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Connecticut Chapter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



This will be an exciting year for those involved in transportation and land use planning in Connecticut. The state will see the opening of its first Bus Rapid Transit System, *CTfastrak*. *CTrail's* Hartford Line will come close to completion with an opening date in 2016. Towns like New Britain, Enfield, Wallingford, and Bridgeport will begin land use planning projects

funded by the State to maximize the benefit of new transit stations in their communities. The Town of West Hartford will study the implementation of a Road Diet to make roads convenient for all modes of transportation. The towns of Bolton and Manchester in the eastern part of the state will see progress on the Charter Oak Greenway to close an important gap in that trail. State legislators will debate a budget focused on transportation investments including auto, rail, bus, air, and water travel.

This year also marks the tenth anniversary of my graduation from planning school, where one of the biggest and relatively new themes taught to young, soon-to-be planners was that a conscious effort to integrate transportation and land use planning would have positive outcomes in communities and regions across the country. It is very rewarding to see the strides that have been made to accomplish this integration and that improved, multi-modal transportation systems have begun to be a regular part of the conversation on quality of life in Connecticut.

**The state will see the
opening of its first
Bus Rapid Transit
System, *CTfastrak*.
CTrail's Hartford Line
will come close to
completion with an
opening date in 2016.**

(continued on page 3)

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CONNECTICUT PLANNING

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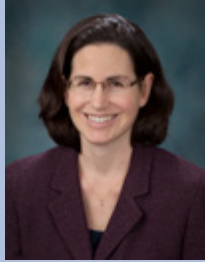
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FROM THE EDITOR

It's an exciting time for transportation planning in Connecticut with so many major initiatives underway, from CTfastrak beginning operations within the month, visible progress on the Springfield-New Haven commuter line and associated new train stations, and the radical transformation of the I-91/I-95 and Route 34 interchange. And, [Let'sGoCT!](#): Connecticut's Bold Vision for a Transportation Future has identified several other large projects. How are these major investments in public infrastructure going to change land use, housing and demographic patterns over the next 30-50 years? How is your community planning for these changes? This issue highlights state transportation plans, and the lessons learned in a regional corridor study, as well as Chapter news and our regular From the Bench and Planner's Profile features. If you have ideas for future edition themes or articles, please get in touch. Welcome spring and watch the potholes! 🚧

— Rebecca Augur



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, CONT

This issue of *Connecticut Planning* is timely for all of the reasons mentioned above, but also as our chapter will collaborate with the Connecticut Institute of Transportation Engineers to hold a program together this spring on Transportation Planning and the relationship between planning and engineering. The event is a part of ITE's Annual Meeting on April 8, 2015 at the Manchester Country Club. We hope that during this year of remarkable advances in transportation planning in our state, you will consider attending this event and joining in the conversation.

As always, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me should you have any thoughts, questions or suggestions for the Chapter! My inbox welcomes your emails, my voicemail welcomes your messages, and my door welcomes your feet if you find yourself in Hartford!

Happy Planning! 🚧

— Emily (Moos) Hultquist, AICP



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Finding Balance Along the Connecticut Shoreline: The Route 1 Corridor Plan

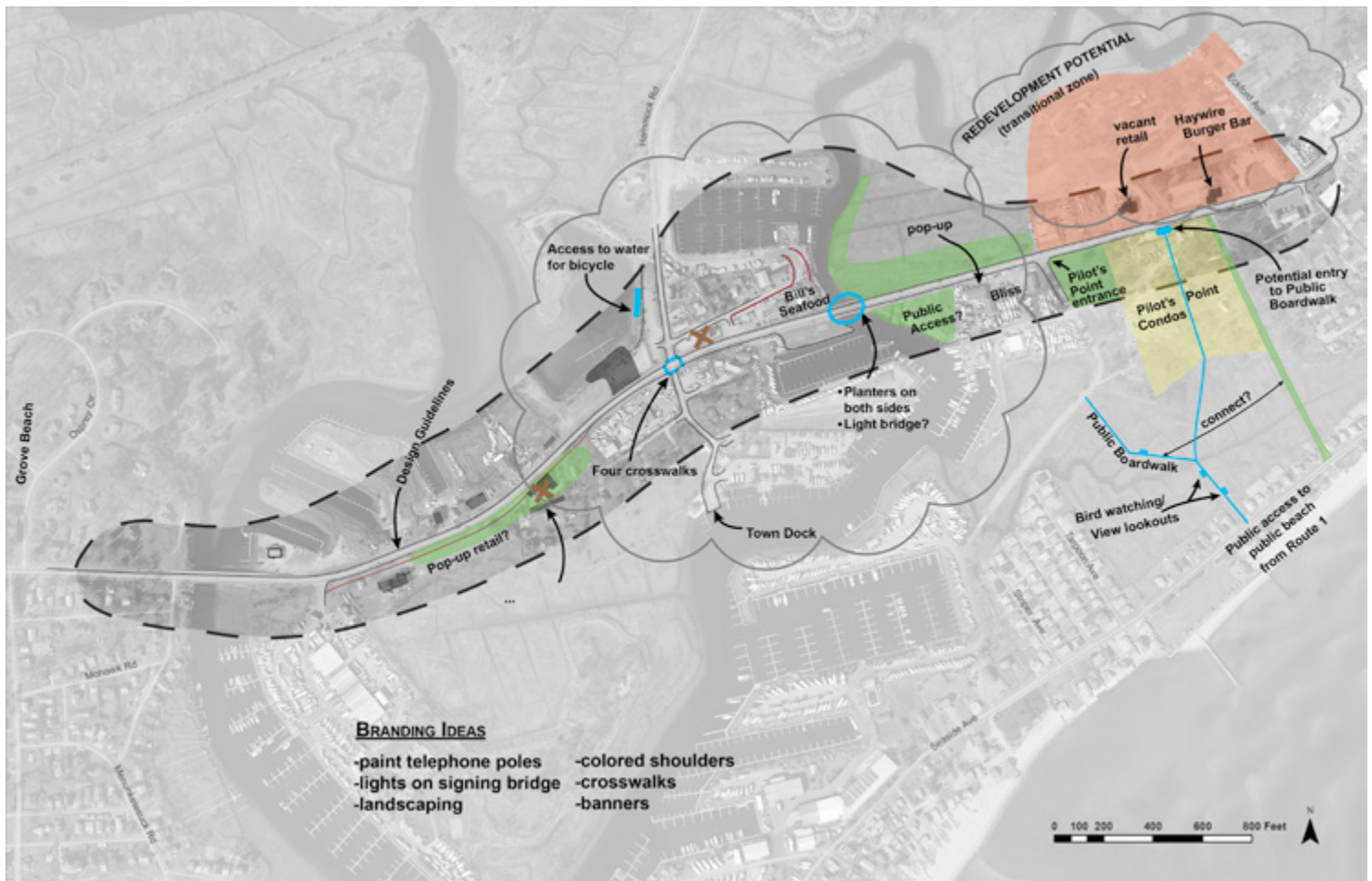
by Jean Davies, AICP, Assistant Director, RiverCOG & Susan VanBenschoten, PE, President/CEO, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Background and Purpose

Despite the best laid plans (no pun intended) it seems to take about five years to get a “Plan” in place and ready for implementation. The U.S Route 1 Corridor Project in the RiverCOG region was no exception to this rule. In fact, it was a uniquely challenging project as it involved three municipalities, the opinions and goals of three Chief Elected Officials, three Town Planners, a cadre of elected and appointed commission members, zoning officials, economic development

folks, emergency responders, public works, town on-call engineers, historic commissions, chambers of commerce, local bike advocacy groups, various departments within the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), and the residents and visitors to the towns, the region, and along Route 1.

