



Place: Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Meeting Notes

Date: March 7, 2022

Project #: 42402.02

Re: State Project No. 301-0512 – Stamford Transportation Center (STC) Virtual Public Information Meeting No. 1

Attendees (in Official Capacity):

CTDOT

Eric Bergeron
Yure Kuljis
Craig Bordiere
Dan Baker
Tom Aparo
Robert Moore

Consultant Team

Tony Sardilli - VHB
Darrell Smith - VHB
Nira Rahman – VHB

Attendees (General Public):

Approximately 28 Attendees via Microsoft Teams
Approximately 21 Attendees via YouTube Live

The purpose of the March 7th Virtual Public Information Meeting (VPIM) was to provide residents, commuters, business owners, and other interested individuals an opportunity to learn about, and discuss State Project No. 301-0512 – Stamford Transportation Center (STC) Master Plan.

The public and stakeholders were able to attend the meeting live via Microsoft Teams, could watch it via YouTube Live, or could listen via phone.

Presentation:

- The meeting went live at 6:45 PM with an introductory informational slide for attendees to view prior to the start of the formal presentation.
- The formal presentation began at 7:00 PM and consisted of the following:
 - Introduction/Opening Remarks by Craig Bordiere, CTDOT Transportation Supervising Rail Officer
 - Introduction of Master Plan Team by Craig Bordiere, CTDOT Transportation Supervising Rail Officer
 - Virtual Meeting Overview/Title VI – Civil Rights by Dan Baker, CTDOT Project Manager
 - Master Plan Purpose and Goal by Tony Sardilli, VHB Project Manager
 - Master Plan Elements by Tony Sardilli, VHB Project Manager
 - Anticipated Schedule by Tony Sardilli, VHB Project Manager
 - Questions and Answers by The Project Team

100 Great Meadow Road
Suite 200
Wethersfield, CT 06109-2377
P 860.807.4300

Questions and Answers (Q&A):

The public and stakeholders were invited to submit questions, at any point during the Microsoft Teams Live event via email, telephone, or live via the Microsoft Teams Q&A chat window.

It was noted and reiterated, during the live presentation and throughout the live Q&A session, that information could be found on the Project website, along with the phone number and email address to contact the Project Team (both during and after the live event), and notification that the public comment period for this project will close on March 21, 2022. Finally, participants were encouraged to take a post-meeting survey, either by using the on-screen QR code or visiting the link on the project website.

Questions asked during the Microsoft Teams live event were verbally answered by members of The Project Team. Questions and comments received are noted below, with responses paraphrased for the purpose of these meeting notes.

Questions Received:

The following questions and comments were received via either the Q&A chat, email or telephone during the Microsoft Teams Live Event, and responses provided during the live Q&A portion of VPIM No. 1:

1. Question [via chat]: What are the study boundaries of the STC Master Plan?

Response: VHB noted that the study area includes North State Street to the north, Atlantic Street to the east, Station Place to the south, which includes the original footprint of the existing parking garage, and Washington Boulevard to the west, which includes the footprint of the new state parking garage currently under construction.

2. Question [via chat]: How can I receive updates about the STC Master Plan as it progresses?

Response: CTDOT noted that, to receive, updates people can go to the project website www.STCMasterPlan.com, click on the 'Get Involved' tab, go to the 'Submit your comments here and Sign up for updates' section, enter their name, email address, and check the box that says 'Sign-up to receive updates'.

3. Question [via chat]: What are your plans to improve safety for pedestrians walking to/from the station? There is a lot of danger for pedestrians walking on the wide car-centric roads in the area.

Response: VHB noted that, as part of the Scope of Work for the Master Plan, there are several tasks that involve looking at the roadways at/around the STC. These include Traffic, where traffic volume and accident data will be reviewed and the information utilized to develop recommendations and improvements under the Station Area Roads task, as well as the Pedestrian Paths of Travel task, which includes looking at the pedestrian circulation external to the STC and providing recommendations and improvements to increase the comfort and safety levels for pedestrians. This includes looking at elements such as the width of sidewalks, number of vehicular traffic lanes, pick-up and drop-off areas for TNCs, taxis, and kiss-and-ride, as well as the bus and shuttle area on the north side of the STC. VHB further noted that bicyclists will also be taken into consideration.

[Note that this question was asked twice during the Q&A session and that the response above includes answers given to both]

4. Question [via chat]: Is anyone on the committee making decisions from the handicapped, special needs community? I don't see any accommodations made for those of us with walking difficulties.....a football field or three is a very long obstacle.

