



NEW BRITAIN-HARTFORD BUSWAY OPEN HOUSES

Connecticut Department of Transportation

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

The Connecticut Department of Transportation held two Public Open Houses for the New Britain-Hartford Busway project on **Tuesday May 19 2009** at Central Connecticut State University, Founders Hall in New Britain CT, and on **Wednesday May 20 2009** at the Elmwood Community Center, West Hartford CT. Total number of Open House attendees was **128**, with **42** in the New Britain location and **86** in West Hartford.

The Open House hours were from **4:00-8:00 PM** in both locations, with two identical short formal presentations twice each evening at **4:30 PM** and **6:30 PM** followed by a brief question and answer session in which all comments were recorded by the project public involvement specialist. At each location, attendees signed in throughout the evening, viewed various information tables and were able to ask specific questions or offer comments to Project Team Representatives. Information tables consisted of the following:

- Bus Routes and Schedules
- Stations (Information available on all 11 stations)
- Rights of Way
- Appearance
- Bus Roadway and Multi Use Trail design

Each short formal presentation included an update on the overall project mission/philosophy, schedule, budget/financing, design progress, remaining work, and an explanation of the format of the meeting and an orientation to the information tables. The presentation also highlighted important Busway features including the updated Bus Service Plan (Routes and Schedules) and Visual Design Guidelines for the appearance of the Busway. Presentation speakers were as follows:

- Introduction and Project Overview (Michael A. Sanders, Transit Administrator CDOT)
- Status of Design and Engineering (Brian T. Cunningham, P.E., Project Manager CDOT)
- Rights-of-Way Acquisition Process (Michael Marzi, Office of Rights-of-Way, CDOT)
- Busway Stations and Architecture (Karen E. Arpino, SEA Consultants Inc)
- Public Comments and Questions

Handouts included meeting agenda, time-line, map and comment sheet. 25 comment sheets were returned, and some are arriving via mail at a later date.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (ORAL)

May 19, 2009

New Britain, CT

4:30 PM Presentation Q&A and Comments

- Install Bike Lockers at:
 - Downtown New Britain Station
 - Sigourney Street Station
 - Newington Junction Station

- Style of Bike Lockers:
 - Similar to those at Metro North Railroad (Hudson River Line) at the junction with Harlem Valley Rail Trail

6:30 PM Presentation Q&A and Comments

- Designers need to make sure that users can easily access Hartford from New Britain via an express line
- Make sure that stations and Busway itself are linked to rail lines/Amtrak/commuter rail – the area really needs this
- Ensure that money is set aside for this rail option; make the Busway part of a larger Regional transit plan
- Integrate future rail plans with the Busway plan
- Former Mayor of Newington:
 - Main Busway benefits are for New Britain and Hartford. Cannot envision people traveling by bus from Newington
 - Too little parking at Cedar Street Station
 - Will create more traffic for Town
 - Don't want Transit Oriented Development (because do not want any development; Newington is already built out, too congested/crowded)
 - Not enough incentive in Newington (Cedar Street Station) design to get people in the area out of their cars and into public transit
 - Projected numbers for the entire Busway system won't significantly alter New Britain-Hartford congestion
 - Money spent on project is unwise

(DOT response):

- Recommended that gentleman speak with Mark Rolfe or Michael Sanders (ConnDOT) to discuss
- Believe that the project is worthwhile as the Busway will be the only transit option of its kind in the entire region
- Forecasting has shown that there is enough of a market to support a Busway (i.e. trips, both commuter and extended)

- Attendee noted that subsidized routes for Hartford commuters should be encouraged and would be well received among companies in the Hartford-New Britain corridor (i.e. TransitChek, subsidies within large corporations, no longer having to pay for parking, etc.)

May 20, 2009

West Hartford, CT

4:30 PM Presentation Q&A and Comments

(Comment):

- Lack of parking at stations is a problem, especially in downtown Hartford
- More parking would encourage people to use the Busway more

(DOT Response):

- There is not much demand for parking in most stations; we are looking to rent additional parking, form nearby parking garages, in major station areas such as New Britain, Hartford
- The market thus far is more for feeder use and not for car parking
- When the Busway line becomes part of a rail corridor as well, will definitely have more parking available
- Will re-examine parking needs once the Busway is up and running, and if more parking is needed will work on creating it

(Q) Is there a community that has a Busway in operation now?