So how can this article inform both seasoned planners, who have run the gambit of planning studies, and the emerging planner who might desire some
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Charrette sketches of ideas for the Westbrook Marina District.

Finding Balance, cont'd

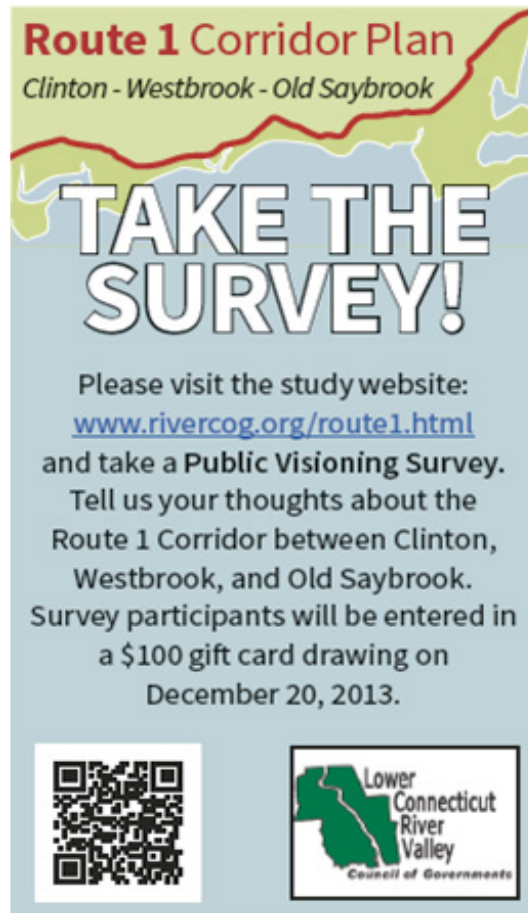
insights? To start, transportation planning is fun for some and incredibly boring to many, so we've got some creative writing to do. The acronyms, the bureaucracy, the numbers and mathematics of transportation planning can be daunting. Are you yawning yet? Ask a planner and an engineer to write an article? Get a cup of coffee and we'll do our best to keep you interested.

Like many un-loved roads replete with commercial strip development and an abundance of entrances and exits, Route 1 is an east-west route (at least through Connecticut!) traveling the shoreline towns — more specifically in the RiverCOG towns of Clinton, Westbrook, and Old Saybrook. There are four lanes....no, 2 lanes...no, back to four lanes!...turn here...there's no pedestrian stripes...why is that lady in the wheelchair trying to cross the road?...What's that bike doing in the travel lane, and hey, where did the shoulder go?...there's a public bus in my travel lane! Hold it...turn...There's Bill's Seafood!

It all started, of course, with a small problem, then a series of conversations over a short period of time; listening to everyone, the common thread, and eventually the understanding that there was a cumulative craving for solutions to the laundry list of issues including: accidents, seasonal congestion, sprawling commercial development, diminishing community identity, lack of access for pedestrians, safety issues for bicyclists, limited public bus access and multi-modal connections to train stations in Clinton, Westbrook, and Old Saybrook. Ultimately, this study was about the communities' vision and taking civic pride in the future of the shoreline's Main Street. The Regional Planning Organization, with its familiarity with all things transportation, offered to facilitate the process to develop a tri-town Route 1 Plan. The primary regional goals were:

1. Protect the unique character of each town and match up to their planning goals.



(continued on page 6)



Route 1 Corridor Plan
Clinton - Westbrook - Old Saybrook

TAKE THE SURVEY!

Please visit the study website:
www.rivercog.org/route1.html
and take a **Public Visioning Survey**.
Tell us your thoughts about the
Route 1 Corridor between Clinton,
Westbrook, and Old Saybrook.
Survey participants will be entered in
a \$100 gift card drawing on
December 20, 2013.



Like many un-loved roads replete with commercial strip development and an abundance of entrances and exits, Route 1 is an east-west route traveling the shoreline towns; more specifically in the RiverCOG towns of Clinton, Westbrook, and Old Saybrook.



Finding Balance, cont'd

2. Incorporate land use investigation, economic development analysis, sustainability, safety, environmental constraints, and emergency access into an integrated and balanced corridor plan.
3. Find the common thread between the three towns to inspire ownership of Route 1 on a regional level and promote desired levels of sustainable economic growth.
4. Develop an implementation plan that would exceed the engineering and geometric elements of a standard road study.

Staff working with Charrette participants helping to brainstorm ideas.



Stamford/Milford Boardwalk.



5. Expand the functionality of Route 1 for all users and provide a template for future CTDOT improvements and grant applications.

RiverCOG officially started working on the Route 1 Study project in 2010. The process involved numerous benchmarks over the next five years. This included securing approval to use our STIP-Urban funds for a regional corridor study and a 10% match from each of three towns. This particular funding source was historically designated for road improvements, but creative thinking led to an approval and we were on our way.

An Oversight Committee was organized by RiverCOG through appointments from each of the three towns. This group finalized the scope and interviewed consultants with the dexterity to help us tackle the technical aspects of this study, negotiate community input, define a shared regional vision, and develop a comprehensive and innovative plan to achieve that vision. The Oversight Committee and the First Selectmen also recommended members for a Stakeholder Group who would give feedback to the consultant as the process and plan unfolded. RiverCOG was the focal point for overall project management.

First, what are the issues in the Route 1 corridor?

The first step of developing any plan is to understand the issues that need to be addressed. In the Route 1 corridor, there were many, and they were particularly unique. Issues included:

- Strong seasonal demands for retail and restaurant services resulting from the beach and water recreational character of the area. The increased summer activity also increased activity and traffic volume on Route 1, particularly on summer weekends when traffic was observed to increase by almost 30%.
- Climate adaptation and resiliency: the CT shoreline had recently experienced two severe hurricanes – Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. Residents, business owners, and Town officials were now

(continued on page 7)

Finding Balance, cont'd

keenly aware of their vulnerability to nature and our changing climate and the need for more assertive resiliency planning.

- I-95 influence: Summer weekend traffic and incidents on I-95 result in spill over travel along Route 1. Yet Route 1 is the Main Street for shoreline towns and not designed as an alternate route for long-distance regional travel.
- Despite the recreational nature of corridor, there is a lack of safe multimodal transportation options — particularly biking and walking.
- Each town has its own character and goals for economic development. Old Saybrook desires to be a regional shopping destination with major national retailers as well as to maintain a smaller-scale local Main Street commercial district. Westbrook wants to control growth but enhance the beach and marina-related character and services and help sustain existing



BALANCING PRIORITIES ALONG ROUTE 1

Economic Development

- Economic growth
- Job opportunities
- Housing choices
- Business sustainability
- Climate adaptation

Mobility

- Traffic flow
- Multimodal options
- Safety
- Emergency response

Natural Environment

- Recreation
- Public spaces
- Coastal character
- History
- Environmental resources

businesses. Clinton wants to enhance its Town Center and take advantage of planned train station enhancements and nearby development opportunities.