Response: VHB noted that the Pedestrian Paths of Travel task includes looking at circulation, both internal and external to the STC, with the overall the goal of which is to improve the clarity and wayfinding of the connectivity and to enhance the pedestrian experience. This includes reviewing and evaluating universal accessibility on the paths of travel and recommending changes to areas to provide well-integrated universal access to the facility. VHB also noted that CTDOT is currently performing an elevator and escalator project at the STC. CTDOT noted that that project includes rehabilitation and replacement of the existing elevators and escalators and that the project is moving forward, with the work starting soon.

5. Question [via email]: In consideration of the "State of the Art" – has the state considered European Transportation Centers?

Response: VHB noted that European transportation centers were not considered as part of this task. In conjunction with CTDOT, this task looked at newly-constructed or recently renovated facilities in the United States that paralleled the STC and, looking at what has worked well/hasn't worked well, see what could be applied, with success, at the STC to give the public a better customer experience and a best-in-class facility.

6. Question [via chat]: Will there be a second online user survey for the public to provide input on draft concepts, and how will the public be made aware about the survey?

Response: CTDOT noted that there will a second user survey, later in the study, that will present the public with draft concepts for station improvements and ask the respondents to select or rank their preferred ones. It was further noted that advertising for the second user survey will include large posters, with QR codes, located throughout the facility as well as staff handing out postcards with the survey information. The survey link will also be posted to the project website and also emailed out to individuals who sign up to receive updates via the project website. VHB added, and CTDOT confirmed, that the timing of the second user survey is currently anticipated to occur in the Fall of 2022.

7. Question [via chat]: When will the STC Master Plan be completed?

Response: CTDOT noted that it is anticipated that the STC Master Plan will be completed later this year/early next year, in the winter of 2022/2023.

[Note that this question was asked twice during the Q&A session and that the response above includes answers given to both]

8. Question: Does the study include the existing garage?

Response: VHB noted that the study does include the original footprint of the existing garage, along Station Place, and that the area will be looked at as to what can be done there and how it can be integrated into the Master Plan.

9. Question [via chat]: How important is pedestrian access, and bicycle access/bike racks, in the STC Master Plan?

Response: CTDOT noted that safety is the top priority for CTDOT and that pedestrians and bicyclists are a top priority/consideration of the Master Plan project. VHB reiterated that pedestrians and bicyclists are extremely important and that the Master Plan team has heard, from stakeholders and users via the first online survey, that they want the STC and the area around it to be a safer, more comforting, and more inviting environment for pedestrians and bicyclists and that both are being considered as the Master Plan is developed.

[Note that this question was asked twice during the Q&A session and that the response above includes answers given to both]

10. Question [via chat]: Do you have any plans for South State Street? I'm not a fan of having high-speed traffic going through the station.

Response: VHB noted that, as part of the Traffic and Station Area Roads tasks, South State Street is being evaluated for recommendations and improvements to improve the existing conditions. VHB further noted that the team has both heard and observed that traffic can flow relatively fast on South State Street and, when combined with vehicles dropping off and picking up passengers, is not always the safest place.

11. Question [via chat]: Has the local zoning been updated in anticipation of the project or is that still to be done?

Response: VHB noted that the STC Master Plan is not necessarily intended to be a single project but could result in several, smaller breakout projects and improvements. VHB also noted that one of the documents they are currently reviewing is the City's recently developed DRAFT 'Station Area Rezoning Development Scenario' and that what is presented in it will be taken into consideration in the development of the Master Plan. In addition, it was noted that VHB, CTDOT, and the City of Stamford are working hand-in-hand and closely coordinating in the development of the Master Plan.

12. Question [via email]: My name is Veronica Chavers, I am the Union President for the CTRANSIT Union Employees. How are you going to reroute the buses when this project takes effect? And will there be parking at the transportation center for the Bus Operators to park their vehicles? Where will we accommodate the passengers? Remember we move this city!

Response: CTDOT noted that it is important that the Master Plan project coordinate with CTtransit as it moves from the planning phase to actual construction projects. As a stakeholder in Stamford, and at the STC, CTDOT will coordinate with CTtransit as the Master Plan progresses.

13. Question [via voicemail]: How are bicyclists being considered in the plan?

Response: CTDOT noted that users who bike to and from the station are being considered in a number of different tasks in the Master Plan, specifically Station Area Roads, Pedestrian Paths of Travel, and the Transformative Vision for Station Place. Opportunities for safer and enhanced access for bicycles, as well as more protected and accessible storage locations and increased amenities, will all be evaluated.

14. Question [via chat]: Will eminent domain of properties on Atlantic street be done to accommodate this project?
15. Question [via chat]: Discussions have occurred with South end residents that eminent domain will be used to widen Atlantic St for bike lanes. 19 properties would be affected.