(A) Ottawa, Canada and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Ottawa busway is very similar to our plan here in Connecticut and is a good model

(Q) The original plan for the Busway created in 1999 stated that rail was part of the plan. Now it is not. Have you reevaluated the Busway to include rail again?

(A) Once the Busway is up and running we will be able to see if density rates are high enough to allow addition of rail. We still have rail infrastructure available for long trips, and for commuter rail we are not excluding any rail possibilities

(Q) How many rails are available?

(A) We are designing the Busway corridor for two rail lines; Union Station would require the most work

(Q) Concerned about safety, cleanliness and security of the Busway. Will there be monitoring of this?

(A) Yes to all three (safety, cleanliness, security). Our Busway plans include station maintenance, facility maintenance, durability, safety and security monitoring

(Comment):

- There is not much detail about when the Busway gets to Union Station

(DOT Response):

- Recommended that this gentleman talk to Martin Hull of IBI Group regarding bus routing in downtown Hartford

(Q) Concerned about the FTA “medium” rating for the Busway – does this make funding unlikely?

(A) A medium rating means that it is scheduled for funding

(Q) Who is paying to maintain the Busway?

(A) The Connecticut Department of Transportation

(Q) Where are you in relation to sharing right of way with Amtrak?

(A) Still some challenges ahead; working on getting easement, construction, and operation agreements – all are in the works; have already signed many contracts with Amtrak so it is moving forward

(Q) What is anticipated ridership?

(A) 15,000 riders per day are what we have been working with thus far. This number may be affected by feeder routes, etc.

(Q) Regarding Busway funding: can legislatures stop it?

(A) Legislature is capable of stopping any state funding; federal availability of money will drive state levels of money

(Q) Permitting challenges? Environmental permitting challenges? What are they?

(A) We have had preliminary meetings with the Department of Environmental Protection and Army Corps of Engineers; have to be continually aware of water quality, wetlands, etc. Fortunately there are no real problematic areas as this is an abandoned rail line.

(Q) What about clean fuel options for the Busway vehicles?

(A) We will have six fuel cell buses, and potential to add hybrid buses as we move forward

6:30 PM Presentation Q&A and Comments

(Comment):

- I need more of a sense of the system: intersections, speed, traffic signal and timing.

(DOT Response):

- Recommended that gentleman view station design section area of the Open House. It describes ITS usage, number of intersections, signal timing and preference (which will allow for constant speeds) – will almost operate as a freeway

(Q) I did not see anything about parking and access in your presentation?

(A) Station designs have layouts of access and parking (visit the station design sections of the Open House). There is not a great deal of parking in some of the stations where short trips would most likely be made via automobile or other local bus routes; and there is not a lot of park and ride in the interior stations for the same reason. We will play some of this by ear, if ridership demands more parking we will respond accordingly – there is space available if we need to add more parking.

(Q) Of the nine miles of Busway, how many of those are along Amtrak rail?

(A) 4.5 miles of the corridor are along the abandoned Amtrak rail line. The remainder of the Busway runs along the unused New Britain rail line – the rail ownership changes around Newington

(Q) I see a lot of job losses in this area. Will there be enough need for the Busway given the current economic situation?

(A) As gas prices continue to rise again, combined with economic recovery, ridership demand will still increase. On average, even with the economic downturn, the market for a Busway in this corridor is still strong. We can't base long-term planning on short-term scenarios.

(Q) How are you going to pay for this and how much of our tax dollars are going to pay for this? There are always cost overruns; will we be paying for them? Has DOT ever had a project come in at budget? What about all those expensive highway projects?

