

[Regional Roundtable Notes excerpted from the minutes of the MPO meeting on 7/28/08]

Special MPO Regional Roundtable - TOD

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Bliss opened the special regional roundtable session of the MPO meeting, welcoming guests and speakers.

2. Showcasing South Western Region's Proposed TOD Applications

a. Darien

Mr. Jeremy Ginsberg presented three applications made by Darien, which included:

- **Tokeneke Rd. Improvements:** Design and construction of sidewalks, marking and lighting along Tokeneke Rd. connecting to Darien station (\$75,000).
- **Darien CBD TOD Feasibility Report:** Feasibility study to determine how to best connect Darien's CBD, which is currently split in half by rail lines (\$100,000).
- **35 Leroy Ave.:** Feasibility study to determine best TOD option for town-owned site at 35 Leroy Ave; design and site plan for site; sidewalks construction and rehab; and signage improvements (\$140,000).

Mr. Ginsberg explained that these proposals all have the unified goal of increasing the connectivity of the train stations and their surrounding neighborhoods. He provided a handout of his presentation (attached).

b. Greenwich

Ms. Diane Fox presented the Greenwich application:

- **Multi-modal Improvements at the Cos Cob Rail Station** application. The proposed project is described as implementation of multi-modal improvements to the area surrounding the Cos Cob Station, which will include the designation of 1.3mi of bike routes via new striping, signage and bike racks and construction of a walkway and crosswalk connecting a new waterfront park to Station Dr. (\$28,000).

Ms. Fox said that this proposal incorporates pedestrians, bicyclists and mass transit ans will act as a pilot for train stations at Old Greenwich and Greenwich. She provided a handout of her presentation (attached).

c. New Canaan

Mr. Steve Kleppin presented three applications made by New Canaan, which included:

- **Bicycle Lane/Bicycle Locker Feasibility & Implementation Plan:** A feasibility study to determine the possibility of adding bicycle lanes on designated streets to facilitate this alternative mode of access to either of the town's two train stations. The second phase of the project is the placement of bicycle lockers at both the Talmadge Hill and New Canaan train stations (\$45,000).
- **Parking Lot Construction at the Talmadge Hill Station:** The proposed parking lot, with 49 parking spaces, would accommodate some of the commuters who are now on a waiting list and thus facilitate the use of transit (\$300,000).
- **TOD Feasibility Market Demand Study:** Feasibility study to identify and evaluate locations that may be suitable for TOD based on their location to the New Canaan train station, their size and potential for redevelopment or additional development. Market demand study to evaluate market demand for office and retail uses by business type and the appropriate mix of residential units (\$75,000).

Mr. Kleppin pointed out that when considering locations for TOD, three factors were considered: Transit; Multi-Modal; and Economic Stimulus. He provided a handout of his presentation (attached).

d. Norwalk

Mr. Mike Moore presented the Norwalk application:

- **Transit Zone TOD Master Planning & Feasibility Analysis:** Master Plan and feasibility analysis for the Transit Zone area which will include: the identification of feasible TOD opportunities; review of the existing residential, retail and commercial markets within the Transit Zone; review and map of the transport connection within the subject area including rail, bus and vehicular routes; analysis of existing zoning and land use regulations and outline of potential alterations to these regulations necessary to foster TOD (\$250,000).

Mr. Moore explained the Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How? And Why? Regarding the *South Norwalk Transit Zone* He provided a handout of his presentation (attached).

e. Stamford

Mr. Josh Lecar presented two applications made by Stamford:

- **Light Rail Terminal (LRT) Conceptual Design Study:** A conceptual design process study for light rail terminals at the Harbor Point commercial center in the South End and the Bull's Head retail center north of downtown, which represent north and south nodes along a Light Rail Transit (LRT) system being planned by Stamford (\$250,000).
- **Springdale Rail Station Shared Parking & Joint Development Study:** A planning study to identify options for redeveloping the Springdale station with a medium density residential or mixed use development above a shared use structure (\$200,000).

Mr. Lecar provided a handout of his presentation, and identified three general goals which these proposals share:

- Coordination with State and regional plans;
- Identifying opportunities for joint development and community enhancement; and
- Encouraging projects with strong private market potential to respond to the State's *Responsible Growth Initiative*

f. Wilton

Mr. Bob Nerney presented the Wilton application and provided a handout of his presentation:

- **Wilton Rail Station Walkway Project:** The Wilton Station Walkway would connect the Wilton Train Station and Wilton Center via a pedestrian bridge and paved walkway that will integrate the train station and the downtown (\$391,000).

