

Hartford West MIS Newsline

Interstate 84 Corridor Planning Study

Hotline: 1-800-786-2191



December, 1998

Hartford West MIS Recommends Busway *Other Transportation Improvements Also Planned for Study Area*

We've come a long way through the Hartford West Major Investment Study (MIS) process. Now the most exciting part of the study has been reached - the point at which we will decide the future of the Hartford West corridor .

In conjunction with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA), not only have we concluded that no additional general purpose lanes should be added to I-84, but we have developed a hybrid package of transportation improvements for the Hartford West corridor which includes a busway linking Downtown Hartford and New Britain.

We believe that this improvement package, with the inclusion of a busway, combines the best features of several strategies. The package brings transportation improvements and related benefits to all the cities and towns within the corridor. Most importantly, it responds to the plans and concerns expressed by local government officials.

The improvements contained in this package are detailed on page 2 of this newsletter.

This newsletter and public meetings scheduled for December 8, 16 and 17 offer an opportunity to learn about the busway and other improvements and their potential for supporting community renewal, economic development, and sustaining quality of life in our cities and towns.

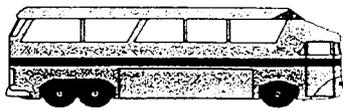
We invite you to join with us in shaping the future of transportation in this vital corridor. We look forward to meeting with you at our public meetings. Further information about these meetings is contained on page 6 of this newsletter.

THE OTTAWA, CANADA BUSWAY - A busway in Ottawa, Canada provides weather-protected, secure waiting areas for passengers, and a limited-access, bus-only roadway. This facility combines the high travel speed and ease with the flexibility allowed by bus transit systems.



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The Hybrid Improvement Package

The analysis of current and future travel conditions in the Hartford West Corridor suggests that no single approach will be sufficient to relieve all future transportation problems .

Early in the study process six alternative improvement packages were presented to the Technical and Policy Advisory committees and to the public. Through extensive discussion with local government representatives, we have developed a "hybrid package" of improvements composed of various elements of each of the strategies studied.

This hybrid package is intended to incorporate those projects which will achieve the best overall performance, receive support from local communities, and be acceptable to regional, and state agencies. The hybrid package of improvements includes the following elements:

- Busway between New Britain and Hartford, along the existing rail right-of-way.
- Reconstruction of I-84 Interchanges at Flatbush Ave., Prospect Ave., Sisson Ave., and Sigourney Street in Hartford and West Hartford.
- Reconstruction of the Route 9 Interchange with Route 4 and Route 6 in Farmington.
- Improved bus service between Farmington and Hartford.
- Transportation demand management (TDM) and transportation systems management (TSM) strategies.
- Addition of auxiliary operational lanes in selected locations on I-84 in West Hartford.
- Land use policies which support transit use.

HARTFORD-NEW BRITAIN BUSWAY PROPOSED



Here Are The Facts:

What is a Busway? A busway is a limited access roadway intended just for buses. This exclusive right-of-way allows buses to travel from station to station without stopping at traffic lights or getting stuck in traffic. A recent *Hartford Courant* article described a busway well...it is "a passenger train without rails".

Why a Busway has been recommended. Busways have been implemented very successfully in other cities such as Pittsburgh and Ottawa and are being studied in a number of other U.S. cities.

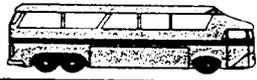
The advantage of a busway over a rail transit system is that buses can enter and exit the busway to complete their route on local streets, providing greater flexibility and the convenience of more direct transportation for passengers, without having to transfer.

Where would the Busway be located? The busway would link Hartford's Union Station with Downtown New Britain. The busway route would be built on or next to existing railway right-of-way connecting Hartford and New Britain. Express bus services would continue via Route 72 to Plainville at I-84.

