



**CITY OF NEW HAVEN
BOARD OF ALDERMEN**

July 25, 2011

Honorable Carl Goldfield
President, New Haven Board of Aldermen

Dear President Goldfield:

We would like to respectfully submit to the Board of Aldermen the attached communication, a proposed resolution urging your support for the redevelopment of Route 34 in Downtown New Haven as a multimodal urban boulevard that connects Interstate 95, Union Station, Downtown New Haven and the Yale Medical District.

One of the biggest revitalization projects in half a century, the New Haven Downtown Crossing project has the potential to reestablish Downtown as a great urban place and be the backbone of an economic resurgence of Downtown New Haven and the greater New Haven area. However, the presence of Route 34 in its current form as a limited-access highway isolates this nascent, but rapidly developing district from other key areas of the City and region.

The Route 34/New Haven Downtown Crossing project envisions the replacement of what is currently a limited-access highway through Downtown New Haven with an urban boulevard that enhances the city. As the project moves forward there is a growing concern among community members and supporters that it could fall well short of its potential to knit together key portions of the City and transportation hubs, and to cement the area's transformation into an urban place and regional job center driven by retail and housing development and growth in education and health and human sciences. The plans presented to the public thus far show the existing highway replaced by a pair of four and at one intersection five-lane (including turning lanes) surface arterials. For comparison's sake there are currently six lanes of traffic on the Q-Bridge supporting an interstate highway.

It would be fiscally, socially, and environmentally irresponsible to execute this project using an "automobile-first" policy of roadway design, as was the case during the original construction of the Route 34 Expressway, which required the demolition of a residential neighborhood. When compared to a pair of two lane roadways, a pair of four lane roads would cost more to build and more to maintain.

We are extremely pleased with the public outreach undertaken by City and Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) staff and appreciate the continued efforts to develop innovative designs and accommodate all roadway users in the plan for this corridor. However, we believe that the project is falling short of its transformative potential. We are optimistic that with the support and continued efforts of City staff, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the consultant team and the public, this project can still be a resounding success.

It is becoming increasingly evident that cities and regions that thrive in the knowledge economy are those places that foster face-to-face interaction and emerge as places where people want to be, rather than merely pass through. Highly-skilled as well as low-income workers are demanding neighborhoods, downtowns and employment centers built on a human scale that have an active, vibrant street life and provide access to both mass transit as well as more active forms of transportation such as walking and biking. Moreover, much of the area's potential relates to its proximity to Union Station. Any redevelopment of the Route 34 Corridor must prioritize the creation of a strong multimodal connection to Union Station. Notably, the redesign could help affect a mode shift away from cars toward mass transit, cycling and walking as a way to commute to and from work at the region's largest employer, Yale-New Haven Hospital, helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality in the city.

Fortunately, the Route 34/New Haven Downtown Crossing project is at a stage where the necessary changes can be made without delaying the project's implementation. To accomplish this, we ask for your support in advocating for the following design elements and criteria to be included in any future plans for the corridor:

- Equal planning priority be given to pedestrian, bicycle, mass transit and automobile traffic in the design;
- A pair of *two-lane streets for North and South Frontage* instead of two four-lane roads, with maximum of three lanes where necessary (including turn lanes);
- 10-foot wide travel lanes and short curb radii to calm traffic and minimize crossing distances for pedestrians;
- Separated bicycle facilities (cycletracks) adjacent to the street on both North Frontage and South Frontage Roads;
- Road design standards based on a target speed of no more than 25 mph;
- Pedestrian connectivity to cross-streets and the inclusion of bicycle lanes and traffic calming on College and Church Streets (notably the narrowing of both streets south of Route 34); and
- Enhanced pedestrian crossings including the use of raised intersections, bump-outs, and stamped pavement/concrete for crosswalks.

We strongly believe that the Route 34/Downtown Crossing project is a good use of public funds and will significantly improve both the economy and quality of life in New Haven. However, given the once-in-a-generation opportunity before us, the redevelopment of the Route 34 corridor should not simply be a good project, but indeed a transformative one.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure.

Respectfully submitted,

JUSTIN ELICKER
Alderman, 10th Ward

MICHAEL JONES
Alderman, 1st Ward

JACQUELINE JAMES-EVANS
Alderwoman, 3rd Ward

ANDREA JACKSON-BROOKS
Alderwoman, 4th Ward

JORGE PEREZ
Alderman, 5th Ward

DOLORES COLON
Alderwoman, 6th Ward

MATT SMITH
Alderman, 9th Ward

JOSEPH E. RODRIGUEZ
Alderman, 15th Ward

SERGIO RODRIGUEZ
Alderman, 26th Ward

CLAUDETTE ROBINSON-THORPE
Alderwoman, 28th Ward

DARNELL GOLDSON
Alderman, 30th Ward

ROLAND LEMAR
State Representative, 96th Assembly District

DOUGLAS HAUSLADEN
Chairman, Parking Working Group

ELM CITY CYCLING

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN STRONGLY URGING CITY AND STATE OFFICIALS AND STAFF TO REDEVELOP THE ROUTE 34 CORRIDOR AS A PAIR OF TWO LANE URBAN BOULEVARDS WITH A MAXIMUM OF THREE LANES WHERE NECESSARY TO ACCOMMODATE TURN LANES, THAT PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, TRANSIT AND AUTOMOBILE ACCESS EQUALLY; AND TO REDESIGN THE CURRENTLY DISCUSSED PROPOSAL WHICH INCORPORATES TOO MANY TRAFFIC LANES AND CREATES AN UNINVITING AND DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS.

WHEREAS: The City has secured approximately \$30 million in federal, state, city and private funding to complete the first phase of the redevelopment of the Route 34 Corridor; and

WHEREAS: the City has described the Route 34/Downtown Crossing project as a plan to transform Route 34 East, from Union Avenue to Park Street in downtown, from highway stub to slower speed, city streets and to bridge the gap between New Haven's Downtown (its business, government, arts and entertainment, and education centers) and its Medical District and Hill neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS: the high number of automobile traffic lanes in the current plan does not provide a safe environment for pedestrian and bicycle safety and for the creation of a livable sense of place, and does not match the City's own stated vision for a safe and transformative project; and

WHEREAS: one-third of households in New Haven do not have access to an automobile, making the provision of pedestrian, bicycle and transit access a matter of social justice and moral necessity; and

WHEREAS: the redevelopment of the Route 34 corridor as a welcoming, vibrant, and safe destination will link New Haven's downtown, the Medical District, and Union Station, creating additional economic development opportunities and effectively expanding Downtown New Haven through the Medical District to Union Station.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the New Haven Board of Aldermen strongly urges city and state officials and staff to redevelop the Route 34 Corridor as a pair of two-lane urban boulevards with a maximum of three lanes where necessary to accommodate turn lanes, that prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, transit and automobile access equally; and that City and State officials redesign the currently discussed proposal which incorporates too many traffic lanes and creates an uninviting and dangerous environment for pedestrian and bicycle access.