



**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: 20 APR 10

MEETING DATE: 13 APR 10 **TIME:** 7 PM **LOCATION:** Stonington, CT

FROM: Leslie Black, FHI

SUBJECT: Study Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Summary

ATTENDEES:

Name	Affiliation	E-mail Address
Bill Haase	Town of Stonington	whaase@stonington-ct.gov
Stephen Gazillo	URS Corporation	Stephen_Gazillo@urscorp.com
Robert Aloise	URS Corporation	Robert_Aloise@urscorp.com
Jenna Nichols	URS Corporation	Jenna_Nichols@urscorp.com
Jim Wensley	Transystems	jawensley@transystems.com
Sam Eisenbeiser	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.	skeisenbeiser@fhiplan.com
Jim Butler	Southeastern CT Council of Governments (SCCOG)	jbutler@seccog.org
Brian Kent	Kent & Frost/AC Member	bkent@kentfrost.com
Bill Parent	Mystic Seaport	bill.parent@mysticseaport.org
Tricia Cunningham	Mystic Chamber	tricia@mysticchamber.org
Stephen White	Mystic Seaport	steve.white@mysticseaport.org
Susette Tibus	Board of Police Commissioners, Stonington	majestic@sbcglobal.net
Bob O'Neill	Town of Groton Zoning Board	oldbob59@aol.com
Susan Cullen	Town of Groton Planning Department	scullen@town.groton.ct.us
Ed Dombroskas	Eastern Regional Tourism District	edombroskas@mysticcountr.com
John Kennedy	Kennedy Technical Services	jbken53@sbcglobal.net
Peter Glankoff	Mystic Aquarium	pglankoff@searesearch.org

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

The meeting began at 7:00 PM. Bill Haase introduced the study team and Advisory Committee. Steve Gazillo began the PowerPoint presentation which was made by the consultant team.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Jim B. indicated that shuttle service into Groton should be considered, even if it is less frequent than the regular service.
- He also indicated that the two towns have been working closely on this project and that the service should reflect that Mystic is a place spanning both towns.
- Steve G. stated that the possibility of extending trolley service to Groton can be explored.
- Jim W. indicated that the purpose of the trolley is to transport people across distances/areas that are less conducive to walking – once the trolley brings a rider to a good pedestrian environment such as downtown Mystic then transit is no longer needed beyond that point.

- Jim B. indicated that the drawbridge is a visual barrier and that if the trolley service can make just one stop in Groton that may be enough
- Steve G. said that the potential ramifications of extending the service to Groton need to be estimated in terms of headway, ridership and operations
- Brian K. asked if the objective of the trolley service is to maintain a regular frequency
- Jim W. stated that ideally the service would have a headway of 15 minutes so that anyone who reached a trolley stop would know that it would be no more than 15 minutes until the next trolley arrived.
- Ed D. indicated that he did not entirely agree with the notion that there is plenty of free parking in the study area as suggested in the presentation. Steve indicated that the parking data is being reviewed but initial findings are that the Olde Mistick Village area provides ample parking and the perception of plenty of available free parking at places such as OMV, the aquarium or the Seaport Museum can potentially be a detriment to encouraging people to use transit.
- Ed D. asked what the overall purpose of the shuttle system would be.
- Steve G. noted that objectives of enhancing multimodal transportation options include addressing roadway congestion, increasing sustainability and improving the experience of visitors and residents.
- Jim W. indicated that the traffic congestion is created by cars traveling short distances. He noted that with a trolley system, those staying overnight in the area would be able to leave their cars parked at the hotel and that, in the future, as increasing numbers of visitors arrive by rail or bus, they will need mobility between the area destinations.
- Bill H. noted that earlier license plate studies conducted showed that visitors who arrived by car to the area followed a pattern of parking at one attraction in the morning, moving their car and parking at another attraction in the afternoon and then moving their car again to park downtown in the evening. A trolley system can serve the demand that this pattern represents, providing an opportunity to move visitors between destinations over the course of a day while keeping their vehicle off of the roadways.
- Bill H. also noted that the group Sustainable Mystic represents an initiative to reduce energy use in the area. He also noted that if the cost of gas were increase significantly, it would have a detrimental impact on the Mystic area businesses if the area were to remain exclusively auto-dependent.
- Ed D. noted that there is an overall resistance to buses in New England and that the trolley ride would need to enhance the experience of visiting Mystic.
- Ed D. noted that rubber-tired vehicles are inherently at a disadvantage to attracting riders.
- Steve G. said that it could be made attractive and more appealing to riders.
- Jenna N. said that the study attempts to view Mystic as a place as opposed to a collection of attractions and that when you focus efforts on moving people vs. moving vehicles you can solve problems such as congestion while improving the experience. Also, she noted that the area is conducive to being experienced while walking.
- John K. noted that more environmentally-friendly vehicles are being made available that could serve as a shuttle and capitalize on its energy-efficiency.
- Bob O. suggested that different groups visiting the area have different needs, such as day visitors vs. those staying overnight. He noted that in Denver there is a shuttle system operated by a group of hotels. He asked if hotel-provided on-call vans would be a good solution.