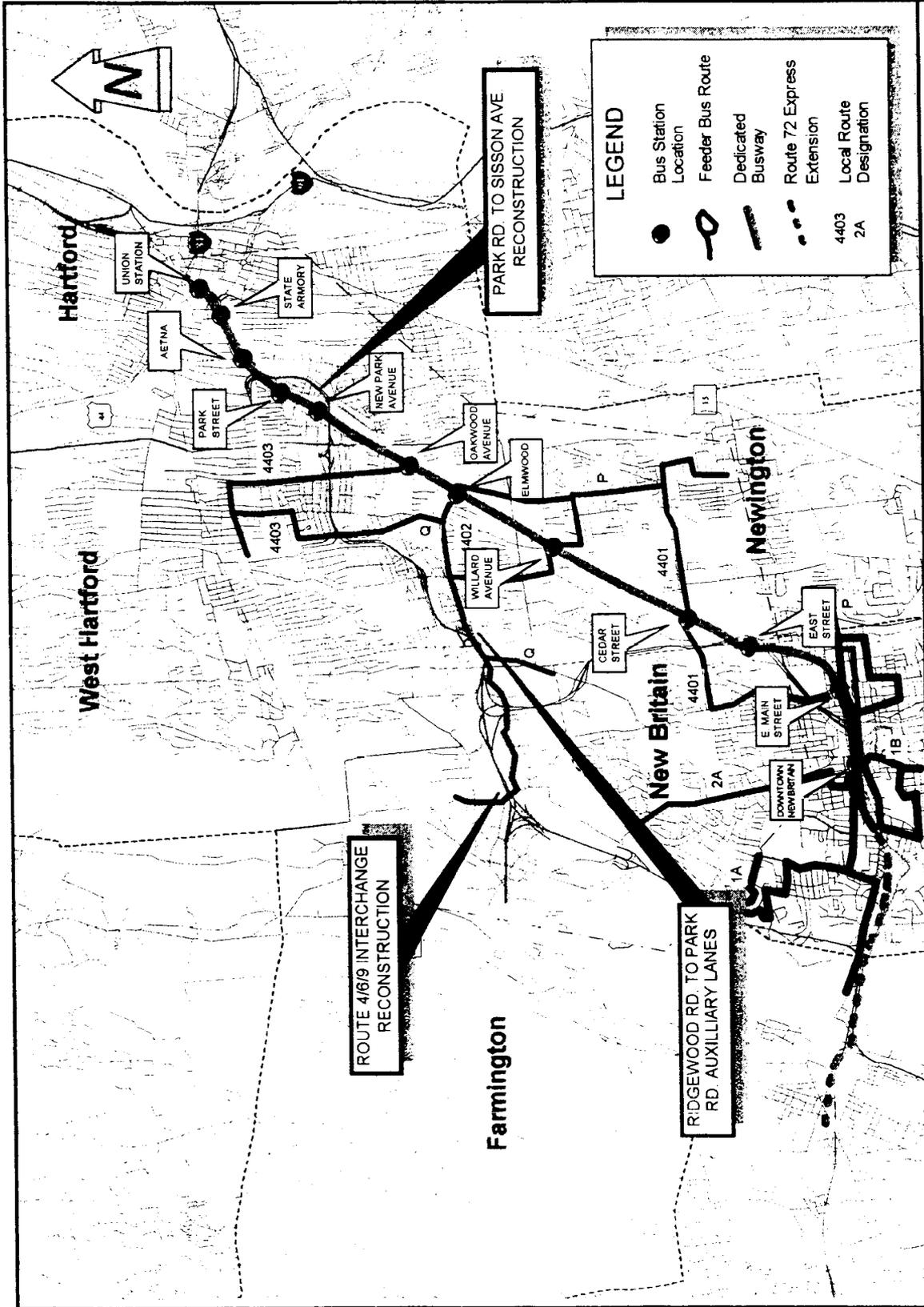
Thirteen stations would be provided, with connecting bus routes and van services to link passengers with off-line destinations. Park-and-ride lots would also be provided, offering further flexibility in meeting passenger needs.

