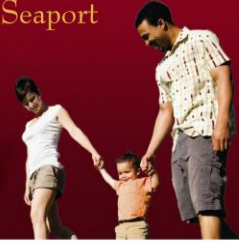




Mystic Mobility Study



MEETING MINUTES

Client: Stonington and Groton, CT
Project Name: Multi-Modal Transportation Study for the Mystic Seaport Area
Location: Mystic, Connecticut
Project Number: 36938369
Prepared by: Leslie Black (FHI)
Issue Date: December 10, 2010

Public Information Meeting #2

MEETING DATE: Monday, November 22, 2010
TIME: 7:00 PM
LOCATION: B.F. Hoxie Fire House, Stonington, CT
ATTENDEES: Study Team and members of the Public who signed in (52 in attendance)

STUDY TEAM ATTENDEES:

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SUMMARY:

Public Information Meeting #2 was conducted on Monday, November 22, 2010 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Hoxie Fire House in Mystic, Connecticut. 52 members of the public and study team were present.

Planning Director for the Town of Stonington, Mr. William Haase, opened the meeting and introduced the study team. Mr. Stephen Mitchell, Consultant Project Manager from URS Corporation then presented a PowerPoint presentation, providing the study progress to date and proposed draft plan concepts being considered for the study area.

The public then moved to the open house workshop part of the evening where they visited various stations around the room that exhibited various elements of the draft plan. The stations were as follows:

- Station 1: Water taxi/trolley shuttle route
- Station 2: New Mobility Hub locations and layout
- Station 3: Wayfinding signage concepts
- Station 4: Streetscape/pedestrian/bicycling improvements
- Station 5: Key intersection and roadway improvements

The public's questions, suggestions, and comments were recorded below:

NOTES FROM STATION 1: WATER TAXI/TROLLEY SHUTTLE ROUTE

Questions:

- Where will people park to get on the trolley? Will additional parking be added to accommodate trolley riders?
- Will the aquarium/seaport object to people keeping their cars parked in those private lots while they ride the trolley? Will the additional parking time affect turnover rates? How will parking be accommodated during the Wooden Boat Show weekend?
- Will the trolley pick up between stops on demand?
- Does the trolley need to stop or can people climb on while it's moving like in San Francisco?
- Is there a potential for town parking near the Cove area?

Suggestions:

- The intersection of Holmes St. and East Main St. will be congested when the bridge is up, possibly impacting trolley circulation as well as pick up and drop off. A number of alternative ideas were suggested, such as:
 - Picking up/dropping off at the Mystic River Park
 - Using Washington Street as an alternative route back
 - Having the trolley by-pass the queue on Holmes St. by traveling in the opposing lane
 - Bypass intersection by going down Holmes to Frazier, Church or Forsyth Streets; then right onto Willow Street; then left onto East Main Street (Route 1)
- There is some additional parking behind the Mystic Hilton in the area where there once was a series of factory outlet stores. There is no trolley stop shown near this area – if a stop were added nearby, this parking could be used by trolley riders. Additionally, perhaps a trolley stop near this area would make the available floor area more marketable and bring more activity to this now largely deserted area.
- The water taxi route was corrected by a Seaport employee – as indicated with black marker, the taxi docks a bit to the north of the location originally shown.
- There may be a higher concentration of stops than is necessary in the OMV/Aquarium area – a single stop may be able to serve this area. Also, the looping circulation in the vicinity of the aquarium seems like it would add too much length to the route – a trolley stop that can be accessed more directly should be investigated.
- "Connection Needed" along Clara Drive south of Coogan Blvd.
- Pedestrian Connection needed at the OMV driveway on Coogan Blvd across from MacDonald's driveway.
- Also, there may be more stops than needed near the hotels at the northern end of the route – a single stop may be able to serve this area as long as pedestrian connections were made.

- No mobility hub at the Cove Stop
- Combine OMV and Aquarium into one mobility hub only due to cost constraints

Comments:

- Extending the Shoreline East service to Westerly is being investigated, this would create additional activity at the Mystic rail station. However, a key obstacle is the need to relocate the platform to a straight section of track to accommodate commuter rail cars.
- If there is a concern about trolley ridership due to the costs, hotels should provide vouchers to ride the trolley.

