

hamlet. That amount of traffic has an impact on it.

We are not going to increase the capacity of the corridor. It will be two-lane construction that will tie into two lanes both north and south. It is being done purely for quality of life reasons within that historic hamlet. However, we have not yet been able to successfully convince FHWA and FTA that we should not be subject to MIS requirements. That type of project really is not what MIS is all about, and we really ought to be focusing our efforts and resources rather than having to document to FHWA and FTA to why we should not have to do an MIS for that type of study.

## Collaborative Planning in the Griffin Line Corridor MIS

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The Griffin Line Corridor MIS has been the subject of numerous papers and presentations for TRB, APTA, and APA, primarily focusing on the innovative approach taken in coordinating transit, land use, economic and community development planning. This presentation focuses on the overall planning context of the Griffin Line MIS. Since its inception, long before the initiation of the MIS, the Griffin Line has been part of a locally driven collaborative planning process.

The Greater Hartford Transit District (GHTD) has been lead agency on the Griffin Line project, representing the City of Hartford, other member municipalities, and the business community. GHTD is not the transit operating agency in the Hartford region. It is an umbrella agency with policy oversight and project development responsibilities, which also operates paratransit, privatized commuter bus operations, and other services in the region. GHTD has absolutely no funding or taxing authority on its own. It is my understanding that the Griffin Line MIS is the first time in Connecticut that an independent entity other than ConnDOT has been lead agency in a major corridor investment analysis.

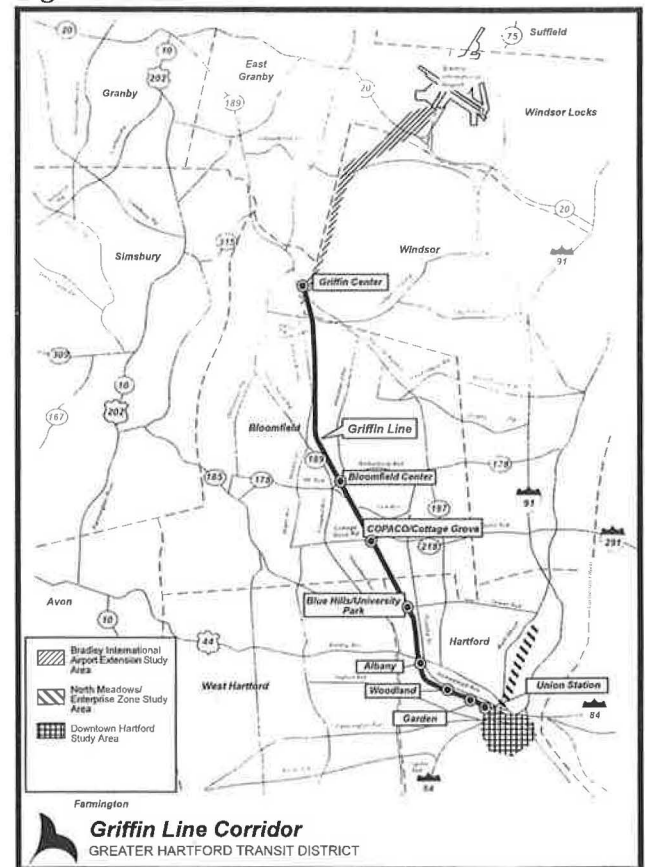
### Project Background

Hartford is a region of approximately one million people, located midway between New York and Boston. Like most cities, there is a network of old, mostly abandoned rail freight lines that radiate from downtown to suburban areas throughout the region. Eight to ten years ago, the Capitol Region Council of Governments

(CRCOG) and GHTD conducted a series of feasibility studies to identify those corridors that might be converted to transitways or fixed guideway systems. The Griffin Line corridor was selected as the first corridor to be extensively studied. In some ways, the Griffin Line MIS runs counter to the FTA/FHWA preferred model in which a problem is identified and alternatives are evaluated to address the problem. The Griffin Line corridor was identified as a desired "transit project" well before initiation of the MIS process.

The Griffin Line Corridor (see Figure 1) extends approximately 15 miles from Downtown Hartford to Bradley International Airport, and includes the municipalities of Hartford, Bloomfield, Windsor, East Granby and Windsor Locks, Connecticut. The initial 9-mile segment from Union Station in Hartford to the Griffin Center Office Park includes 8.5 miles of abandoned rail right-of-way already owned by the State of Connecticut. The Griffin Line serves several major residential, employment, educational, health care, cultural, and institutional centers.