Response: CTDOT noted that the project is currently in the planning phase and everything is being looked at. CTDOT further noted that they have used eminent domain in the past on projects but that it is one of the last resources/alternatives and the current focus is on listening to all of the stakeholders to see what is best for this location and, as such, it is very early to determine what will be done/what the next steps are. CTDOT also noted that additional public meetings will be held for those projects that come out of the STC Master Plan.

[Note that questions 14 and 15 were answered together, with the above response, during the Q&A session]

16. Question [via chat]: Will the public have an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan improvements?

Response: VHB noted that the plan/goal of the second online user survey is to obtain feedback on draft conceptual plans that will be presented to the public. Further, the intent of Virtual Public Information Meeting No. 2, anticipated to be held in the Fall of 2022, is to obtain feedback on the draft conceptual plans as the public feedback is wanted and valued.

17. Question [via email]: Have you thought about ways to do eco-friendly initiatives with this project like city bikes in NYC, electric bikes, etc.?

Response: CTDOT noted that, as part of evaluating the paths of travel for both pedestrian and bicycles, the project is looking at opportunities to increase bicycle racks and bike storage at the station, as well as amenities such as bike repair stations and bike share programs. CTDOT further noted that the project is looking to enhance customer waiting areas at the facility, both interior and exterior.

18. Question [via chat]: Does the plan take into account Gov. Lamont's recent executive order that DOT projects need to target VMT reduction over the next few decades?

Response: CTDOT noted that the Master Plan will take into account the governor's executive order, signed on December 16th of last year.

19. Question [via email, follow-up from Veronica Chavers, CTtransit Union]: Please keep the special needs and disability passengers in mind during this process. This is very important.

Response: CTDOT thanked Veronica for reiterating this important point.

20. Question [via voicemail]: Can you please repeat who the stakeholders were who were interviewed in the beginning stages of the Master Plan?

Response: CTDOT noted that there 11 sets of interviews were conducted with stakeholders to date. These included Metro-North Railroad, Amtrak, the City of Stamford, CTDOT, WestCOG, bus and shuttle operators, elected officials, major employers, and civic groups.

21. Question [via email]: Will there be any impact to nearby residents and/or businesses and if so, will those individuals be invited to meetings as plans get proposed?

Response: VHB noted that, as a Master Plan, this project is more of a global look at how things can come together and function better and provide for a transformative vision. VHB further noted that what comes out of the Master Plan is not intended to be a single project that closes down the entire study area and rebuilds it from the ground up. Rather, it is anticipated that the Master Plan will lead to different sized projects moving forward. Impact is inevitable from any construction project in a tightly constrained urban area such as this but consideration is given to minimize disruption, inconveniences, and impacts, to the extent possible, to nearby residents, nearby businesses, and the travelling community.

[Note that this question was asked twice during the Q&A session and that the response above includes answers given to both]

22. Question [via chat]: Will there be considerations for PPP as part of the master plan?

Response: CTDOT noted that, while this project is just in the planning phase, opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPP) would be considered.

23. Question [via chat]: Will changes eliminate drivers dropping passengers off in the road, U-turns, parking on the side of Station Place, parked cars blocking entrances to garage? If not will there be police to enforce the law? There is none now.

Response: VHB noted that, as part of the Station Area Roads and Pedestrian Paths of Travel tasks, they will be looking for ways to make the area safer as well as easier for people to pick up and drop off passengers. VHB further noted that an issue on South State Street is that, due to the high volume of traffic, people don't like to use the designated pick-up/drop-off lane as they, essentially, get trapped in it. This has resulted in people pulling over on South State Street, partially in the travel lane, and passengers get out of the vehicles and hop the fence to get to the sidewalk to get to where they are going. While a design can't stop someone from doing this, the conceptual design plans will offer safer alternatives for pedestrians and vehicles. CTDOT added that operations and enforcement on Station Place will be considered in the Master Plan and potentially incorporated into recommendations for operating the bus and shuttle area as well as pick-up and drop-off locations on Station Place.

24. Question [via chat]: Will you consider closing Station Place to use as part of the Parking Garage which can include drop off, pickup, bikes, and taxis?

Response: VHB noted that, as part of CTDOT's desire for a fresh look and a new vision for the STC area, the possibility of closing Station Place is already being discussed and considered as part of the Master Plan. Possible uses for the it and the area of the original footprint of the existing parking garage include pick-up/drop-off for kiss-and-ride, taxis, and TNCs. VHB further noted that traffic data, in particular future traffic volumes, will be important in determining whether or not closing Station Place is feasible and that any potential changes to Station Place will be included in the conceptual designs to be developed.