NOTES FROM STATION 2: NEW MOBILITY HUB LAYOUT

Questions:

- What are you doing to address commuter/worker needs and to help integrate SEAT bus service with the Hubs? Will these mobility hubs be available for commuters to use while waiting in the rain for SEAT service? Will SEAT service be coordinated with the trolley shuttle? Have you been working with SEAT?
- What are the security issues associated with the interactive screens? How durable are the monitors when outside?
- How much of the hubs will be green? Will they be LEED certified?
- Who is going to maintain the Hubs?
- Will there be free Wifi at each hub? If so, suggest they are at each location such as example in Pittsburgh (?)
- Will the community be able to use the Hubs to post notices?

Suggestions:

- Trash receptacles at each Hub should support recycling. There should be a lot of trash receptacles along the pedestrian routes to support the new pedestrian environment.
- Solar roof should be considered for each Mobility Hub. A green roof would not be logical given the small footprint.
- Lighting for signs should be by LCD and should be a subtle blue with warm lettering. Bright LED, 'heavy electric signs' such as the samples shown are too bright and won't be approved by Planning & Zoning.
- You should consider lockers at each Mobility Hub for personal storage for those visiting for the day (not staying overnight)
- People should be allowed to lock their own bikes at each Hub as well as rent a bike. Who will run and maintain the bike program?
- Suggest use of solar compactors.

Comments:

- Existing Wayfinding signs recently put up by town are plastic looking and not effective (5-6 individuals commented on this). Signs don't point to anything specific and people don't know what to make of them

- The drawing you have of the Mobility Hub is too overbuilt for the context and dimensions of Mystic.
- Information aspect of the Mobility Hubs, and the potential of having an iPhone app was very well received by multiple persons during the course of the evening
- I know your Hubs will be ADA compliant (woman in wheelchair); I have three words for you to consider: strollers, strollers, strollers
 - You need to consider Exit 89 & Allen Street as an over-looked area.

NOTES FROM STATION 3: WAYFINDING SIGNAGE CONCEPTS TABLE

Questions:

- Are sidewalk improvements scheduled for Bay Street?
- Can Holmes Street have two lanes south to accommodate the trolley movements when traffic is backed up at the bridge? The bridge traffic back ups blocking turning movements out of Holmes Street.
- Would making Holmes Street one-way south be positive? That would give two lanes needed for the trolley.
- Dennis O'Brien, a local sign designer, asked who was doing the interpretive signs. He was referred to Bill Haase, Stonington Town Planner.

Suggestions:

- Pedestrian improvements are needed at the intersection of Route 27 and Coogan Boulevard
- Consider orienting pedestrians to Bay Street
- Don't direct vehicles down Holmes Street. Keep it pedestrian-oriented.
- The streets need traffic-calming measures.
- The existing pedestrian wayfinding signage is a nice design motif but the content is very poor. You need specific information and distances. Check New London in terms of what they say on their wayfinding signs.
- Promote the train station, Mystic Seaport and the downtown area with signage.
- Mystic Arts Center wants a wayfinding sign on the Stonington side.
- Quality signage is important. Bronze plaques and/or porcelain enamel are good products.
- Don't over-sign and clutter the community with sign pollution.
- Set up wayfinding sign mock-ups and get feedback. Contrasts, font sizes, and font types often fail in new signage.
- Wayfinding signage needs to integrate the train station for both vehicular and pedestrian users.
- The 55-acre site off Route 27 would make a good site for a visitor center.
- Consider adding sidewalks on Isham and Bay Streets.
- Consider both Isham and Bay Streets as one-way direction for vehicles.
- Hub/trolley stop should have a designated color represented on pedestrian and vehicular signage.
- Hub proposed at Howard Johnson Hotel should be encouraged as the drop-off/pick-up location for buses from New London.
- Pedestrian signs need to show bathroom locations.
- Consider traffic-calming devices on Route 27 (especially north of I-95 interchange).
- Consider planters on rollers as part of traffic-calming.

- Limit the number of existing and proposed regulatory signage in proximity to new pedestrian/vehicular signs – too cluttered.
- Pedestrian and vehicular signage should guide users to specific destinations.
- Consider pedestrian wayfinding signs similar to European (metal) style.
- Consider purchasing 50-acre site along Route 27 for use in circulation patterns. Makes a great location for a hub.