(A) A Federal grant is paying for half; the other half is Federal and State money. Our department has some very efficient projects: Bus Garage in New Haven coming in at \$72 Million and was budgeted at \$85 Million. We are the public transportation department so do not know much about highway expenditures, but we can get the highway data for you if you'd like.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (WRITTEN)

May 19, 2009 New Britain | May 20, 2009 West Hartford

Submitted by:

Joseph and Francis Arbuglio
31 Grassmere Avenue
West Hartford, CT
(860) 233-1721
May 20, 2009

1. Use roofs at top of drop-off stations to collect rain water, store water in underground fiberglass tanks; 3-8 thousand gallons. Have tank full of sensors so that when tank is full, no more water will enter. Have clean out filters at water opening to keep water tank clean. Use this rain water for watering plants and trees outside drop-off stations, also use water for rest room facilities, flush out tanks every 3-6 months, and refill. Use a program timer and ground moisture sensor. Also, use DC to AC inverters; convert 12VDC to AC120V60HZ power with deep cycle batteries.
2. Use roof solar panels on top of drop-off stations to charge deep cycle storage batteries, use batteries to operate water pumps for underground tanks, power low current draw solenoid valves for controlling automatic sprinklers used to water outside lawns, trees, plant and rest room facilities. Have backup city water if tank runs dry, or pump river water to fill tanks. Use deep storage cycle batteries to power LED lighting and electronic indicating boards inside drop-off stations and outside LED lighting. If river is nearby use water turbine AC which produces somewhat pure water; also use steam turbine for electric power.
3. Have back-up street power if needed, using automatic transfer switches. Also if cost is right, use fuel cell generator at all drop-off facilities.
4. Scooter buses used to take passengers from drop-off stations to various stops in town, cities area, run on fuel cells or hybrid-type systems. Also provide rental mopeds at drop-off stations; customer must refill gas tank before returning to drop-off station, or drop-off at another station. Also, rent bicycles the same way.
5. Provide handicap scooter buses, or full-size handicap buses, powered by fuel cell or hybrid.
6. Buses and train engines powered by fuel cells or hybrid.
7. Use LED lighting on buses and train engine for lighting.
8. Buses running along rail, and trains running on rail should be double-decker type carrying more passengers; less wear on using many train cars to maintain.
9. Have lunch and breakfast cars with vending machines and microwaves running on 12VDC

10. Vending machine rail cars equipped with seating and tables and trash barrels. All trash barrels have automatic battery-operated de-odor scent sprayers to keep bad odor smell down. V ending machine car also have shoe shine facility and automatic newspaper machines.
11. For air cooling train rail cars and buses traveling along rail, scooter buses, and handicap buses, use electronic-type kootron units to cool inside of vehicles, conserve fuel and energy, and use same to cool inside of drop-off stations. All systems run on 12VDC source.
 - A. Design scooter buses so that they can be parked on either side of drop-off station, so that telescopic tunnel can be attached and passengers can board scooter bus when it is parked on either side of the station
12. On either side of drop-off station have scooter buses and handicap buses parked on each side of drop-off station; also have telescopic tunnel attach to enter of scooter buses – passengers stay dry from bad weather.
13. Have illuminated LED signs above each tunnel inside drop-off station, indicating bus number and route number, matching inside drop-off station large route board of scooter buses, where to board, proper scooter buses to take passengers into town or city areas.
14. Must pay token or ticket at scooter bus boarding entrance; pays to maintain scooter buses.

Submitted by:

Mike Scurso

Mjscurso@yahoo.com

1. Would the busway eliminate the possibility of building a rail link between Hartford and Waterbury (a Metro-North branch)?
2. Will there be an option to pick up a bus from the busway terminus to New Britain (rail) Station?

Submitted by:

Anonymous

1. I thought this was a very informative meeting. There was much advance publicity before the meeting and this was a good thing.
2. I feel very impressed with this whole project and can only see good benefits.
3. Maureen, you were very gracious and personable and most of all you were extremely knowledgeable in answering all my questions. I would say all the people were pleasant and gave a clear picture of this project.

Submitted by:

Gary Robinson
Vision New Britain
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getgary@aol.com

- Bike Boxes – rather than [bike] racks or at least covered areas

Submitted by:

Charlie Beristain, Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance (CCBA)

1. Please be sure that cyclists can RIDE across the Flatbush overpass
2. Subject: Fencing on both sides of the Multi-Use Trails
 - Please try to have these fences as “open” and “non-confining” as possible
 - Split rail fences would be ideal; would keep cyclists and walkers from inadvertently crossing over to the Busway

Submitted by:

Michael Seder
michaelseder@comcast.net

1. If successful, the number of parking spaces planned is woefully inadequate
2. Future promises to increase number of parking spaces in a timely matter by the State is just not believable

Submitted by:

Martin Putorak
860-666-3589

3. Please consider moving the East Main Street New Britain Station to the St. Jean the Baptist property on Smalley Street

Submitted by:

Jim Rogers
139 Daly Ave
New Britain, CT 06051
RogersJimL@yahoo.com
860-796-3690

4. Concern: the lack of parking at the station. Make parking free at the station, or a yearly sticker. The biggest problem that Hartford has is the lack of parking and the price of parking.

