



June 8, 2012

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RE: Comments on Notice of Scoping for Stamford Transportation Center Parking and Transit-Oriented Development

Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a regional transportation advocacy organization which supports increased investment in public transit, smart growth, and efforts that support biking and walking. We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Notice of Scoping for planned parking improvements and transit-oriented development around the Stamford Transportation Center.

When ConnDOT announced that it was seeking proposals for this project, Commissioner James Redeker said (in a release) that the agency would “seek innovative ideas for fully developing this vital transportation center in downtown Stamford. We anticipate development that will enhance the experience of commuters and also add new development in this area that will have a transformative impact on the city of Stamford.”

We agree with that sentiment, and urge the department to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian accessibility in the proposed transit-oriented development (TOD), and seamlessly integrate the development with Stamford’s surrounding urban fabric. We also support the department’s proposal to site a replacement garage within a quarter-mile of the station. Multiple studies demonstrate that people are willing to walk up to 1/4-1/2 mile to transit stations, or further if the walk is safe and attractive.

While any TOD plans for the area around the transportation center should consider easy parking access, it’s important to remember that the percentage of people who arrive by car, park, and board the train is far outstripped by those accessing the station via other means, and those who arrive at the station to travel to nearby destinations. According to Metro-North, the Stamford station sees over 26,500 daily commuter rail and Amtrak boardings and disembarkations daily. Given that there are only about 2,200 parking spaces available today, it seems clear that the station is more utilized by people who walk or cycle to and from the station, take shuttles or local buses, or utilize “Kiss and Ride” facilities.

A number of ongoing projects in Stamford will improve access to the station, including the TIGER-funded Stamford Transportation Center Multi-Modal Improvement Project. The area around the Transportation Center represents the “gateway” to Stamford and the first impression visitors receive of the city. In

general, all parking and TOD proposals received by ConnDOT should be consistent with these ongoing initiatives.

In the RFQ provided to developers in February 2012 (“Request for Qualifications and Conceptual Proposals for the Transit-Oriented Development of the Stamford Parking Garage (STOD22912)”), ConnDOT indicated that project goals included replacing the original garage with a minimum of 1,000 spaces, minimizing impacts on commuters, maximizing state revenue, and promoting economic development (in Section 2.0, “Scope and Requirements”). While the proposal includes an increase of 300 parking spaces, future project documents must also include the goals of “enhancing pedestrian and bicycle access” and “promoting transit-oriented, walkable and bikeable development.”

These goals should also be reflected in language throughout future documents. In the RFQ, the project’s “requirements and objectives” include a number of objectives relating to access, but do not emphasize that access for all users is important and do not emphasize that pedestrian/bicycle access and TOD should be supported in a way that is consistent with ongoing initiatives in Stamford.

For example, the RFQ includes an objective reading “Delivery of Station Place and parking garage improvements that increase access, upgrades conveniences to commuters, and are pedestrian-friendly.” An example of a change which reflects the above goals is, “Delivery of Station Place and parking garage improvements that *increase access for all users (including pedestrians, cyclists, public transportation users, and drivers)*, upgrades conveniences to commuters, and are *pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly.*”

Similarly, in the RFQ Section 2.1, “Project Requirements,” the “Traffic Flow” issue’s corresponding requirement reads “Improved traffic flow on Station Place and the minimization of traffic disruption during the demolition of the Original Garage.” An example of a change which reflects the above goals is, “Improved *nonmotorized and motorized* traffic flow on Station Place and the minimization of *disruption to pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, and vehicle traffic* during the demolition of the Original Garage.”

There are a number of benefits to prioritizing walkability and bikeability in the station and vicinity. Doing so will make access easier for those who already arrive without an automobile, increase property values nearest the station, maximize rail ridership, and make the trip from any parking resources within a quarter of a mile from the station safer and more pleasant for those who do choose to drive.