transit services that would be implemented as part of the Tappan Zee Bridge reconstruction. Due to changes with that project, the scope of the I-287 work changed to focus on addressing potential new uses for financially failing office parks. The new objective of the study was to redesign office parks in the corridor for a mix of uses. Several meetings with a working group composed of members from towns along the I-287 corridor, Urban Land Institute, RPA, and other stakeholders gathered relevant information about the corridor in preparation for a public stakeholder workshop attended by stakeholders from municipal councils, members of the real estate community, and local citizens. Comments from the workshop were compiled and converted into actions and recommendations. The next step in the study is to identify a champion to develop and promote a comprehensive plan from this work.

Questions

A question was asked about commercial vacancy in the corridor. Gerry responded that there is a 30% commercial vacancy, which has alarmed property owners. They are now receptive and involved in the corridor study. There are several landlord developers that are trying to promote this idea. Floyd Lapp, outgoing Executive Director of SWRPA and professor at Columbia University, offered to have his Columbia planning students work on an aspect of the I-287 program in the future.

REPORTS FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

North Jersey Sustainable Communities Consortium

Zenobia Fields of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Agency provided an update on the 60-member consortium that includes state agencies and non-profits. Outreach is occurring in three phases:

Discovery, Vision, and Action Planning. They have just completed the Discovery phase, for which they held 15 public workshops. The Consortium is currently administering three incentive grant programs: Local Demonstration Grant Program, Local Government Capacity Planning Program, and a Non-Profit Micro Grant Program. North Jersey is also working on their Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat topics to analyze regional transportation, environment, and economic development issues. They've created standing committees for livability, society and community; and economic competitiveness to aid in writing the regional comprehensive economic development strategy with the support of consultants. They are moving forward with 12 demonstration programs and are currently issuing contracts and receiving consultant responses to requests for proposals.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rick Dunne from the Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Regional Council mentioned that the Valley Council of Government assembled almost \$1 million dollars to begin a study on alternate TOD nodes and transit modes along the Route 8 corridor. Funding is in place. The Scope of the project will work to incorporate the Livability Principles from the HUD-DOT-EPA partnership.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of the September 14th, 2012 Steering Committee meeting minutes was motioned by Floyd Lapp, representing the Southwestern Regional Planning Agency, and seconded by Rick Dunne, representing Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. The minutes were adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

Approval of Steering Committee Resolution SC01-2013, Selection of a Professional Service Firm, was motioned by Susan Sweitzer of the City of Norwalk, and seconded by Rick Dunne representing Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. The resolution was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

Consideration of Steering Committee Resolution SC02 – 2013, Approval of Subgrantee for LIRPC, was tabled for the next Steering Committee Meeting on September 13th.

Consideration of Resolution SC03-2013, Procedures for the Transit-Oriented Housing Incentive Fund was tabled for the next steering committee meeting September 13th in anticipation of further input by Steering Committee members and the public. Sarah Goldwyn at NYCDOP asked if delaying the resolution could cause problems in executing the program on deadline. Chris Jones at RPA said that he felt there could be problems meeting the deadline but that he felt that getting these procedures corrected and ready to accept applicants was more important.

Approval of Steering Committee Resolution SC04-2013, Acceptance of Task G Deliverables from the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council, was motioned by Rick Dunne, representing Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and seconded by Floyd Lapp, representing South Western Regional Planning Agency. The resolution was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

Approval of Steering Committee Resolution SC05-2013, Acceptance of Task N Deliverable from Suffolk County, was motioned by Sarah Goldwyn, representing New York City Department of City Planning, and seconded by Linda Puopolo, representing the City of White Plains. The resolution was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

Approval of Steering Committee Resolution SC06-2013, Acceptance of Section 11.15 Deliverable on the I-287 Corridor, was motioned by Sarah Lansdale representing Suffolk County, and seconded by Floyd Lapp representing South Western Regional Planning Agency. The resolution was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

Approval of Steering Committee Resolution SC07-2013, Amendment to the Memorandum of Agreement, was motioned by Susan Sweitzer representing the City of Norwalk and seconded by Satish Sood representing Nassau County. The resolution was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

The election of Brian Bidolli of the Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and Sarah Lansdale of Suffolk County as the new Steering Committee co-chairs for the July 2013-June 2014 term was motioned by Floyd Lapp, representing South Western Regional Planning Agency, and seconded by Rick Dunne, Representing Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. The nomination was adopted and passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

Regional Plan Association's Amanda Kennedy presented an update of work underway on the Plan Enhancement for Regional Sustainable Development and the Regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA). These two projects are requirements to our grant program. The Plan Enhancement reviews existing regional plans and assesses their completeness for how they support one another and address the six Livability Principles by the Federal Partnership. The Consortium research uncovered a few general areas where gaps exist: impacts of transit cost, integrating local and regional transit planning, support TOD in priority growth areas, reducing non-point source pollution, preserving open space, and helping the region adapt to climate change.

The FHEA work looks at housing issues through a broader lens: issues of discrimination, concentration of minorities, and impact on economic opportunity. The Consortium has done data analysis on location of racially concentrated areas of poverty to show the relationships to income levels, educational opportunity and accessibility to transit.

Assessing the plans will help us to make recommendations to improve regional and local planning. The NYMTC and RPA staff are drafting those recommendations for discussion in later public stakeholder and other public meetings. With the work on the Fair Housing Equity Analysis, more work needs to be done on the FHEA. There will be stakeholder outreach in July 2013. NYMTC and RPA staff will compile public input in preparation for a second phase of public outreach meetings in the fall. RPA will complete and submit the work to HUD by the first quarter of 2014.

NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA

The next public Steering Committee meeting will be Friday September 13, 2013, 10 AM, at the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, 199 Water Street, Lower Manhattan. The agenda will include the resolutions SC02 and SC03 and a detailed update on the North Jersey Consortium.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.