

## MEETING MINUTES

**SUBJECT:** Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Needs and Feasibility Study  
(Project 170-2562)

**MEETING DATE:** February 27, 2009

**TIME:** 9:00 – 11:00 AM

**LOCATION:** South Western Regional Planning Agency Offices, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 888  
Washington Blvd, Stamford, CT

**PURPOSE:** Regional and Local Officials Outreach Meeting–South Western Regional  
Planning Agency (SWRPA)

### ATTENDEES:

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Floyd Lapp	SWRPA	203-316-5190	<a href="mailto:lapp@swrpa.org">lapp@swrpa.org</a>
Sue Prosi	SWRPA	203-316-5190	<a href="mailto:prosi@swrpa.org">prosi@swrpa.org</a>
Michael Pastore	Town of New Canaan	203-594-3000	<a href="mailto:Michael.Pastore@ci.new-canaan.ct.us">Michael.Pastore@ci.new-canaan.ct.us</a>
Josh LeCar	City of Stamford	203-977-5398	<a href="mailto:jlecar@ci.stamford.ct.us">jlecar@ci.stamford.ct.us</a>
Kip Bergstrom	URC	203-327-9180	<a href="mailto:kbergstrom@ci.stamford.ct.us">kbergstrom@ci.stamford.ct.us</a>
Andrew Davis	CTDOT-Planning	860-594-2157	<a href="mailto:Andrew.h.davis@po.state.ct.us">Andrew.h.davis@po.state.ct.us</a>
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### MEETING SUMMARY

Andrew Davis of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) welcomed participants to the meeting for the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Needs and Feasibility Study (WNCS) and made introductions around the room.

Peter Smoluchowski, Consultant Project Manager, identified the meeting objectives:

- Provide First Officials with an overview and update, and
- Present Long List alternative concepts developed/revised as a result of the January 21, 2009 Advisory Committee planning charrette and garner feedback on these evolving concepts.

Mr. Smoluchowski then briefly reviewed the study background including, study area, current service on the New Canaan branch line, goals and objectives of the study, and capacity and

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operational issues in the corridor. He then walked through the Long List concepts and issues discussed at the Advisory Committee planning charrette on January 12, 2009:

- **New Canaan Station**
  - Remove bulk storage track
  - Add second side platform, with “horseshoe” connection between the platforms for ADA compliance
  - Grove Street grade crossing should remain single track
  - Passing siding just south of New Canaan Station not useful
  - Signalization of dark territory key to improving service and safety
  - Investigate possible parking/TOD opportunity on existing Town lot
- **Talmadge Hill Station**
  - Increase parking on west side of track
  - Examine ways to improve/increase parking on east side of track
  - Consider adding second platform to improve pedestrian safety
- **Springdale Station**
  - Investigate possible parking/TOD joint development opportunities
- **Glenbrook Station**
  - Due to site constraints, limited options for improving existing station without substantial redevelopment of station area
  - 3 alternatives:
    - Redevelop parcel west of existing station as mixed-use TOD with parking above
    - Move station north of Glenbrook Road and redevelop parcel west of new station as mixed-use TOD with parking above
    - Eliminate station and replace with service to new East Main Street Station
- **East Main Street Station (new)**
  - Consensus that best location would be a site under I-95, one block south of East Main Street
- All stations – need for improved amenities, such as electronic real-time train info
- Other Long List Alternatives to be Described in Long List Report
  - Signalize dark territory at northern end of branch
  - Double track
  - Improved station amenities
  - Station parking

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### QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

#### General:

- What do you mean by exceed capacity on the main line in 2030?  
*The Metro-North main line will have demand for more train slots than there is room by 2030.*
- Sue Prosi (SWRPA) passed along the New Canaan First Selectman's comments on the importance of maintaining the Town's FRA Quiet Zone.
- When will the TOD report be available?  
*After the Long List Report is completed.*
- We would like this study to identify things that can be implemented in the short term and are financially feasible.
- Sue Prosi asked would the new parking facilities be operated and maintained by CTDOT or the municipalities. Is CTDOT developing operations and maintenance costs as part of the WNCS? She commented that governance of new facilities should be identified up front.  
*Andy Davis (CTDOT) replied that at this point we are just estimating capital costs, but the report will include a brief statement on the typical cost of operating and maintaining lots.*
- TOD overlays and other station-area zoning should be shown in the TOD report.
- The Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission (URC) should be involved in the WNCS.
- URC would like parking/TOD joint development at Springdale, Glenbrook, and East Main Street, implementing a "transit village" concept. They're using their Park Square development as a model for how they'll manage these types of facilities. URC also thinks they can get money for "wrapped parking facilities" in the transportation bill reauthorization.
- Floyd Lapp (SWRPA) identified three elements that would make a difference if implemented: 1) parking; 2) TOD; and 3) ITS/station amenities. Carmine Trotta (CTDOT) added that from an operational standpoint, the three elements that would most improve New Canaan Branch service are 1) extending CTC all the way to New Canaan; 2) second platform at New Canaan Station; and 3) passing siding(s). Mark Foran (CTDOT Rail Ops) added that CTDOT is exploring ITS independent of this and other studies.