Establishing a Vision

The next step was to dream a little.... seriously! Over the fall and winter of

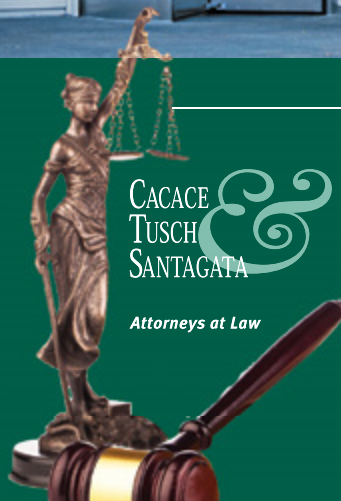
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Finding Balance, cont'd

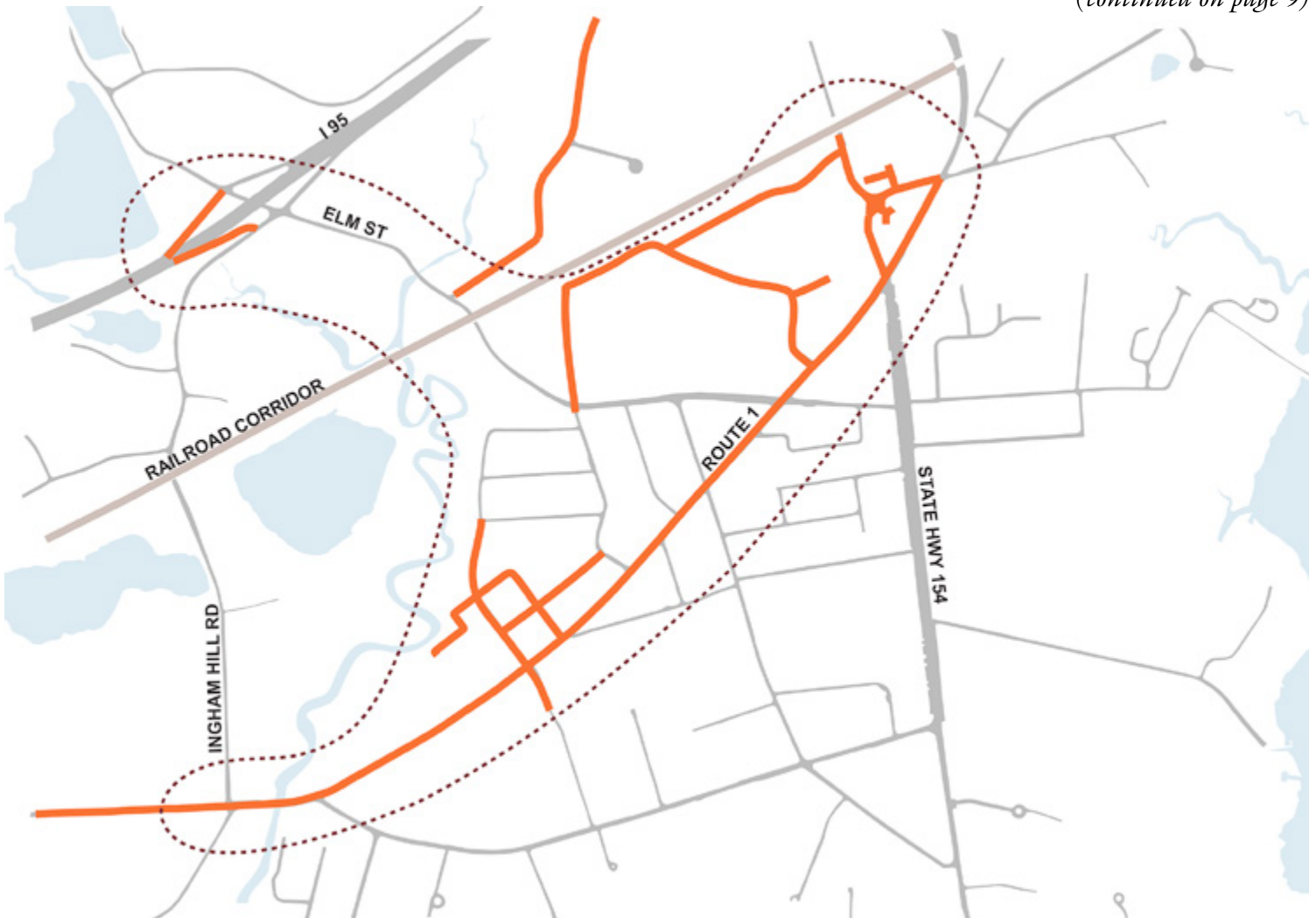
2013-2014, the project team embarked on a series of “mobile visioning workshops” at a variety of popular community events from the Old Saybrook Holiday Stroll to the Westbrook tree lighting ceremony, to a series of planning workshops at the Clinton Library.

At these events, the project team set up interactive voting stations to solicit input about the communities’ priorities with respect to land use and transportation. Visitors to the “pop up booths” were also enticed to complete an online survey. Of course, free food and a gift card raffle always help increase participation.

The goal was to understand how the communities wanted the corridor to evolve over the next 20 years. What we heard was no surprise:

1. Minimize the negative impacts of incidents on I-95, particularly on summer weekends.
2. Improve mobility for all modes, including a more robust transit option.
3. Make Route 1 safer for walking and biking to better support the recreational nature of the corridor.
4. Protect our small town charm and enhance our Town Centers.
5. Sustain our valued businesses and attract enough economic development to provide quality local services and jobs.
6. Protect our natural environment and find ways to maximize responsible recreational use of our special shoreline resources.
7. Take better advantage of our train stations for regional access and connect them better to our communities.

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Schematic showing proposed regional and local network enhancements in Old Saybrook.

Finding Balance, cont'd

It was clear that a variety of transportation, economic development, and natural resource priorities needed to be balanced to reach a shared corridor vision. Striking that balance, while addressing the various needs of stakeholders became the next challenge.

Innovative Solutions that Balance Priorities

It became apparent very early in the process, that Route 1 was not your typical

corridor study. The unique issues along the corridor associated with the small-town coastal character created a variety of competing interests. The project team would need to dig deep into its creative vault to find ways to meet many competing objectives. To do this, the project team enlisted the help of the public and hosted a two-day design charrette where participants offered ideas to help address the complex issues and desires for the corridor.

This section presents a sampling of four unique corridor challenges and the solutions proposed through this collaborative process. The overall Plan proposed dozens of recommendations; this article only highlights a few.

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Providing travelers with real time information helps manage diversions as well as driver frustration.

The unique issues along the corridor associated with the small-town coastal character created a variety of competing interests.



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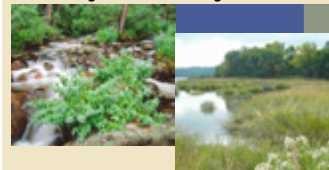


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Finding Balance, cont'd

Challenge #1: Incidents on I-95

I-95 runs parallel to Route 1 along the CT shoreline. As a result, traffic often diverts from I-95 to Route 1 to avoid congestion, often associated with heavy seasonal weekend traffic and sometimes to avoid backups caused by incidents. There was much discussion early on as to whether Route 1 should be expanded to provide spill-over capacity for I-95. The consensus of the Advisory Committee was that to do so would destroy the Town Centers and character and safety of the towns. While there will be times when traffic diverts to Route 1 to avoid an incident or congestion, the better solution is to support long-range plans for increased capacity on I-95 combined with a much more robust regional incident management plan. Each facility has its own purpose, and Route 1 should not be designed to serve long-distance, high-speed travel. A more robust incident management plan will help manage desired diversion routes, potentially minimize diversions by providing better information to travelers on the extent