Figure 1



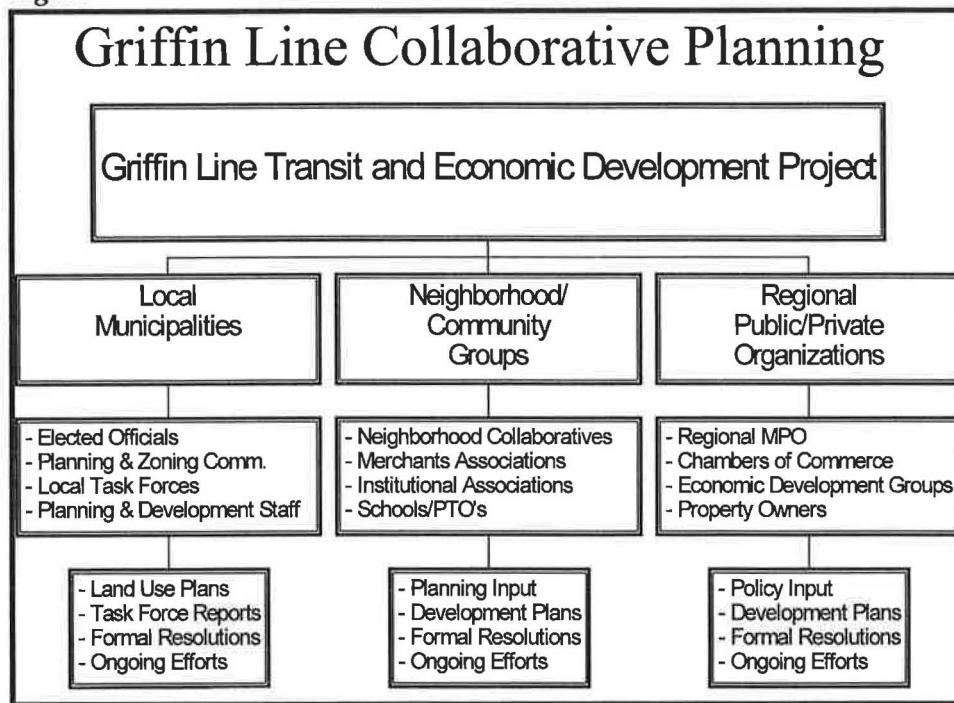
Since 1988, the Griffin Line Transit and Economic Development Project has planned for coordinated transit, land use, and economic and community devel-

opment initiatives in the corridor. The Griffin Line Corridor Major Investment Study was completed in May 1995 by the GHTD, CRCOG, and Bechtel Corporation as prime consultant.

### Collaborative Planning Process

Broad-based community involvement has been a long-standing hallmark of coordinated transit and land use planning efforts in the Griffin Line corridor. The collaborative planning process (see Figure 2) has included local municipalities, neighborhood and community groups, and regional public and private organizations. Hundreds of public meetings have been conducted, ranging from briefings for interested neighborhood and civic groups, to community meetings conducted by local task forces and advisory committees, to formal public hearings in front of local and regional elected officials.

Figure 2



Local task forces identified potential station stops and prepared conceptual development plans through a series of public, community-based planning meetings leading to formal approval by local planning and zoning commissions, and town councils. Questions raised at local task forces addressing land use and community development as well as transit plans include: How do you want to see your community grow? What would you like to see happen or not happen around potential transit station areas? Sometimes, what the community did *not*

want to see happen was even more significant or important to learn than what they *wanted* to see happen.

These local task force meetings and station area planning workshops were very good forums for getting the issues out on the table early in the process. However, this process can lead to difficulties as well. For example, since the project was still so early in the planning stages, it was often difficult to provide the specific, technical answers that were expected at community meetings. In addition, one should be warned that such a collaborative, community-driven process requires an extraordinary level of resources and commitment. As a small regional agency, it became very difficult for GHTD to keep up with the demands of this process.