Comments:

- Multimodal hubs need to be distinctive in appearance.
- The multimodal hub across the river in Groton may not work due to headway times.
- Regarding vehicular signage concept sketches, four people preferred Option A; none Option B. They do not think the compass rose is necessary.
- Regarding how people are experiencing the community, newcomers are often confused thinking Mystic Seaport is Mystic Village, etc. Downtown Mystic is unknown to many people.
- Should commuter trains ever become active, the requirement for raised platforms will require the train station to be relocated, but in the meantime people need to be directed to the station.
- Coogan Boulevard is a terrible walk.
- The sense of arrival to Mystic is a complete turn-off, and the Department of Transportation has not cooperated or assisted in efforts to provide for landscape improvements at the off-ramps.

NOTES FROM STATION 4: PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS TABLE

Questions:

- Where the users of the trolley shuttle will park? One man said that we are missing the important piece of the puzzle; we need to provide parking for the trolley shuttle users who are coming to Mystic just for the day (rather than those who are staying at the hotels, where they can leave their cars). Peter Glankoff (Mystic Aquarium) more or less said that the Aquarium does not want to become the unofficial parking lot for trolley shuttle users.
- Are additional crossings going to be designed along Coogan Boulevard?

Suggestions:

- The trolley shuttle should use Cottrell Street and Washington Street instead of East Main Street
- A bicycle route network should be laid out and use Cottrell Street and Washington Street instead of East Main Street
- Suggested making Isham Street, Oak Street and Bay Street (to intersection with Holmes) a pedestrian only street (except for residents who live on the streets and Seaport emergency vehicles)

Comments:

- Sidewalk along Route 27 (following the cemetery) between the Seaport and Coogan Boulevard intersection is a critical pedestrian connection. Many people emphasized that this is a sidewalk that they use a lot and that it needs significant improvement. The pavement is currently in very poor condition and the lack of pedestrian scale lighting makes it feel dangerous to use. The sidewalk could be wider and resolve the accumulation of soil on the sidewalk.

- Intersection of Route 27 and Willow Street is very dangerous for pedestrians – motorists ignore red lights and drive at a high rate of speed through the intersection.
- Improvements are needed at pedestrian crossings on Coogan Boulevard:
 - Improve pedestrian accommodations and crossing in front of the McDonald's driveway, and the Hilton Hotel's driveway on Coogan Boulevard
 - Improve pedestrian crosswalk accommodations across Coogan Boulevard from the Mobil Station to the Steak Loft
- Improvements are needed to enhance the pedestrian accommodations and crosswalks in front of the I-95 Northbound Exit 90 off ramp intersection with Route 27
- Pedestrians are often stranded at the Route 27 and Coogan Boulevard intersection
- Sidewalks on Holmes Street are heavily traveled and in poor condition. This area was repeatedly mentioned as an area where pedestrian connections and improvements are very much needed.

NOTES FROM STATION 5: PROPOSED INTERSECTION/ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS TABLE

Questions:

- Is it better to have the sidewalk on the south side or the north side?
- Will there be additional sidewalk connections on Clara Drive or into the Aquarium or Shops?
- Did we coordinate the shuttle route and stops with the existing SEAT service?
- Pedestrian crossing of Coogan difficult/unsafe. New design is better, but can it be further enhanced? Do NOT recommend additional signals.
- Route 1 & 27 very important. Why is there no RTOR permitted westbound (Rt. 1 to Rt. 27)? This should be allowed with a right turn overlap in the final design.

Suggestions:

- There needs to be a sidewalk on the north-east corner at Route 27 & Coogan because there is a relatively heavily used SEAT bus stop there. There is presently no sidewalk or place for people to wait.
- Need to revise signal timings at Route 27 in the interchange area. Many phases are too short.
- Need to revisit allowing left turns at Village Farm Road. They are presently prohibited. (Some comments to add the left turns back). Others to extend the median to positively eliminate them.
- Agree that Route 27 northbound at Coogan is a problem with 2 lanes not acting like two lanes due to the left turns. Signal timings very poor. Need pedestrian enhancements for crosswalks.

Comments:

- Coogan Boulevard is better for bicycles as it is today. With 2 lanes in each direction, cars are forced to get into the left lane to pass a bike, and then cannot turn right across the bike's path. This is a safer condition. With the proposed arrangement, the car can turn right from the single lane, turning across the bike's path and potentially causing a collision.
- Stop sign pedestrian crossing on Clara between Shops and Aquarium is very poorly laid out.