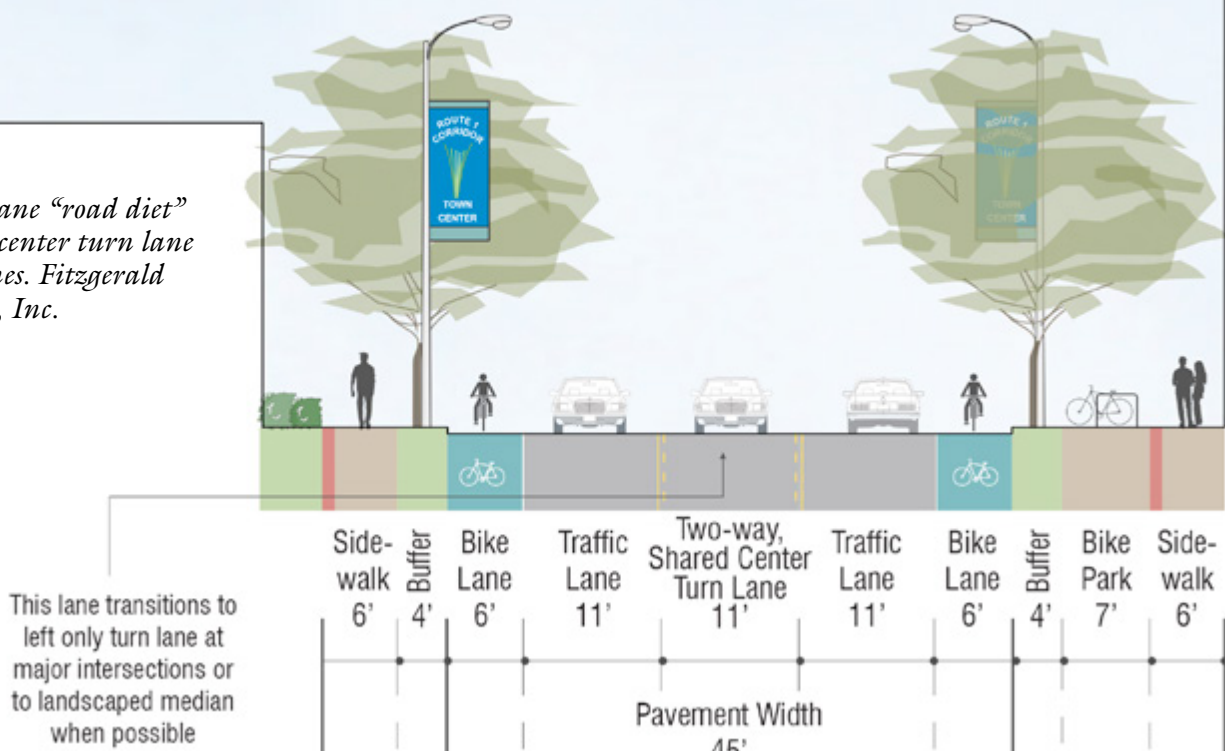
of the delay, and better define role of local authorities to most effectively help manage the incident. Early interactions with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) indicated strong support on their behalf to move this regional incident management plan forward.

Challenge #2: Efficient vehicular flow while better accommodating bicyclists and walkers

Another major objective in the corridor was to increase mobility for all modes of travel and to better accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel. The knee-jerk response to increasing vehicular mobility is often simply to add more lanes in order to add capacity. However, for Route 1, adding more local roadway network was an alternative capacity-enhancing and demand management strategy that also provided increased opportunities to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities while creating resiliency in the transportation system. The increased local network spread traffic demands, eliminated choke points, and provided opportunity for increased access

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Proposed 3-lane "road diet" with shared center turn lane and bike lanes. Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.



Finding Balance, cont'd

and economic development.

In addition to enhanced networks, the plan proposes a “road diet” for the existing 4-lane portion of Route 1 in Old Saybrook (approximately one mile in length). This section of Route 1 is lined with frequent driveways and has the highest accident rate along the entire 12-mile study corridor. The high accident rate is associated with frequent turning vehicles and lane changes combined with high speeds. A road diet here allows for safer turning movements into and out of driveways while at the same time freeing up space for bike lanes.

Both strategies, an enhanced network and the road diet, provide an improvement in vehicle flow, increased access and safety, and the opportunity to improve the bicycle and pedestrian environment.

Challenge #3: Business sustainability and economic development

The shoreline communities along Route 1 in the study area represent a

Example of a “Pop-Up” restaurant in a beach community.



dynamic environment with respect to vulnerability to storms as well as a surge in population and visitors during the summer. Storm vulnerability is particularly challenging to “mom and pop” type establishments who struggle with obtaining affordable insurance and are more frequently faced with the threat of flooding and

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Finding Balance, cont'd

expensive storm damage. The large swings in population and visitors between summer and off-season times add additional challenges to sustainability of business on a year-round basis. One creative solution to the dynamic climate and seasonal demands in the corridor is to regulate and allow for the “pop up” restaurant or retail establishment. There are many benefits to this including:

- This is a demand-responsive business model that allows the owners to easily adjust to fluctuations in business demand.

- This is a “climate-friendly” business model in that the facility can be easily moved out of harm’s way if flooding or storms are predicted.
- This is generally a lower risk and lower cost investment for a business owner.
- There is potential for revenue to the Town and/or property owner to license the use and lease the property.
- Establishing a more robust “critical mass” of retail options has been shown to improve the overall economic activity in a town or region; both seasonally and year-round.

Challenge #4: Protect the natural environment while taking advantage of its recreational opportunities and appreciating its beauty

Clearly, the shoreline of Long Island Sound offers an invaluable asset to the three study area towns. The vast waters of Long Island Sound itself; as well as many small rivers and streams, coastal marshes, beaches, and harbors; all attract birds and other wild life that further enhance the environmental resources and beauty. These same resources provide great opportunity for recreational activities such as boating, fishing, other water sports, bird watching, or just enjoying the shoreline views from land. It’s important to protect these natural resources while enjoying them. As part of the design charrette a number of recreational enhancements were proposed such as canoe and kayak launches and public open spaces with coastal views. One of the more significant ideas was to build a boardwalk from Route 1 to the Westbrook beaches across marshland near the Pilot’s Point Marina. The permitting for this idea will be challenging in order to avoid impacts to wetlands and endangered species, however the idea has many benefits including:

- It provides a much stronger pedestrian connection from Route 1 to the Westbrook Beach and waterfront.
- It has the potential to raise property values in the Marina District of

(continued on page 13)



Example of boardwalk concept and connectivity from Route 1 to Westbrook Town Beach.

Finding Balance, cont'd

Westbrook by providing easy access to the beach.

- It provides more cohesiveness between the beach neighborhoods and the commercial services on Route 1 through increased pedestrian connectivity.
- It provides the opportunity to view the natural environment and wildlife associated with the coastal wetlands.
- It has relatively low impacts to the coastal wetlands and can be designed to be resilient to fluctuations in sea levels associated with coastal storms.

Lessons Learned

These four examples illustrate some “out of the box” ideas as well as some simple tried and true solutions to transportation and community challenges. Every corridor is unique and every study process needs to adapt to the specific needs within that corridor. A few of the many questions we asked ourselves as the project neared its conclusion were:

1. Did we adequately convey to the town officials and the public, the complexity of existing and future conditions so that they could contribute informed comments and critiques?
2. Did we get enough diverse and representative public feedback?
3. Do the recommendations represent both the feedback received and also the best practices available for creating a safe, economically dynamic, and sustainable “Shoreline Main Street”?
4. Did we, as professional planners and engineers, offer the region and the communities the best vision possible for a long-term implementation plan?

First, there’s always something that could have been done better. There were too many competing interests. We met with officials in the three towns last month and asked them if they were happy

with the outcome of the project, and was there anything we could have done differently or something that hadn’t been addressed. 97% of the feedback was enthusiastically positive even while some asked for minor adjustments to specific Plan elements. The remaining 3% included a few individuals who felt that their ideas and priorities were not fully reflected in the final plan.