- Sam E. noted that at the focus group meeting with the hotel operators, those present saw the value of a shuttle that would help strengthen the brand of Mystic and would be used by both day visitors and those staying in hotels.
- Stephen G. noted that when a convention of educators recently visited the museum they asked why there was no transit system available in the area
- Peter G. noted that education efforts will be important to getting people to travel without their cars, including wayfinding systems.
- Peter G. also noted that the crosswalk across Coogan near the Mystic Hilton is not walkable
- Steve G. noted that they would be conducting a pedestrian survey in the summer
- Bob O. stated that the congestion in downtown Mystic is related to mid-block pedestrian crossings. He also noted that if the trolley were to cross the drawbridge then it would be slowed down by the downtown congestion and pedestrian activity.
- Bill H. discussed the ongoing streetscape projects, noting that extensive wayfinding signage will be included in the Stonington project
- Stephen W. asked about the potential extension of water taxi service to the cemetery area. Rob A. indicated that the consulting team would be exploring the possibility of this service, although the relatively long walk from Rt. 27 along the cemetery border to the waterfront might be a detriment to the success of this service.
- There was general discussion about the roadway that runs from the I-95 NB off ramp directly to the Aquarium along the north side of OMV. It was noted that some visitors believe this roadway to be the on-ramp to I-95 and they avoid taking it even though it is more direct and prevents them from having to take a left turn onto Coogan Blvd. Suggestions were made to enhance the signage to reassure motorists that the Aquarium is accessible by this route, including possibly painting the road surface with a marine life theme.
- Stephen W. noted that the existing water taxi service docks adjacent to the southerly entrance of the museum
- Steve G. asked if there was general consensus on the question of mobility hubs vs. a centralized transportation center. Ed D. noted that it would be difficult to make a centralized transportation center a success. Peter G. noted that the key advantages of the mobility hubs system is that the hubs can scaled to fit the environment and that they provide a frequent message to the visitor regarding the availability of multiple modes of transportation.
- Jim B. indicated that early studies of a potential transportation center found that the most available land was located near Jerry Browne Road and that such a location is too far removed from the activity to be successful.
- Brian K. suggested that having a hub at the flagpole may be difficult since there is little space there. Steve offered that since the hubs can easily vary in scale that there may be a way to design a hub that is appropriate to that site.
- Tricia C. wondered if the Seaport Marine/Dinghy Dock location might be appropriate for a hub.
- Overall, there was general agreement that the mobility hubs offered a more suitable solution than the centralized transportation center.

Next Steps:

- Steve noted that the community workshop will be scheduled for the last week of May or the first two weeks of June and that the committee members would be notified by e-mail. Bill H. stated that the workshop would be held at the Hoxie Fire House in Mystic, CT.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Signed: Sam Eisenbeiser
Sam Eisenbeiser, FHI