The goal of this proposal is to connect downtown Wilton with its train station.

3. OPM and ConnDOT Responses to the Proposed TOD Applications

Mr. Dave LeVasseur thanked everyone for attending and said that when Executive Order 15 of October 6, 2006 called for Regional Roundtable events, "this is exactly what we were hoping for." Connecticut municipalities need to begin thinking more regionally and coordinating planning efforts. Because of the current economic climate, we really need to figure out how to do things differently.

Secretary Robert Genuario pointed out that this current energy crisis has pushed alternatives to the forefront. All of our data indicates that people are driving less. The State needs to move forward with projects that embrace this shift. He responded to the TOD Application presentations by saying “a lot of these are plans with more long-term implications and it’s exciting to see proposals like Wilton’s that will be putting the shovel into the ground soon.” The State is reviewing these applications and will make appropriate recommendation to Governor Rell. These are moderate and reasonable proposals.

Deputy Commissioner Al Martin said that all of these are exciting proposals and we look forward to making these a reality and are trying to work as expeditiously as possible to get through the process and give you some sort of word as soon as possible.

Mr. Bob Nerney said that he was very please to see so many State Officials here; often times, we don’t get to discuss funding requests with those reviewing and/or granting the requests. He also asked how long it will take the State to complete these reviews.

Secretary Genuario responded that a very important function of the process is the Bond Commission. The Pilot Program is administered by ConnDOT who determines standards and evaluates the applications. After doing so, ConnDOT will send a list of recommendations to the Governor. He pointed out that the Governor will have to judge the list of recommendations against one another, but also against other Connecticut initiatives. The Bond Commission will meet in late fall and then again in early winter.

Mr. Gordon Joseloff said that Westport is conspicuously absent from the list of proposals, but Planning and Zoning has reviewed a number of developments near the Saugatuck rail station. The Town continues to explore adding rail station parking capacity, but has faced severe opposition from the community to constructing a parking structure. He mentioned that SWPRA is preparing a regional rail station parking study and that Westport will be producing a study of parking at its two stations.

Mr. Floyd Lapp said by setting aside \$5 million for the TOD Pilot Program, at the moment, Connecticut is ahead of New York and New Jersey. New Jersey operates a \$1-2 million program and New York has no money set aside for similar projects. He also expressed pleasure that the Pilot Program has caused the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to join in. The fact that six of eight South Western Region communities have applied for grant funding underscores the importance of TOD in the region and state.

4. Open Discussion of TOD and Responsible Growth in the South Western Region

Secretary Genuario agreed that TOD and the Governor’s Responsible Growth Initiative go hand-in-hand and have been universally embraced statewide. On the issue of rail station parking, he wondered if the State and municipalities have studied demand to the extent that they are able to assess the direct impact on demand of adding capacity. He suggested that we all give much thought to utilizing park and ride and shuttle services to maximize existing capacity.

Mr. Mike Moore explained that the South Norwalk Inter-Modal Study is exploring the option of providing shuttle service from various locations to and from the South Norwalk rail station.

Secretary Genuario added that the cost of constructing parking facilities has skyrocketed.

Ms. Prosi pointed out that the Norwalk Transit District (NTD) and the City of Stamford are using Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) monies to fund

alternative programs such as those being discussed. Norwalk is operating a shuttle service and Stamford is constructing the Stamford Urban Transitway. Norwalk is also setting a good example for the region's parking managers at the South Norwalk and East Norwalk stations. When a commuter calls Parking with an inquiry regarding parking capacity, he/she is advised of all parking options available; not just at the stations. SWRPA's 2008 SWR Rail Station Parking Study includes this policy as a Best Management Practice that others should follow. The Study recommends exploring ways to maximize utilization without increasing capacity. Shared parking also needs to be addressed.

Mr. Woody Bliss thanked everyone for attending and added that the number one issue in the Town of Weston, which does not have a rail station, is setting policy to establish shared parking that can be used more efficiently.

5. Where Do We Go From Here?

The MPO agreed to schedule another regional roundtable, possibly in three months.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:23 a.m.

Handouts

- *Information Letter Regarding the Route 7 & Route 15 Interchange –from ConnDOT*
- *Summary of the approval of Additional Highway Funding (bill H.R. 6532)*
- *Summary of South Western's Transit Oriented Development Applications Submitted to ConnDOT.*
- *List of attendees*
- *TOD Presentation Handouts*
 - *Darien*
 - *Greenwich*
 - *New Canaan*
 - *Norwalk*
 - *Stamford*
 - *Wilton*