The most constructive takeaway is that this regional approach yielded a more robust project than if each town had proceeded individually. The study was collaborative, cost effective, and will lead to more efficient use of future transportation funds. Now there is a road map for the future for Route 1 that improves and preserves the character of each town and encourages a regionally focused economic and environmental balance for future growth. With RiverCOG as an enthusiastic project manager, a politically neutral atmosphere was created where elected and appointed town officials, town employees, advocacy groups, and the public could confidently express their opinions. Also, the region was able to encourage a larger vision and perspective. It helped that RiverCOG has a conversant and close relationship with member towns and the town staff. The significance of municipal boundaries and local issues were preserved where required.

Finally, we at RiverCOG joked around as to whether to end this article with a promotional nod to the study consultant, FHI. This article certainly isn’t meant to convey such a promotion, but rather a quick perspective on a fun and compelling project conducted by an enthusiastic project team made up of the consultant, the towns, and the region. Regional and municipal colleagues will agree that there are many terrific transportation and planning consultants in Connecticut. Whoever you choose for your project; make that selection based on the consultant’s wholehearted enthusiasm and understanding of your town, region, and project. It makes every dollar spent feel like you got more in return. ■

About the authors:

Jean Davies, AICP works as Principal Planner for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) with 28 years of experience in urban and rural planning specializing in land use and subdivision, long range plans, code development, transportation, economics, emergency management, hazard mitigation, and project development. Jean’s responsibility was project origination and lead for the Route 1 Corridor Study.

Susan VanBenschoten, PE is the President and CEO of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. She has almost 30 years of transportation planning experience with a focus on multimodal corridor planning and design of more livable communities. Ms. VanBenschoten served as Project Manager for the Route 1 Corridor Study and was particularly enthusiastic about this study given her personal knowledge of and appreciation for the CT Shoreline, where she lives.



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TransformCT: Strategic Transportation Planning

by David Elder, AICP, GISP, Project Manager Office of Strategic Planning and Projects, Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview & Purpose

The State of Connecticut has a pivotal role in one of the largest regional economies in the world. The State's geographic location along the eastern seaboard between two of America's largest cities positions Connecticut to capitalize on opportunities in the global marketplace. The state's skilled workforce, renowned academic institutions, entrepreneurial spirit, and innovative industrial and technological enterprises can propel our economy to a new level. The connections to Boston and New York City, Greater New England, the Mid-Atlantic States, and the global economy are entirely dependent on Connecticut's ability to move people and goods through and within the State safely and efficiently. The transportation system that connects Connecticut to these regional and global markets must be modern, streamlined and multi-faceted.

Connecticut is at a critical crossroad, emerging from the Great Recession of 2008, competing globally for trading partners and skilled workers, and facing an aging population. We are challenged with reconstructing an aging infrastructure suffering from years of deferred maintenance and underinvestment. We face a competitive gap that is accentuated by the economic and social impacts of significant traffic congestion and demands for more choices in the way we travel — particularly by educated millennials. Increasingly, this younger and highly-valued workforce is leaving the state for more livable cities that provide more transportation options. To address this, in 2013 the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), with the full support of the Governor's office, launched TransformCT, a state-wide strategic planning effort to develop a vision and prepare a strategic long range transportation plan that links transportation infrastructure investment to quality of life and economic competitiveness.

Visioning

This plan goes far beyond business-as-usual planning and breaks the mold of the typical long range planning process. To develop this vision the Department conducted more than 85 public engagement meetings, workshops, and visioning sessions and has launched an online public discussion (www.TransformCT.org). As of January 2015, more than 6,000 people had been engaged through in-person meetings and more than 16,500 people contributed through our online forum. The collective response from stakeholders, businesses, and advocates was that the future of the state's economy, quality of life and transportation system are inextricably linked.

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We must invest in an integrated transportation system that is responsive to citizens' travel needs and lifestyles, both current and future.

TransformCT, cont'd

Accordingly, the strategic plan includes a comprehensive vision for the future of the transportation system in the context of development, mobility, conservation of natural resources, and economic competitiveness. Additionally, the vision, while financially unconstrained, will be translated into a strategic, intermodal investment plan that addresses our existing system's needs, outlines opportunities for future enhancements, and describes the economic return of these investments.

To realize this vision, we must invest in an integrated transportation system that is responsive to citizens' travel needs and lifestyles, both current and future. In assessing our options for achieving a broad transportation vision, CTDOT believes that priority should be given to programs and projects that provide the greatest return on investment. An important part of this effort is to conduct comprehensive economic impact assessments to understand the benefits from various transportation investments and, ultimately, to inform our decisions.

Challenges

Connecticut's transportation system is dense and complex. It includes over 21,000 route miles that accommodate approximately 31 billion vehicle trips per year. Of these roads, 652 miles are limited access and Interstate highways which account for only 3% of the entire network but accommodate almost 50% of all trips. These roads are the main corridors of travel in Connecticut, serving the daily trips of commuters and families, the delivery of goods to stores, and the shipment of materials, supplies, and products to and from businesses. However, many of these highways are overburdened. The resultant congestion is reducing the quality of life, causing delays to deliveries, and driving up the cost of shipping and doing business. It is estimated that over the course of a year, the average person spends the equivalent of a full work week (40 hours) stuck in traffic; and this costs residents and businesses over \$1.6 billion in lost time and wasted fuel. There are also over 7,000 bridges on this network, of which a

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TransformCT, cont'd

majority are reaching their structural design-life. Furthermore, while the majority of trips in the state occur on the state system's highways and bridges, the complex system of our local roads and bridges is also critical for mobility and accessibility to and urban centers and communities.

In addition to the state's highway system there are two major commuter rail lines and one intercity regional rail service that stop in 42 of Connecticut's towns to cities. The New Haven Line (NHL) is the busiest commuter rail corridor in the country with over 40 million trips per year. Maintaining conditions of the 203 railroad bridges that support this commuter service is a major responsibility and challenge for CTDOT. Many of these rail bridges are over 100 years old. These bridges also carry much heavier freight car loads as well. In fact, since the date of construction for most of these bridges, the maximum weight of a freight car has increased by over 100,000 pounds. In addition to rail services, transit services

throughout the state produce more than 40 million bus trips each year. Connecticut's strategic plan will identify the investments needed to sustain the current system in a state of good repair, and describe a future enhanced system that will produce greater efficiency, improved mobility and increased customer satisfaction.

The vision requires improvements to all modes, highways and bridges, rail, bus, airports, ports, urban systems, and regional trails. Businesses, shippers, and industries that depend on the efficient and reliable movements of their products demand the system perform at high levels and with minimal delay. System users, be it by car, air, rail, bus, bike, or foot, expect systems that get them to their destination and home safely. The safety of the system is paramount.

A critical piece of strategic planning is the assessment of resources available to meet the goals, or achieve the vision. The majority of funding for transportation comes from the federal and state gas tax. The federal gas tax has remained at 18.4

(continued on page 18)

The majority of funding for transportation comes from the federal and state gas tax.

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Many states are investigating alternative sources of transportation including spot tolling, increases to the gas tax, income taxes, and sales taxes.