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### New Canaan Station:

- When is work on CTDOT's New Canaan Track Extension project expected to take place, and how is it related to the WNCS?

*Andy Davis replied that the New Canaan Station design presented today is currently just a plan. The New Canaan Track Extension project is separate from the WNCS and will begin sometime this year.*

- Town of New Canaan is concerned about the temporary loss of New Canaan station during the New Canaan Track Extension project. Mike Pastore (Town of New Canaan Public Works) suggested performing as much work as possible during the summer months, when many New Canaan commuters are away.
- Mike Pastore described the Town's previous plan (from 8-10 years ago) to expand parking at New Canaan Station, which they ultimately decided was not worth the cost for the number of additional spaces it would provide. He will send CTDOT their plans for the structure. Mike added that he still believes the existing lot just west of the station/east of Grove Street would be a good location for a parking structure/joint development due to the slope of the site, commercial zoning, and proximity to the station. Mike added that commuters will likely not be opposed to the project as parking close to the station is a priority.

### Talmadge Hill Station:

- On the Talmadge Hill Station site, there was once a commuter lot in the location where the new parking is proposed along Old Stamford Road (Route 106). CTDOT closed this lot at the Town's request.
- Mike Pastore stated that nearby residents in both New Canaan and Darien may object to an increase in parking on the site.
- Sue Prosi suggested letting Jeb Walker lead the charge for replacing the parking lost at New Canaan Station during the track extension project with temporary parking at Talmadge Hill.

### Glenbrook Station:

- The City does not want to lose 60 parking spaces [church parking] near the Glenbrook station.
- There should be a productive and revenue-generating development above the parking in various stations (particularly Glenbrook Station).
- Glenbrook Alternative 1 – Josh LeCar (City of Stamford Planning Dept) said that upzoning properties along Glenbrook Road and incorporating them into a parking/joint development plan would be preferable to taking these businesses outright
- Glenbrook Alternative 2 – Relocating the platform to the north of Glenbrook Road would be an expensive option. Building a parking structure with joint development

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north of Glenbrook Road doesn't have to be tied to relocating the platform – Josh would favor an alternative that includes joint development/parking north of Glenbrook Road but keeps the platform where it is.

- Additional parking at Glenbrook Station is not a critical need – the lot is usually only 60-70% full.
- Closing Glenbrook Station is not realistic from a political standpoint.
- Eliminating the Glenbrook Station would mean removing 150 parking spaces for New Canaan Branch passengers.
- Josh LeCarr stressed that the City of Stamford wants to *enhance* the service at Glenbrook, not diminish or eliminate it.

### East Main Street Station:

- How would you provide universal access given the steep slope of the site?  
*Peter Smoluchowski replied that we would have elevators for ADA compliance.*
- Josh LeCar questioned why the ridership projects for East Main Street are so low compared to Glenbrook, given that East Main Street has a larger, denser catchment area. He doesn't want a new station to be ruled out based on incorrect ridership assumptions. He also asked that the history of State Street Station in New Haven be used as an example of a station that people did not think was necessary, but 15 years later is considered an asset to New Haven.
- There are several low-value properties near the East Main Street site.
- A single bus pullout would be sufficient. Buses from the proposed Stamford transitway would not serve the East Main Street Station.
- Hybrid buses won't fit under some of the bridges and railroad structures in Stamford.
- The City would prefer structured parking with ground-level commercial to a surface lot.
- The report should mention that construction of the East Main Street Station could be phased (i.e., build platforms and station facilities first, add parking/joint development later). Inclusion of a kiss-and-ride feature would be attractive.
- Report should also discuss interconnectivity with the Stamford urban transitway—East Main Street drawings should show pedestrian connections.
- Sue Prosi also mentioned that there should be consideration for a shuttle circulator.
- Carmine Trotta pointed out that there could be an issue with continued maintenance of the I-95 bridge.
- Josh LeCar will get input on the station concept from the East Main Street Partnership, URC, and other local stakeholders prior to our next meeting.

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### NEXT STEPS

- Schedule Stakeholder meeting with Urban Redevelopment Commission (URC) in Stamford, CT
- Schedule Advisory Committee Meeting in May 2009
- Add PowerPoint presentations marked “Draft Concepts” to study website