



## MEETING MINUTES

**RE:** Danbury Branch Improvement Program – FTA AA/EIS  
**DESCRIPTION:** Study Advisory Committee Meeting #2  
**MEETING DATE:** March 17, 2010  
**MEETING TIME:** 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** Ridgefield Town Hall, Conference Room

### PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
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### MEETING AGENDA ITEMS:

#### 1. INTRODUCTIONS

#### 2. CTC PRESENTATION (CTDOT):

- CTDOT provided an overview on the CTC project, which will provide upgrades to the railroad signal system

- Technical questions for the CTC project should be directed to Tim Sullivan
- The CTC Project is not technically part of this Danbury Branch Study and therefore it is not required to update the advisory committee on its status as frequently as the Danbury Study, however, CTDOT will attempt to join these meetings as often as possible.
- Committee suggest that graphics be used in future presentations for public outreach to show siding – make it clear to the locals
- The CTC Project began in July, 2009 with the procurement of materials for the project
- CTDOT does foresee that there might be night-time outages (depending on the contractor bid as well), however, outages will be scheduled in advance to let everyone know ahead of time.
- The CTC project is fully funded using ARRA, FTA and CT DOT funds. The total project cost is \$63 million
- Trenching – Cable Plow
  - Ability to dodge obstructions
  - Some track crossings to avoid utilities
  - Sufficient capacity for future upgrades
  - Question pertaining to any environmental constraints: Mile post number 5 *close* to wetlands.
  - Cable plow trenching machine extends 10' from the centerline of track – all work will be performed on right-of-way, all material will be stored on site, and equipment only extends 10' from centerline of track.
  - Cable plow trenching machine is drawn by a diesel engine – noise concerns in residential areas will be avoided by plowing trenches during the day and using the night hours for other activities.
  - Cable plow trenching will compliment future electrification but it will need to be aerial (catenary). Ancillary communications will be able to use cable fiber optics.
- Who is providing bus service? – Metro-North will coordinate it using a CT operator (CT Transit – use of a CT operator was well received); number of buses will accommodate the train service users
- Metro-North doesn't grant outages during the holiday season
- If contractor can't get the trenching done in 80 days, they might need to call for more night outages, but there are provisions for Liquidated Damages tied into the contract to entice the contractor to complete the work on time.

### **3. ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION PRESENTATION (URS):**

- FTA's Boston office is now the coordinator for this project (no longer the NY office); URS will meet with representatives from the FTA Boston office to bring them up to speed on the project.
- Goal is to publish DEIS by early fall.
- Utility relocation, communication and signal upgrades, and station upgrades to be discussed at the next meeting.
- South Norwalk to Danbury segment
  - Currently 40-50% of the RR is on curves
  - Conceptual plans suggest changes to superelevation at 5 curves and the realignment of 33 curves to improve maximum speed to 60 MPH.
- North of Danbury to New Milford segment
  - 27 existing curves are relatively gentle because of the freight operation (which only has speeds of 25 mph)