TransformCT, cont'd

cents per gallon since 1993 and the state gas tax is 25 cents, 7 cents less than it was in 1994. Both the federal excise tax and the state gas tax are flat taxes and are not indexed to inflation. Improved vehicle fuel efficiency, paired with a revenue source that is not indexed to inflation, is unsustainable and erodes the purchasing power of every dollar over time. The challenge of declining revenue is compounded by the fact that the nation's transportation infrastructure and Connecticut's, is aging and requires more and more funding for preservation activities each year. While fuel efficiency has the potential to greatly reduce the environmental impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, it also poses serious risk to the ability to adequately maintain the transportation system in a safe and efficient condition.

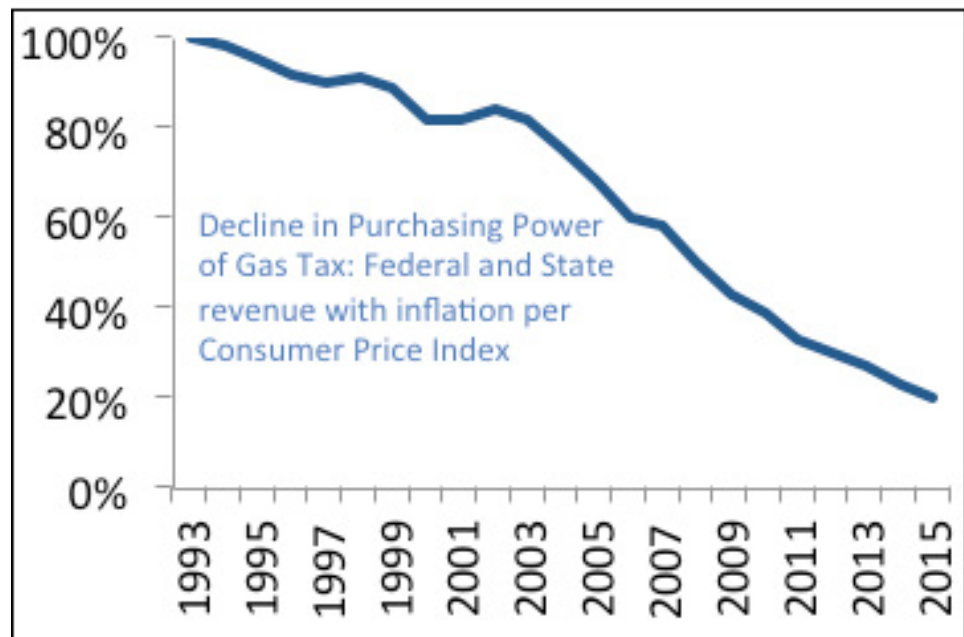
Many states are investigating alternative sources of transportation including spot tolling, increases to the gas tax, income taxes, and sales taxes. Several western states are also piloting a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee model where a user is charged a fee based on miles of travel. It is widely held that any VMT based user fee in the New England region would need to be regionally instituted due to the significant amount of through-traffic among these states. Experience in other states

suggests when a proposed fee is clearly and deliberately set aside for an intended purpose, (in this case transportation) the willingness to pay is much higher. A common sentiment throughout the public engagement of TransformCT was that all funding for transportation, generated by the users of the system of any mode, must go back into the system and not shifted to another purpose, i.e., schools, services, etc. A complete analysis of potential revenue sources is ongoing and is part of the strategic plan.

Call to Action

In 2015, as part of the visioning and planning process the governor introduced *Let's Go CT!* — a call to action and infusion of a significant amount of capital funding into the transportation system starting with the biennial budget. The five-year ramp-up part of *Let's Go CT!*, which represents the first five years of the 30-year vision, includes additional funding to make an early investment in some of the most critical transportation projects identified in the strategic plan. It increases state funding for the five-year period from approximately \$3.8 billion to \$6.6 billion. This major investment of state funding into the transportation program, in addition to federal funding, greatly enhances the ability of the state to invest

(continued on page 19)



TransformCT, cont'd

in its priorities outside of the federal program eligibility requirements. State funded design and construction can also reduce the federal regulatory processes that accompany the acceptance of federal funding, which can result in more projects, done faster, and for less money.

The rest of the 30-year vision will include not only preservation of the existing transportation system but also enhancements to the system. As communicated in *Let's GO CT!* the total amount of capital to achieve the vision is one-hundred billion dollars. More than half of this amount is to preserve the existing system. Both preservation and enhancement projects positively impact the economy and improve the quality of life for residents. An example of these analyses has already been conducted for the Charter Oak Bridge. The Charter Oak Bridge connects two interstates and one major limited access highway in the Hartford area. The current configuration of the Charter Oak Bridge causes major congestion and

has been identified as one of the top 100 freight bottlenecks in the country, resulting in a high amount of accidents. A project is currently in design for reconstruction of the interchange with an estimated full construction cost of \$195 million dollars. The estimated economic output from the project is \$860 million; or simply stated, the result is a cost-benefit of every \$1.00 dollar spent yielding \$3.78 in economic benefits. Over the next few months more economic analyses like this example will be completed for both preservation activities and enhancement projects.

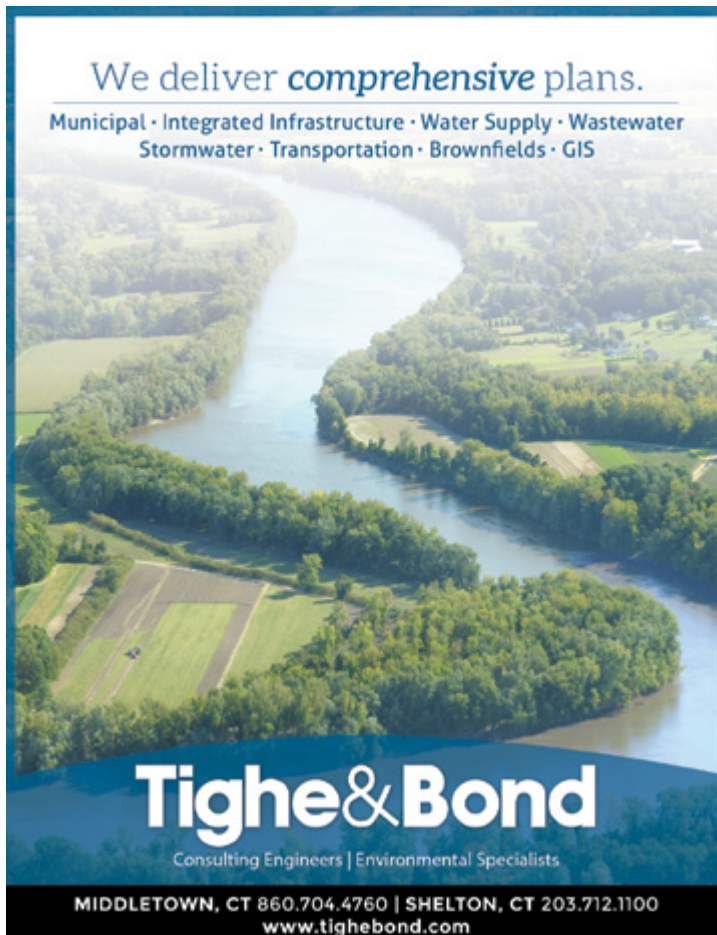
Strategy and Implementation

Connecticut's Strategic Transportation Plan, TransformCT, and the call to action to start now with *Let's GO CT!* is transformative and provides the transportation foundation for the future of Connecticut's economy. It requires connecting urban cores, suburban communities, and rural communities into a single system that incorporates and maximizes all modes to convey people and goods cohesively and efficiently to enable economic growth and

mobility. To realize this vision the strategic plan for transportation must support, and be supported by other state agencies, municipalities, and other partners to ensure that all investments are coordinated and contribute to attaining the state's housing, energy, economic development, and conservation goals and objectives.