[Note that this question was asked twice during the Q&A session and that the response above includes answers given to both]

25. Question [via email]: VHB was just talking about "projects being developed". Are these commercial developments within or outside of the project area or are they projects just related to improving the efficiency of the STC? Like ramps, roadways & signage?

Response: VHB noted that, as part of the Summary of Development Projects task, those would be State and Local projects happening in the area of the STC and how they would impact the STC site itself. For example, if a building were going in that was going to bring 1,000 new employees, how would that impact the STC and what challenges would need to be coordinated in order to improve functionality at the STC site. As such, it is necessary to review and understand these projects, including the operational impacts, both positive and negative, that they may pose on the STC.

26. Question [via chat]: How important is the voice of the property owners around the STC Master Plan Project?

Response: CTDOT noted that the voice of nearby property owners and businesses is very important and that they want to hear from them. CTDOT thanked everyone for attending VPIM No. 1 and noted that there is a project email address and project website where individuals can ask questions and suggest ideas. CTDOT further noted that, as this project continues, we will be sharing information with everyone, including as part of the second VPIM.

27. Question [via chat]: Will eminent domain be used to take homes on Atlantic Street?

Response: VHB noted that, at this time, currently, the planning team does not anticipate their concept plans impacting homes on Atlantic Street. It was further noted that, if it did occur, or if CTDOT had a future project that did impact houses on Atlantic Street, there is a process in place that CTDOT follows for any project that requires property to be acquired. CTDOT reiterated that the study area boundaries are the four streets [North State Street, Atlantic Street, Station Place, and Washington Boulevard] and the immediate area surrounding the STC. Further, CTDOT noted that, currently, there is no intention to expand the concept plans and recommended improvements outside of this area.

28. Question [via chat]: Is there a plan to incentivize consolidation of corporate shuttle services and shift some of those trips over to the public bus system?

Response: VHB noted that the topic of consolidating corporate shuttles had been discussed during the stakeholder interviews held to date. In addition, as part of the Bus, Shuttle, TNC & Taxi Services tasks, the planning team will be looking at ways to consolidate shuttles and shift those trips over to CTtransit. Further, as part of those tasks, the team is also looking at who has/can/should have access to the area as well as how they get in and out of the site. It is currently understood that, while taxis, buses, and shuttles all have dedicated areas, TNC services such as Uber and Lyft are able to pick-up and drop-off at will in the area surrounding the STC. The goal is to develop a management plan for all for-hire-vehicles.

29. Question [via chat]: Will you consider using the sideways elevator by ThyssenKrupp?

Response: VHB noted that, for persons with the inability/difficulty to walk long distances, a people mover could be considered. At this stage of the Master Plan, the team is open to all options and would look into the feasibility of where something like a people mover could potentially be used with the goal of providing universal access and a more customer-friendly locale.

30. Question [via email]: Who does Guernsey Street Parking belong to? It's open to the public right now. There is actually construction going on, on Guernsey Street. I witnessed today. Is this part of the new development related to the Master Plan?

Response: CTDOT noted that Guernsey Street is a City of Stamford local road and that anything affecting that area would be in conjunction with the City.

Additional Questions and Comments:

The following, additional questions and comments, were received during the Microsoft Teams Live Event, but not responded to during the live Q&A portion of VPIM No. 1. Responses are provided below:

1. Question: Would pedestrians on west side of Washington Boulevard be able to use the overpass to cross Washington Boulevard?

Response: Yes.

2. Question: Are there any state owned commercial properties in the project area and will they be developed?

Response: With the original footprint of the existing parking garage planned to be demolished following completion of the new parking garage, that area is being considered for other uses as part of the STC Master Plan.

3. Comment/Question: The last time DOT came to the STC, they brutally ignored local input and left in an apparent scandal. Are there any state owned commercial development sites being considered in or near the 0301-0512 project area of the current Master Plan?

Response: With the original footprint of the existing parking garage planned to be demolished following completion of the new parking garage, that area is being considered for other uses as part of the STC Master Plan.

4. Question: Will the master plan be making allowances for probable bike ride sharing facilities at the STC in the future?

Response: The opportunity for bike share programs are being evaluated as part of the STC Master Plan.

5. Comment: This is an opportunity to eliminate the many illegal driving, parking and unsafe pedestrian activity on Station Place. I suggest the Oldest Garage be recreated/replaced to include the pickup/dropoff function, taxi and non-traditional taxi function and include parking for bikes.....as well as commuter parking.