However, the collaborative process was invaluable for the MIS and the project. The Griffin Line now has many "stakeholders" at the local municipal, community, and regional levels. Local Task Force activities culminated in formal resolutions acted on by local planning and zoning commissions, city/town councils, and other entities. State, regional, and local officials took significant formal actions in support of the Griffin Line Project. In 1993, the Connecticut General Assembly and Governor adopted Special Act 93-15 designating the Griffin Line as a *pilot mass transit and economic development corridor*. The following year, the Griffin Line was selected as one of the City of Hartford's *priority economic development projects* at the Hartford Economic Summit, sponsored by the Mayor and City Council.

### MIS and Evaluation of Alternatives

The Griffin Line MIS presents a comprehensive evaluation of bus and light rail transit alternatives in terms of impacts on improving mobility (particularly for the transit-dependent), fostering economic and community development, long-term environmental and energy benefits. It includes an assessment of cost effectiveness and financial feasibility. The MIS incorporates addi-

tional emphasis on land use, economic, and community development impacts, since these issues are such a unique and significant feature of the project.

While the MIS addressed the standard analyses related to demand forecasting, cost estimation, and environmental assessment, additional emphasis was directed toward land use, economic, and community development impacts. In addition, an independent economic impact analysis was completed by University of Connecticut. It is interesting to note that the locally driven collaborative process we followed probably led to an increased level of detail in many of the technical analyses completed in the MIS. The project's extensive interaction with local task forces and community groups created high local expectations regarding the extent of information to be produced in the study.

The evaluation of transportation alternatives completed in the MIS followed the standard evaluation process, including effectiveness (goals achievement), efficiency (cost effectiveness), equity considerations, and trade-off analysis. However, perhaps most significant in the local evaluation process were several key issues that reflected the local, community-driven focus of the transit and economic development project, including:

- transit dependent mobility and accessibility;
- economic and community development;
- local land use policies and transit-oriented development;
- long-term transit system build-out and network;
- long-term environmental conditions.

The Federal MIS process proved to be extremely flexible in enabling GHTD and CRCOG to incorporate these critical, locally driven issues to play a key role in the evaluation of alternatives. The consideration of cumulative transportation and mobility, economic and community development, and environmental impacts, as well as the analysis of alternative policies and operating assumptions, is consistent with Federal policy on major investment studies and with local and regional guidance provided throughout the project.

### **Local and Regional Selection of Light Rail Alternative**

In July 1995, CRCOG, the designated metropolitan planning organization in the region, formally selected the Light Rail alternative and directed GHTD to complete a detailed financing and implementation plan. The CRCOG Policy Board, consisting of the chief elected officials of the 29 member municipalities in the region, voted unanimously in favor of light rail, follow-

ing the unanimous recommendation of the CRCOG Transportation Committee. CRCOG took actions following detailed review of the MIS findings, and formal recommendations from the City of Hartford, the Town of Bloomfield, and a broad spectrum of community, civic, and business organizations.

The selected light rail investment focuses on the initial nine mile segment from Union Station in Hartford to Griffin Center in Bloomfield, for a total capital cost of \$176 million. However, extensions are planned to include service in Downtown Hartford and to connect to Bradley International Airport.

The link between transit investment and sound land use, economic, and community development played a significant role in the region's decision to select light rail. The CRCOG resolution states that *"the Griffin Line would contribute to the achievement of important State and regional goals, including mobility improvements for urban and suburban residents, economic and community development, and sound land use, air quality, and energy policies."*

The Hartford City Council resolution selecting light rail as the locally preferred alternative states, *"The economic and community development impacts of the Griffin Line are as important as the improvements in transit."* The Bloomfield Town Planning and Zoning Commission *"sees the light rail alternative as the best way to promote the Town's long-range community and economic development goals,"* and continued its commitment to implement pro-active growth management policies and zoning regulations to direct new development to light rail station areas while preserving open space in other parts of town.

### **Next Steps: Griffin Line Financing and Implementation Plan**

In July 1995, CRCOG also endorsed the Greater Hartford Transit District's initiative to establish a Task Force of Federal, State, local, and private-sector officials to develop a detailed plan to finance and implement the light rail service. Since October 1995, Eileen Kraus, the Chair of Fleet Bank Connecticut, has been serving as Chair of the Griffin Line Financing and Implementation Task Force. The recommended financing structure is scheduled for completion in May 1996.

In addition, GHTD continues to work closely with corridor municipalities, community organizations, and the private sector on station area land use planning, economic, and community development initiatives.