(continued on page 20)

As communicated in *Let's GO CT!* the total amount of capital to achieve the vision is one-hundred billion dollars.



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TransformCT, cont'd

The plan is still in development and the second phase of public engagement is just beginning. Additionally, we are looking inward at the core capacity of the CT-DOT to assess our ability to implement the plan and its vision while continuing to deliver the current level of services. This is an ongoing managerial improvement process and includes the recognition that the department must be responsive and accountable to system users, our local and state officials, and other partners.

To this end, CTDOT is scheduling regional workshops and seeking feedback from citizens, partner agencies and stakeholders. We look forward to this productive and fruitful collaboration. To learn more about TransformCT and the Governor's initiative, *Let's GO CT!* visit www.letsgetct.com. 

David Elder, AICP, GISP is a Project Manager in the Office of Strategic Planning and Projects, a part of the Bureau of Policy and Planning at the Connecticut Department of Transportation.



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Now Available: Private Practice Planning Handbook

APA Private Practice Division has produced an award-winning 49-page publication that will be of value to all private planning consultants, the “Private Planning Practice Handbook.” Led by Mentoring Committee co-chairs Ramona Mullahey and Carol Thomas, and edited by division member Jerry Weitz, FA-ICP, the Mentoring Committee initiated the creation of this publication as a substantive response to a flurry of member queries about business practices. The Private Practice Planning Handbook and the Private Practice Division will be honored with the APA “Best Practices Award” at the 2015 National Planning Conference in Seattle.

The publication offers insightful information to both novice and seasoned planning consultants, including topics such as “Organizing the Planning Consulting Business,” “Project Management,” “The Personal Side of Consulting,” and many useful templates, including a sample agreement for services.

The production of the handbook was an impressive collaborative process, exemplifying the best of private planning practice professionals and division members working together to produce a much-needed, high-quality resource. We are proud to have this exciting publication to offer as an exclusive Private Practice Division member-only benefit. To receive your PDF copy, please send a request to info_private@planning.org

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Government Relations Update

by Jana Butts Roberson, AICP, Government Relations Committee Chair

This is a busy year with scores of bills introduced at the Connecticut General Assembly. CCAPA is currently tracking thirty-eight bills. Several have emerged which are of interest to CCAPA members including one promoted by CCAPA.

CCAPA's Government Relations Committee is advocating for SB 677, An Act Establishing Tax Incremental Financing Districts, in partnership with the CT Main Street Center, the Yale Law School's Community and Economic Development Clinic, the CT Economic Developers Association (CEDAS), and Pullman and Comley, LLC. The bill would encourage the use of incremental property taxes to construct public infrastructure, to promote development and redevelopment opportunities and to expand municipal tax bases. Compared to some other states, TIF's in CT are extremely hard to implement (especially for small projects)

but TIF's can be a very effective tool for economic revitalization if they are done right. New TIF legislation could benefit a wider variety of projects consistent with planning goals for responsible growth. The proposed TIF statute would:

1. Be streamlined. A recent survey showed that TIF's are too hard to get adopted to be a useful economic development tool in most communities.

2. Be flexible. Tax increments could be used for a variety of purposes such as downtown revitalization, transit-oriented development, incentive housing developments, and even park and streetscape improvements.

3. Create TIF districts for neighborhoods rather than be used solely for large development projects.

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Government Relations Update, cont'd

4. Put municipalities in control. TIF's are based on local property taxes and should only need local approval.

SB 677 was sponsored by Senator Kissel, Representative Zawistowski, and Representative Sayers. A public hearing was held by the Planning and Development Committee on March 6, 2015. CCAPA is optimistic that this bill has a good chance of passing this session. CCAPA members are encouraged to reach out to their legislators to support SB 677.

Other legislative proposals that CCAPA has testified on include:

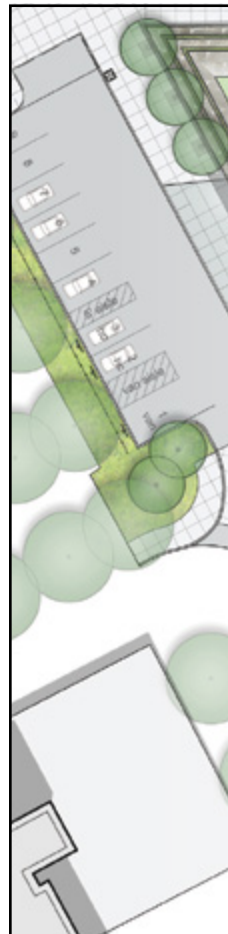
- **SB 880** – Requires the Office of Policy and Management to study responsible development – SUPPORT.
- **HB 203** – Requires community residences to comply with local zoning regulations – OPPOSE.
- **HB 1045** – Requires municipal POCD's to designate the existing and planned sewer service and avoidance areas within the municipality – SUPPORT.
- **HB 5090** – Prohibits Zoning Commissions from requiring special permits for uses made non-conforming by new zoning regulations – OPPOSE based on existing language in CGS 8-2.
- **HB 5092** – Requires a municipality to notify abutting property owners when the selectmen propose to discontinue all or part of a highway or private way – SUPPORT.
- **HB 6259** – Aligns the boundaries of regional economic development districts with the boundaries of one or more regional councils of government – SUPPORT.
- **HB 6572** – Extends the land value taxation pilot program – SUPPORT.
- **HB 6853** – Reduces the local match for municipal participation in the intertown capital equipment purchase incentive program – SUPPORT.

- **GB 6851** – Establishes the Connecticut Transit Corridor Development Authority – SUPPORT but with concerns regarding the far-reaching powers of the proposed TCDA.

One more bill of interest to planners that CCAPA did not get to comment on:

- **SB970** – Allows golf courses to be taxed as open space.

As always, CCAPA members are encouraged to monitor legislative developments by watching for the Government Relations Committee email alerts and updates and by checking the CT General Assembly webpage. Please forward questions, concerns, or comments on legislative matters to janaroberson@outlook.com. 🏡



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From the Bench

by Christopher J. Smith, Esquire

Variances, Nonconformities and More: A Primer

On March 10, 2015, the Appellate Court released a comprehensive decision addressing variances and nonconformities, with a valuable discussion on what constitutes a “formal, official, collective statement of reasons” for a land use board’s decision. As a bonus, the Court provides an analysis of what is required to substantiate a claim that a regulation has a confiscatory effect on a property.



The case, *Verrillo v. Zoning Board of Appeals*, et al., 155 Conn. App. 657 (2015), involves a matter where the Branford ZBA granted eight variances, which essentially permitted the applicant-landowner to expand an existing single-family house that was nonconforming as to coverage and most, if not all, applicable setbacks. The variances permitted the expansion of these nonconformities. The nonconforming house is on an undersized lot.

A neighbor appealed the ZBA’s decision claiming that the applicant didn’t establish required legal hardship; therefore, the variances were improperly granted. The Superior Court reviewed the administrative record, agreed with the plaintiff neighbor and sustained the neighbor’s appeal thereby invalidating the variance approvals.

The Appellate Court affirmed the Superior Court’s decision in a 75-page decision. Anyone who is involved with land use, from professional staff, board members and landowners, should take the time to read this decision, for the following sum-

mary cannot cover the detailed analysis of the important issues addressed by the Court (and don’t forgo the footnotes).