5. If you made abundant free and/or sticker parking, some people would park and ride the bus to Hartford. In addition, driving in and out of Hartford is very difficult with inclement weather. I am not sure how many people would walk and wait for the bus along New Britain Avenue, but many more people would drive and park at the bus station.
6. Many people are too lazy to walk two or three blocks to the Avenue for the bus, but may drive to the station

Submitted by:

Anonymous

1. Please consider bike access to all stops
2. Please consider bike travel on Broad Street to accommodate Flower Street closure
3. Spruce Street is a real challenge and very congested today. Would changing the one-way of Union Street accomplish anything?
4. Please consider pedestrian access to Sigourney Street Station from Imlay Street [in Hartford]

Submitted by:

Anonymous

1. Could they use existing infrastructure on the I-91 and I-84 HOV lanes, north and east of Hartford to start a pair of dedicated busways for a lower cost prior to [the] Hartford-New Britain [Busway]?
2. Can they increase service on existing local routes prior to construction to get people used to mass transit?
3. Would light rail (NJ River Diesel line or Baltimore Electric Light Rail) as models be cheaper because it would run on the old rail line?

Submitted by:

Anonymous

- The stations should be redesigned for more adequate protection from the elements

Submitted by:

James Cassidy

James_p_cassidy@mac.com

1. Work to establish or accommodate connections to other regional transportation systems (including bike/ped facilities)

2. Bike lockers at key stations: New Britain Downtown, Newington Junction, Sigourney Street, Union Station
3. Find ways to speed up the project for completion before late 2013

Submitted by:

Anonymous

1. [Existing] buses have poor maintenance
 - a. Dirty interior
 - b. No A/C
 - c. No heat (you can see your breath on board)
2. Different vehicles appearing
 - a. School buses
 - b. "Limousine" buses
3. Buses break down

Submitted by:

Anonymous

- I can't wait until this is ready! Too bad it'll be 2003; I wish it could happen sooner! ☺

Submitted by:

Anonymous

- Each of the buses will have five riders. For \$569,000,000

Submitted by:

Lee Roullette

Lee.r.oulette@aetna.com

Thank you for:

1. This public forum
2. Keeping the DOT website up-to-date with information about the Busway. The website has been and incredible source of information
3. Telework [growth of] has fortunately already started to ease I-84 congestion
4. I personally can't wait for this to go 'live'
5. THANK YOU, THANK YOU for cycle racks at the stations

Submitted by:

Daniel Haim

Hartford, CT

1. At Newington Junction, coordinate station planning with planning for the commuter rail station, to allow easy pedestrian transfer between the two lines
2. New feeder buses are an excellent idea! (E.g. hospital line connecting Hartford neighborhoods to the Sigourney Street station)
3. Express bus to Meriden is an excellent idea!
4. Suggestion: until the commuter rail line is done, consider improved express bus service to New Haven. Existing DATTCO schedule is unusable for most commuters in the afternoon. 4:40 departure is too early; 6:40 departure is too late.
5. Suggestion: update website to include current plans. Website now shows different schemes at Flatbush and Sigourney Street stations.

Submitted by:

Joe Calhoun

- It was a very nice presentation!

Submitted by:

David Kosciuk, New Britain OMS

860-225-8787 x24

- New Britain stations should participate in city-wide Public Access AED Program – currently 20+ AEDs at areas of mass gatherings.
- Call me for more information

Submitted by:

Richard Wiszniak

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1. Interested in how present and future light rail service can co-exist with bus service, ESPECIALLY THROUGHT NEW BRITAIN
2. Housing and offices or work sites (light industry) should be encouraged for bus stations; more than two or three stories
3. Good luck and thanks
4. P.S. Any chance such “events” as today’s can be recorded for play on CTN?