FUSS & O'NEILL

MEETING MEETINGS
PAC Meeting #1
College Hill Corridor Study
Thursday, April 21, 2022, 1:00 – 2:30 PM via Zoom

ATTENDEEES: Matthew Skelly (F&O); Katherine O'Shea (F&O); Rosie Jaswal (Toole); Jim Butler (SCCOG); Kate Rattan (SCCOG); Amanda Kennedy (SCCOG); Victor Arcelus (Connecticut College); Anna Bergeron (CTDOT); Michael Passero (Mayor of New London); Sam Quigley (Lyman Allyn Museum Director); Tom Quintin (City of New London); Mike Carroll (SEAT); Brian Kent (Bike Groton); Brian Wright (Police Chief)

This meeting was held to kickoff the project with the project advisory committee and inform them of the anticipated project timeline. The meeting began with introductions, giving all attendees the opportunity to share their organization and relation to the project. Matthew Skelly of Fuss & O'Neill presented the following information on scope and schedule:

- Fuss & O'Neill and Toole will be studying multimodal transportation accommodations under current and future conditions. This study will include data collection, traffic analysis, the preparation of concept plans and sketches, and an implementation plan. Previous studies of the corridor will be consulted and inform recommendations.
- The existing corridor is a divided highway, but the goal is to design the corridor to function as more of a community street. The history of safety issues along this corridor was noted, including the death of a Connecticut College student in 2015.
- The schedule is designed so that significant public outreach efforts take place during the college semesters in order to involve students. The entire project will be completed in approximately one year. The final report is anticipated to be delivered in March of 2023.

Rosie Jaswal of Toole Design provided further insight into the public engagement plan, outlining following phases:

- Phase 1: conduct stakeholder interviews, pop-up kiosks, and online engagement to capture input from the public on existing deficiencies along the corridor
- Phase 2: conduct a second PAC meeting that will include a design charette activity to guide the preparation of the concept plans. A public workshop will also be held during this phase, during the Fall 2022 semester.
- Phase 3: conduct a third PAC meeting to present the draft concept plan and receive feedback from the committee. Present the draft concept at a second public workshop to gather feedback.
- Phase 4: Meet with the PAC to present the study recommendations and post the final report and concept on the website.

Rosie presented the project goals, including increasing safety and comfort, enhancing connections across the street, encouraging slower vehicle speeds, and providing a visual gateway into the college neighborhood.

Victor Arcelus, Dean of Students at Connecticut College, raised the question of when any recommendations of this study would eventually be implemented. Matthew reiterated that because Route 32 is a State Road, it is up to CTDOT to implement recommendations, and emphasized that the team will work to give the DOT exactly what they need to initiate projects. Anna Bergeron, CTDOT Project Manager echoed the sentiment. Rosie added that the implementation plan will include further information on this topic.

Rosie asked the committee for additional project goals, and to identify location specific issues and opportunities along the corridor. This activity was conducted using the online white board tool Miro. Responses were recorded on the project Miro Board. A summary of responses is below:

- Several points were made regarding the "highway feel" of the roadway. Victor indicated that vehicles often run red lights because they are not expecting to have to stop, noting a particular issue at the intersection of Route 32 and Benham Street. Amanda Kennedy of SCCOG noted that there appears to be excessive highway infrastructure that encourages high vehicle speeds, and that presently there are very few low-speed connections to downtown New London. Tom Quintin from the City of New London also noted that the interchange ramps encourage high vehicle speeds. Kate Rattan of SCCOG suggested the possibility of using roundabouts to implement speed control, though it was noted that there are existing constraints due to the steep grades on either side of the corridor.
- Tom suggested that lane widths could be reduced to ten feet to control vehicle speeds and reduce overall vehicle travel width on the roadway.
- Amanda noted the reduction of noise impacts as an additional goal, and Sam Quigley, Director of the Lyman Allyn Museum, agreed, noting that an artistic looking noise barrier could address both noise impacts and assist in creating a visual gateway into the college.
- Victor noted that Connecticut College is planning to install a sign at the main driveway that will assist in creating this visual gateway.
- A number of difficulties were noted for crossing pedestrians. Victor expressed that there is a need for better pedestrian refuge locations, specifically noting the steep sidewalk at the Connecticut College driveway that almost pitches pedestrians into the road. Additionally, it was noted that the pedestrian bridge is the safest way to cross Route 32 presently, although the bridge is not accessible.
- The intersection of Deshon Street and Route 32 was discussed as a key connection between Connecticut College and the US Coast Guard Academy (USCGA). Victor mentioned the possibility of an additional pedestrian bridge at this intersection, and noted that the Connecticut College parking lot located near Deshon Street is sometimes used by the USCGA for overflow parking.

- Kate Rattan noted that traveling west on Deshon Street approaching Route 32 is difficult due to the uphill approach grade and short greet light for Deshon Street. Jim Butler, executive director of SCCOG noted that vehicles often run yellow and red lights on Route 32 at this intersection.
- Video detection was recently installed at the intersection of Reservoir Street and Route 32, but does not appear to be functioning properly for vehicles on Reservoir Street.
- Brian Kent, president of Bike Groton noted that the ADT seems too high on Route 32 to implement un-protected bicycle facilities. He noted that Williams Street may be a more appropriate corridor for bicycle improvements.
- Victor noted that it is very difficult to cross Route 32 safely on a bicycle and suggested that more students would use bicycles if there were a way to safety do so. He also stated that many students drive across Route 32 now, so safer pedestrian and bicycle crossings could assist in reducing vehicle volumes on Route 32.
- Jim and Victor both noted that a reduction in volume on Route 32 may not be realistic, as the construction of another connection between I-95 and I-395 is not currently scheduled.
- Kate indicated that the corridor has potential to service some public transit, and noted that many college students that live along the corridor do not have cars.
- Amanda asked for examples of high-volume roadways similar to Route 32 where traffic has been calmed.
- Victor noted a previously held DOT workshop that discussed strategies for repurposing some of the existing I-95 interchange ramps to become pedestrian and bike only and introducing traffic calming measures.

Next Steps:

- The project team will host a pop-up kiosk on the Connecticut College campus and present to the Connecticut College Student Government Association on May 5. An additional pop-up kiosk will also be identified to capture input from other area residents.
- The project team will collect data and begin work on the existing conditions analysis.
- The project website will be online within the next two weeks, where project documents will be posted and an online engagement tool will be used to capture input from commuters and other users of the corridor.