At the outset, the Court addresses what constitutes a board’s formal statement of its reasons for its decision. When a board formally states its reasons for a decision, a reviewing court is limited to such when determining the appropriateness of the board’s action. Absent a decision “with express reasons” stating a “basis or rationale” for the board’s findings and conclusions, the court is left to search the record for evidence to support the decision. Therefore, it’s very important for a board to take the time to state, in a motion, the board’s collective reasons for rendering a decision. The following do not constitute part of a formal decision: (1) a board member’s statements during deliberations or voting; (2) the remarks of a board member when moving to approve or deny an application; and (3) references in the board’s minutes.

The Court next provides an overview of variance authority, its requirements, standards and limitations, and the need for substantial evidence in the record to reasonably support the board’s decision. This may be “old hat” for veterans, but it’s a nice overview for new board members or anyone not seasoned in the process.

The opinion’s next section addresses legal hardship, which must be the result of a zoning regulation’s peculiar or unique impact to the subject property, which is different from the regulation’s impact upon other properties in the same zone district. The

impact must be beyond the control of the landowner (i.e., not self-created). A desire to improve one’s home isn’t enough. The Court ultimately finds that the landowner’s essential reasons for the requested variances are to expand the house’s living and storage space, and modernize the structure — not legal hardship.

The Court then provides an excellent summary of the law concerning zoning nonconformities. A valid nonconformity is a constitutionally protected vested right that runs with a property (i.e., it’s not tied to the owner). Although afforded many protections from being taken away, a vested nonconformity cannot be expanded.

Next the Court reviews, and dismisses, the following claims of hardship: (1) the house expansion would make the house “more [building or fire] code complaint”; (2) a three foot wide easement on one side of the house required the requested house expansions; and (3) the application of the setback and coverage regulations have a confiscatory effect upon or destroy the value of the property. The Court found that the administrative record lacked substantial evidence to support these claims.

Finally, the Court discusses the narrow exception to having to establish legal hardship when changing a nonconforming use to a less offensive nonconforming use, or reducing bulk/area nonconformities. This exception doesn’t apply in this matter because the landowner proposed to expand existing nonconformities. For the same reason, the Court found the

(continued on page 27)

CCAPA Membership News

by Alan L. Weiner, AICP, Chairman, Member Services Committee

Current CCAPA Membership

As of March 1, 2015, CCAPA had a total enrollment of 390 members, categorized as follows:

- AICP – 189 members
- FAICP – 5 members
- APA – 139 members
- Chapter-only – 5 members
- Officials – 23 members
- Students – 29 members

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

The following are the newest members of CCAPA (Dec. 1, 2014-Feb. 28, 2015):

- Emily Anyzeski, Ellington
- Sandeep Aysola, New Haven
- Phil Barlow, New Britain
- Elizabeth Burdick, Burlington
- Gregory Carrafiello, Danbury
- Sadie Colcord, Guilford
- John Fries, Cheshire
- Patrick Gallagher, West Hartford
- Drew Goldsman, New Haven
- David Kelsey, Windsor
- Dan Kost, Groton
- Thomas Lane, Waterford
- Gary Lorentson, Stratford

- Gregory Milano, West Haven
- Kate Novick, Killingworth
- Michael O'Brien, Windsor
- Pat Padlo, Meriden
- Karl Profe, Windsor
- Ken Smith, Windsor
- Thomas Zanarini, North Stonington

Changing Jobs?

Share the big news about your latest career move with your fellow CCAPA members! Contact me at membership@ccapa.org with the particulars (including new job title/address/phone and fax numbers/email address) and we'll announce it in the next issue of *Connecticut Planning*.

Need to Update Your Member Profile?

Please advise APA's Chicago office of any updates to your APA member profile (e.g., your mailing or email address). You can do so at APA's website (www.planning.org) by logging into My APA and clicking "Edit" under your contact information. Or you may submit your update by email to customerservice@planning.org. ■

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Join 5,000 of your fellow planners at APA's big event — the 2015 National Planning Conference, April 18–21 in Seattle. This year's 300 sessions run the gamut from events for emerging professionals to a new Masters Series for experienced planners. You'll find training workshops — free this year — plus targeted tracks, career coaching, and mobile workshops. Take advantage of APA member rates. Learn more at planning.org/conference.

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Erg Chebbi, Morocco... Jökulsárlón, Iceland



What made you decide on a career in planning?

With a Bachelor's Degree in Communications, I started my "planning" career doing community outreach for a Transportation Consulting firm out of Boston. Not long into this career, I attended a breakfast in New Haven hosted by the Greater New Haven Community Loan Fund (GNHCLF). I remember sitting through that morning's speaker presentation, fascinated with the topic. It had never occurred to me before that a City would propose to tear down a police station and build something more suited for the area and the transportation hub adjacent to it. The topic for the day was Transit-Oriented Development and the speaker was Mike Piscitelli, who at the time was the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Director for the City of New Haven. I received my Master's degree in planning a few years later.

Why did you decide to be a planner in Connecticut?

After I received my Master's Degree, Parsons Brinckerhoff supported my new focus by moving me more towards the planning discipline and provided the opportunity to contribute on planning studies and projects. I have had the opportunity to learn from respected and seasoned planners and engineers in the industry and have learned how to apply these techniques, principles and practices throughout Connecticut.

What projects/initiatives are you currently working on as a planner?

As a Planner, I have worked on many different types of studies including parking studies, bicycle and pedestrian analyses, state rail plans, grant applications, walkability studies and funding strategies memos. I am currently assisting on the Route 34/Downtown Crossing Project in New Haven, which is transforming Route 34 back into an Urban Boulevard and reconnecting streets and neighborhoods that were destroyed by misguided Urban Renewal in the 1950s. I am most actively involved in the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project through the Connecticut

Department of Transportation (CTDOT). This is a new and exciting project for the state as well as for CTDOT.

The purpose of the TOD program is to promote, plan, and facilitate TOD initiatives as well as educate communities and manage transit-oriented development in areas served by the state's rail and bus systems, specifically, CTfastrak and the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail line.

Why did you join CCAPA/What do you like about being a member?

I joined CCAPA and APA while I was obtaining my Master's degree in planning. The American Planning Association is a great resource and it allows me to stay up to date on current planning topics and stay connected to the planning community.

What do you think of the Governor's proposed 30-year transportation plan?

Let's Go CT! is the Governor's 30 year transportation strategy to lead Connecticut in the transportation future. Connecticut has aging infrastructure, a history of sprawl and over congested roadways. Connecticut has potential to become a transportation innovator, a state others look to for successful transportation stories; a state that is economically viable and with a quality of life that retains and attracts a high quality workforce as well as the companies that hire them. Let's Go CT! has another title: "Connecticut's Bold Vision for a Transportation Future." All success stories start somewhere and I think that the Governor's proposal is tackling this start with the bold determination that Connecticut needs to meet the future head on and come out on top. It is very exciting to be a planning professional in Connecticut, and through the Lets Go CT! initia-

(continued on page 27)

Planner Profile, continued

tive, be part of a movement to help shape our transportation future.

Do you have any favorite websites/tools/blogs that relate to planning and/or your job that you'd like to share?

Center for Transit-Oriented Development: www.ctod.org

Reconnecting America:
www.reconnectingamerica.org

Institute for Transportation and Development Policy: www.itdp.org

Planetizen: www.planetizen.com

Street Plans Collaborative:
www.streetplans.org

Planners Web: www.planningreports.com

From the Bench, continued

requested variances inconsistent with the comprehensive plan (zoning regulations and zone map), which prohibits the expansion of nonconformities.

In conclusion, after an excellent summary of the law concerning variances, nonconformities and other issues, the Court held that the record doesn't contain substantial evidence of required legal hardship. Therefore, the variance requests were improperly approved. A simple variance case? Yes, but a learned decision well-worth the read. ■

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