- To upgrade to 60 mph a rebuilt railroad will be required, that includes new rails, ties, and ballast.
- Discussion of track realignments, bridge upgrades and ROW impacts along the corridor (provided some specific examples):
  - At South Norwalk, CTDOT asked URS to look at a direct connection between the branch and the Mainline, which would require adding a bridge to add an adjacent track with a direct connection
  - Another location, near Commerce St. in Norwalk suggests bringing the curved alignment inland to create more waterfront property and consolidate the bridges.
  - Berkshire Junction – adding a link on the main track for passenger operation
- Computed Train Performance Calculations (TPC) to determine the time savings when the track is electrified. The result was a potential 25% time savings of 21 minutes using electrified rail. Electrified cars are typically multiple car units that are self propelled, meaning that the whole train begins moving together and does not have to wait for each car to move individually. Electric cars also typically have doors in the middle or the body of the car instead of on the ends of the cars, which reduces dwell times (time spent loading and unloading passengers). Electrified cars are also faster at acceleration and deceleration.
- 15 open deck bridges will need to be replaced with ballast deck bridges. Ballast decks are better for maintenance and better for overall efficiency.
- The yard layout in Danbury will change, however the location will remain the same. It will require upgrades to service isles, water supply, toilet servicing, car cleaners, etc. The new layout will encroach a small amount on the existing museum space, but there is potential for a land swap.
- If passenger service is extended to New Milford, the storage and maintenance yard should be relocated to New Milford to eliminate the need for dead-heading (running empty trains from Danbury to New Milford in the morning to service the commuters). Deadheading is expensive and causes congestion on the rail lines during peak travel times.
  - The Brass Mill site was selected for the location of the New Milford yard.
  - Conceptual layout attempts to get to the backside of the property
  - Suggestion to look into preserving the existing track spurs on the property. More information will be sent to Dave Chase on the existing tracks.
- Electrification Schematics:
  - Peaceable Street (Branchville) – existing transformer and circuit breaker should be considered for use.
  - Load flow analysis will be conducted to show that the locations selected for electrification power supply are ideal.

#### **4. PRESENTATION ON SUMMARY OF TOD REPORT (URS):**

- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently new regulations that evaluate New Start projects differently.
- TOD project in Cohasset, Massachusetts could be used as a role model.
- Improving quality of service will improve potential for TOD.
- TOD Guiding principles:
  - Quality and level of commuter rail service (frequency). Importance of this principle was stressed.
  - Level of parking appropriate for site (no “one-size-fits-all”)
  - Pedestrian access and walkability within each TOD site

- Control traffic congestion at each TOD location
- Balance and mix of use
- Add to the list “working with developers”
- Can URS suggest TOD plans for the TOD sites?
  - These “plans” could be even less than conceptual plans, but some sort of schematic to illustrate to the community what potentially could develop. This will help to gauge the “mood” of the communities particularly with changes causing increased walkability and densely populated areas.
- Is there any attempt to have coordination with the Rte. 7 study or other ongoing studies?
  - A lot of work is on-going and cannot yet be shared. This project would benefit from more access to the plans of on-going projects
- Suggestion to provide recommendations on zoning changes for areas, identifying what zoning changes might be necessary to achieve successful TOD.
- Suggestion to add the “guiding principles” to the TOD inventory report so that communities can use them as a guide.
- TOD report – helpful as an inventory. Is it possible to add communities’ dialogue into the document? This would help to get a sense of the communities’ feel for the project; opinions, evaluations, etc.
- Use the “TOD Type” table to further elicit community input.
- TOD Maps and target areas
  - Coordination with Rte. 7 project to use a similar representation of TOD areas
  - Add context and be sensitive to the way TOD radius is displayed (don’t want to raise red flags and/or expectation levels)
  - Developable land highlighted, mature neighborhoods not highlighted
- Will stations be able to be added to the branch? (i.e. Kent Street) – This is difficult to do while maintaining acceptable travel times and a level of service that is desirable.
- Mainline tracks at Norwalk drive the whole schedule – at best we can get approximately 22 trains each way, realistically we can get approximately 18 trains each way. Currently 11 trains each way.
- Question regarding the use of a tension wire with counterweights: will this system be used? Counterweights not required because trains travel only 60 mph. That detail will be reconsidered/evaluated.
- Question regarding the benefit of only going part of the way with electrification: what is the benefit?

**5. GENERAL NOTES:**

- April 15<sup>th</sup> – URS asked to attend a presentation to HVCEO on the proposed stations
- Continue the dialogue with the municipalities, CTDOT, and URS. Look for opportunities to engage residents and towns ahead of time.
- “Going Beyond the Inventory” – may be some very positive responses; could be helpful to get positive feedback on our side as we go public with the study results.

Submitted by:




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Stephen Gazillo, URS

3/17/2010

Date