



PROJECT MEETING REPORT

Client: Stonington and Groton, CT
Project Name: Multi-Modal Transportation
Study for the Mystic Seaport Area
Location: Stonington, CT
Project Number: 36938369
Issue Date: 02 DEC 09

MEETING DATE: 02 DEC 09 **TIME:** 7 PM **LOCATION:** Stonington, CT

FROM: Leslie Black, FHI

SUBJECT: Study Advisory Committee Kick-Off Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Name	Affiliation	E-mail Address
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Stuart Popper	URS Corporation	Stuart_Popper@urscorp.com

DISTRIBUTION: Towns of Stonington and Groton, URS study team, Advisory Committee Members

Bill Haase introduced the study team and Advisory Committee. The study is being funded by a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) earmark made possible through grant obtained by lobbyists from the Mystic Seaport. Funds are coming from the FHWA through the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The towns of Stonington and Groton and the Mystic Seaport are involved in the study management process.

Stuart Popper, consultant project manager from URS Corporation made a PowerPoint presentation to the Study Advisory Committee. He outlined the key objectives of the study and the responsibilities of the Study Advisory Committee. He also discussed the parameters of the study area with the Committee. He

reviewed the public outreach process including six (6) Study Advisory Committee meetings, a series of public stakeholder interviews as well as public information meetings.

ACTION: Stuart noted that he would forward a pdf copy of the presentation to the Committee for their reference.

Bob O'Neill commented that many on this committee attend a great number of meetings and how to find a best time to meet throughout the course of the study. He asked that meetings not conflict with Town zoning meetings.

ACTION: The consultant team will canvass the Advisory Committee to ensure best time/date/location for all to attend.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Roadway Considerations:

- Physical limitations of Route 27, including limited right-of-way width, were noted and will be a focus of the study.
- Route 27 is more of a concern than Route 1 (Main Street).

Bicycle/Pedestrian Considerations:

- Mystic Community Bikes has 10 distribution centers throughout the study area and is growing in popularity especially with tourists. Facilitators of this program would like to provide safe routes for those who use the bike program to get around Mystic. They want to encourage riders to not use sidewalks and would like to see safe bike route throughout the community. Link to program: <http://www.mysticcommunitybikes.org/>
- Sidewalk system – downtown next to bridge on Groton side, a sidewalk widening project is underway with bump-outs at corners to enhance pedestrian safety and promote traffic calming.
- Sidewalk widening and bump-outs are noted as making it more difficult for dedicated bicyclists to maneuver through the downtown.
- The streetscape provides an established pattern of traffic movement that cyclists can learn.
- Consider bicycle route options from Howard Johnson along Route 27 to tourist destinations and downtown Mystic; may have to push CTDOT regulations for road width and sidewalk to accommodate bicycle path; envision bicycle fleet at hotels in Golden Triangle – people want out of cars
- Bicycle racks; 24 units proposed on Groton side and 5 units on Stonington side
- Design a safe bike route to edge of down town to park bicycles near bridge and move to pedestrian mode of getting around
- Select trolley shuttles with bicycle racks on front of shuttles so people have multi-modal options
- Bicycles and cars can mix together is traffic moves slowly enough
- Route 1 to Stonington borough is okay with wide shoulder for bicycle traffic
- Cycling is a challenge from Seamen's Inne to Howard Johnson Hotel, both on Route 27.
- Accommodations for senior citizens and those with ADA requirements for safe crossing of Route 27; concept of a pedestrian bridge at the north gate of the Mystic Seaport Museum is not likely to happen soon and would still be a long distance for disabled.

- Many European and Canadian tourists prefer to cycle around the Mystic area

Transit – Multi-modal Considerations:

- Mystic Seaport is looking for safe zone around Mystic Seaport Museum for visitors; one solution is the river and how to make better use of water taxi system with waiting places along the river to disembark and board as well as travel north up the river from the Museum stop to other destinations; direct cars to parking lot for one-stop parking and use of other modes of transit to destinations throughout the study area
- A disadvantage for hotel guests is that most hotels do not have shuttles; many guests arrive by train and Coogan Boulevard is a 2 mile walk from the train.
- Existing SEAT shuttle serves workers taking transit to and from Pawcatuck but not tourists
- Howard Johnson ran a co-operative shuttle between other hotels, businesses, and casinos but operations costs were not sustainable with cost/passenger ratio.
- A seasonal shuttle would need to operate over a longer season than peak summer months to accommodate tourism
- Shuttle service from train station would accommodate train travelers who have no other form of transportation to get to hotel destinations; long wait for taxi cabs
- Transit Center – where would it be located if built? Various sites are under consideration
- A Multi-modal Transit Center – feasibility is driven by cost constraints of structured parking versus surface parking; it would be a landing spot for a regional circulator shuttle service and linkage for bicycle rentals; Committee member could not picture it being popular with the community if built as a structured parking garage; Newport Transit Center was mentioned as an example of a parking structure that serves a tourist-oriented community
- Proposed regional circulator system - a 2005 recommendation for such a service by SCCOG study – study team will review this 2005 study
- Challenge to a local shuttle would be to fund operating costs
- This study will look at best practices of places where this type of shuttle service works well such as Portland, Maine and Freeport, Maine
- Another example might be Niagara Falls shuttle where service was linked to ticket sales for tourist venues
- Bill Haase cited preliminary estimates of cost of transit shelters estimated to be \$50,000 for 6 shelters; way-finding signage estimated at \$25,000.

Way-finding Considerations:

- There is a current pilot program with streetscaping Phase I in Stonington
- Way-finding signs between rail station and downtown Mystic are needed to direct arriving passengers
- It would be great to see a map of preferred destinations/locations for way-finding signage throughout the study area
- Think about way-finding and the overall experience of a visit to Mystic; point of entry, gateway to the Mystic experience
- Helpful wayfinding signage would be a single map of the area posted at each destination in the area with “You are Here” label and information about the destination

Rail Considerations:

- Signage to move tourists in correct direction towards Town

- Shuttle consideration to move travelers to and from station without having to use a car

Other considerations:

- Do not forget residents and workforce who need to get through the area daily
- One consideration would be to provide a fleet of bicycles for staff – e.g. at Aquarium
- Consider linkages to outside the study area
- A lot of community outside that should be encourage to tie in
- New London Multi-modal Center Study underway
- Branding/marketing – how to educate people about what services are there to take advantage of – park once but many ways to move around the area
- Opportunity to use water, trolley bus, bike, or walk but not rely on vehicle
- Whole approach could be “green”

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Signed: Leslie Black
Leslie Black, FHI