Response: As part of CTDOT's desire for a fresh look and new vision for the STC, the area of the original footprint of the existing parking garage will be looked at for a variety of possible uses, including pick-up/drop-off for kiss-and-ride, taxis, TNCs, etc.

6. Comment: Parking is a huge problem for the residents in the South End. People are not going to stop driving and use bikes. Parking areas need to be provided for residential use.

Response: The South End is outside of the limits of STC Master Plan study area, which is bounded by North State Street to the north, Atlantic Street to the east, Station Place to the south, including the

original footprint of the existing parking garage, and Washington Boulevard to the west, including the footprint of the new state parking garage currently under construction.

7. Comment: Looks to me like decisions are already made and you guys pretending to be open for suggestions and approval.

Response: The project is currently in the planning phase and all thoughts, ideas, and recommendations are being considered. The public will have additional opportunities to provide comments, including on proposed concepts once they are developed and presented later this year.

8. Question: Is the garage being constructed on Washington Boulevard a part of the master plan?

Response: While the construction of the new parking garage itself is not part of the STC Master Plan, it is being considered as to how its presence, and the parking it provides, can be incorporated into future uses of the STC and the study area.

9. Question: Can you please speak more broadly as to how current and future station parking fit into this plan?

Response: Parking for the STC, within the limits of the study area, is being considered in the development of the concept plans. This includes the spaces that will be afforded once the new parking garage is complete as well as those that will be lost when the original footprint of the existing parking garage is demolished. Existing and projected passenger volumes at the STC, including the modes of transportation passengers use to get to and from the facility, will also be considered when determining the amount of parking to be provided.

10. Question: Why weren't any European models explored?

Response: The multi-modal projects considered under the Research of Comparable State-of-the-Art Projects task were limited to those constructed throughout the United States and included a mix of project types, from new construction to rehabilitation to a combination of both.

11. Question: How many commuters from Stamford are on the planning committee?

Response: The Stamford Transportation Advocacy Team (STAT) includes members that are frequent users of the STC. Several STAT members represent the interests of organizations with a large number of daily commuters.

12. Question: Will consideration be given to the fact that the South End is on the National Historical Register including the homes on Atlantic Street?

Response: The South End is outside of the limits of STC Master Plan study area, which is bounded by North State Street to the north, Atlantic Street to the east, Station Place to the south, including the original footprint of the existing parking garage, and Washington Boulevard to the west, including the footprint of the new state parking garage currently under construction.

13. Question: What civic groups were involved since the resident homeowners being impacted was not at the table?

Response: The civic groups People Friendly Stamford and the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council were interviewed as part of the Stakeholder Interviews task, as well as Zoning officials from the City of

Stamford. It is not anticipated that concept plans developed as part of the STC Master Plan will impact homes on Atlantic Street.

14. Question: Did you guys consider that you will kill one of the oldest business in Stamford by widening south part of Atlantic Street?

Response: The south portion of Atlantic Street is outside of the limits of STC Master Plan study area, which is bounded by North State Street to the north, Atlantic Street to the east, Station Place to the south, including the original footprint of the existing parking garage, and Washington Boulevard to the west, including the footprint of the new state parking garage currently under construction.

15. Question: Is it necessary to use eminent domain on Atlantic St in your plans? Has there been bike use studies? We do not see many people riding bikes in this neighborhood.

Response: It is not anticipated that concept plans developed as part of the STC Master Plan will impact homes on Atlantic Street.

16. Comment/Question: This plan is affecting residents on Atlantic St that are homeowners and business owners. How are you accommodating these residents and what effects will this project have on these residents and businesses?

Response: It is not anticipated that concept plans developed as part of the STC Master Plan will impact homes or businesses on Atlantic Street.

17. Question: [CTDOT] mentioned stakeholders, who exactly are these stakeholders. Are nearby property owners who might be affected by eminent domain?

Response: Stakeholders interviewed to date included Amtrak, City of Stamford, Metro-North Railroad, People Friendly Stamford, WestCOG, Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, Fusco Management Company, businesses including Building and Land Technology, Charter Communications, and Empire State Realty Trust, CTtransit, state and local elected officials, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Closing:

Following the answering of questions submitted during the Microsoft Teams Live event, CTDOT reminded attendees to please complete the post-meeting survey, as well as the phone number and email address to contact the Project Team with any additional questions or comments, or by visiting the project website, up to the closing of the public comment period on March 21, 2022.

CTDOT reminded participants that a second Virtual Public Information Meeting will be held in the Fall of 2022. The purpose of that meeting would be to present various conceptual designs to the public in order to solicit feedback on them.

The meeting was closed and adjourned at approximately 8:20 PM.

Distribution: Attendees (in Official Capacity only)
Project File 42402.02