Who would benefit from a Busway? Both bus users and commuters would benefit from a busway, as well as residents and businesses in the entire study corridor,

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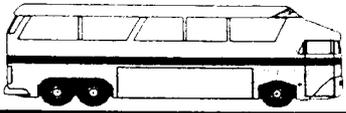


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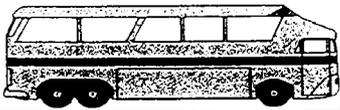
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Busway stations are provided at major outlying activity centers. Coordinated land use and transportation planning encourages development in the vicinity of busway stations



In Downtown Ottawa "diamond lanes" designated exclusively for bus use during peak hours of travel provide a continuation of the busway into the City's core.



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because the busway will do more than just move passengers from the suburbs to downtown. By offering an attractive transit alternative, the busway can reduce travel congestion within the I-84 corridor, and in the long run, extend the interstate highway's physical capacity.

The busway will also serve significant activity centers in the New Park Avenue area in Hartford, the Elmwood community in West Hartford, and the future business center anticipated to develop at the junction of Route 9 and Route 175 at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain.

New bus routes designed to take advantage of the busway will be able to offer Hartford residents greater access to suburban employment centers in the towns of West Hartford, Newington, New Britain, Farmington, and Plainville. The flexibility of busway operation would allow our transit system to more effectively respond to changing ridership demand and future developments within the study corridor.

How much would a Busway cost? Current estimates are that busway construction would cost \$75 million, while a rail system in the same corridor would cost \$100 to \$150 million. A rail system would also have higher operating costs and require more extensive bus-rail transfer facilities.

In addition to a rail system's higher cost, annual operating costs have been calculated to be \$22.3 million for a light rail system, versus \$20 million for a busway system providing comparable service.

What are the advantages of a Busway?

- Buses avoid travel on the highway and thus avoid highway congestion. Travel time for passengers is reduced.
- Buses can enter and exit the busway, so they can operate both in the busway and on city streets.
- Many busway riders can avoid transfers between buses or between rail and bus, and will thereby experience the ease of "single seat" rides.

- Enclosed all-weather stations along the busway will offer comfortable, convenient locations for park-and-ride passengers.
- Not only will buses within the busway operate faster, but service will also be provided lower headway, meaning less waiting time between buses.

What other improvements are proposed for I-84?

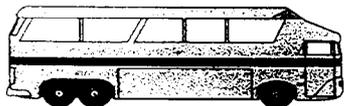
Significant improvements are proposed for I-84 to improve safety, reduce congestion and enhance the potential for economic development. The proposed reconstruction program would involve an examination of all feasible alternatives to correct identified deficiencies.

Access to I-84 has been limited by poor roadway geometry at Flatbush Avenue, Prospect Avenue, Sisson Avenue and the Sigourney Street interchanges. Left-hand exits at Flatbush and Sisson are viewed as contributing to safety and capacity deficiencies, while the Flatbush Avenue interchange does not allow access to or from the west on I-84. These interchange areas will be improved.

The existing configuration of the interchange of Routes 4, 6 and 9 with I-84 in Farmington creates confusion and congestion, and may cause additional traffic on surrounding residential streets. For example, it is currently not possible to go directly from Route 4 eastbound to Route 9 southbound. In addition, the left-hand entrance from Route 4 to I-84 eastbound causes a lane reduction from three lanes to two, creating congestion and unsafe weaving maneuvers.

The improvement proposed for the Route 4/6/9 interchange will encourage traffic to use Route 6 and Route 9 as alternatives to the more congested Route 4.

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Public Information Meeting Schedule !

Plan to Attend! The next step in the MIS process is the presentation of the information compiled about the busway and the hybrid package of improvements at a series of public information meetings. Meeting dates and times are as follows:

December 8 - Central CT State University, Student Annex Center, New Britain

December 16 - Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 816 Asylum Ave., Hartford

December 17 - UCONN Medical Center, Keller Auditorium, Farmington Ave., Farmington

Meetings Schedule:

6:30-7:30 p.m. Open House

7:30-8:15 p.m. Presentation

8:15-9:00 p.m. Questions and Answers

What do you think?

There are several ways you can stay involved and let us know your thoughts as this study progresses:

- * You can attend one of the Public Informational Meetings listed to the left.
- * You can contact your community representative on the TAC through your Town/City Hall.
- * You can read reports on the project at your local library.



You can also use the Hartford West Hotline to contact the project team.

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