

# Metro Hartford **RapidRoutes**

Transit Priority Corridors Study



## Review of Plans and Studies

April 2021

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## Overview

This document presents an overview of plans and studies that are relevant to the development of the Metro Hartford RapidRoutes Transit Priority Corridors Study. These documents provide context for the study and identify previous and ongoing efforts to foster transit priority corridors in and around Metro Hartford. The documents summarized include:

- Downtown Hartford Transit Circulation and Through-Routing Study (2013)
- Hartford Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis (2017)
- CT *fastrak* Expansion Study (2016)
- Connect 2045: Capitol Region Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2019)
- East Hartford Silver Lane Study (2020)
- Hartford Re-Imagining Main Street Study (2020)
- Greater Hartford Mobility Study (Ongoing)

A list of planned projects along or adjacent to the identified potential corridors is also provided at the end of the document.

## Downtown Hartford Transit Circulation and Through-Routing Study (2013)

### Purpose

The Downtown Hartford Transit Circulation and Through-Routing Study, which was managed by CRCOG, presents a plan for bus circulation in downtown Hartford. The study built on the City of Hartford's initial concept for downtown bus circulation as part of the Intermodal Triangle Project, which was intended to improve mobility and access in downtown Hartford by facilitating the flow of bus traffic across downtown, redirecting bus and general traffic away from Bushnell Park, enhancing Main Street as a more pedestrian-friendly street, and providing better transit access to Union Station.

### Summary

The study presents a recommended concept for consistent alignments, layover locations, and facility needs for buses in downtown Hartford. The City's initial bus circulation concept included a pair of new downtown transit spines along Asylum and Pearl Streets that would facilitate east-

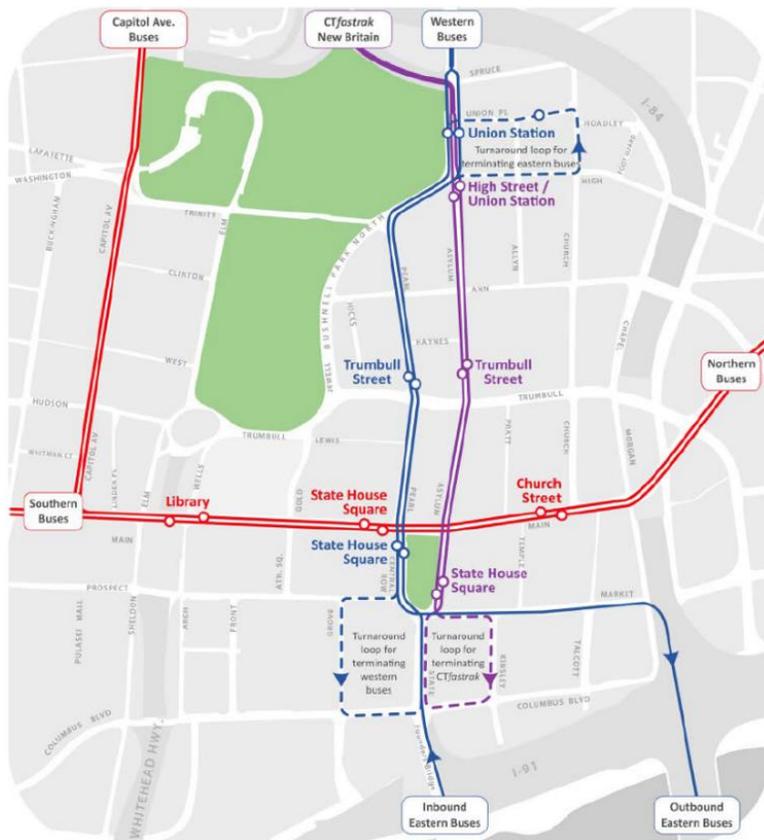
west bus travel, enhance access to parts of downtown that are east and west of Main Street, and remove bus routes traveling west of downtown from Bushnell Park and Main Street.

The study maintained the focus of local bus service around Main Street and Pearl Street/Central Row, ensuring short walks and easy transfers between buses. The final circulation concept re-aligns east-west routes along a common spine on Pearl Street and Central Row, allowing through-routing of east and west routes and providing at least some overlap of non-through routes, providing more convenient transfers for passengers continuing past downtown. The future CT *fastrak* service would operate parallel to this alignment on Asylum Street. All north-south service would continue to operate on Main Street.

### Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes

- The study provides insights into how to align routes through downtown Hartford. Currently, buses do not operate through downtown exactly as illustrated in the design concept.
- Main Street is identified as the north-south backbone of downtown transit circulation, and it does continue to serve this function today, carrying a significant volume of CT *transit* buses and ridership, especially between Church Street and Park Street. It is notable, however, that the recent Re-Imagining Main Street study (2020) proposes reducing transit service along this corridor.
- The primary CT *transit* routes serving Farmington Avenue today – 62, 64, and 66 – travel into and out of downtown Hartford via Church Street (eastbound) and Asylum Street (westbound) rather than via Pearl Street.
- CT *fastrak* Routes 101, 102, and 128 generally operate between Farmington Avenue and downtown Hartford via Jewell Street (eastbound) and Asylum Street (westbound).

## Downtown Hartford Transit Circulation Final Design Concept



# Hartford Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis (2017)

## Purpose

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) initiated a Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) of CT *transit's* Hartford Division. The aim of the study was to inventory the transit needs and transit potential of the Capitol Region and to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of existing transit services. The CSA began in September 2014 and was completed in April 2017.

## Summary

The CSA consisted of a review of existing conditions, an assessment of the demand for transit service in the study area, outreach to stakeholders and members of the public, a detailed evaluation of existing fixed-route services, and the development of service improvement recommendations. Overall, the recommendations were meant to accomplish the following:

- Improve transit service for the vast majority of current and prospective transit riders in the Capitol Region
- Complement recent and planned transit investments including CT *fastrak* and the CT *rail* Hartford Line
- Ensure that CT *transit* operates as efficiently as possible by addressing under-performing routes and service redundancy

The recommended service plan identified a selection of key corridors as Transit Priority Corridors, based on their very high bus ridership volumes and underlying market demand. These corridors include Franklin Avenue, Park Avenue, Farmington Avenue, Albany Avenue, and Main Street in Hartford, as well as Burnside Avenue in East Hartford.

In the short term, these corridors would primarily be defined by high service frequency, which can be achieved by coordinating the schedules of several local routes operating in each corridor. Over the long term, these corridors would provide a focus for transit-supportive capital investments, including transit priority treatments (such as exclusive bus lanes, queue jump lanes, and/or transit signal priority), stop consolidation, and enhanced passenger amenities. These capital investments would complement high-frequency transit service and reinforce the image of each corridor as an enhanced transit corridor.

#### Proposed Implementation of Transit Priority Corridors:

##### *Short-Term (1-2 Years)*

- Review recent ridership data to verify correct identification of key corridors
- Coordinate with on-going planning initiatives, such as the CT *fastrak* Expansion Study and the Regional Bus Shelter Program, to ensure compatibility with recommended transit priority corridors

##### *Mid-Term (3-5 Years)*

- Implement a Transit Signal Priority pilot program
- Consolidate bus stops to offer faster service
- Improve rider amenities and shelters at key bus stops

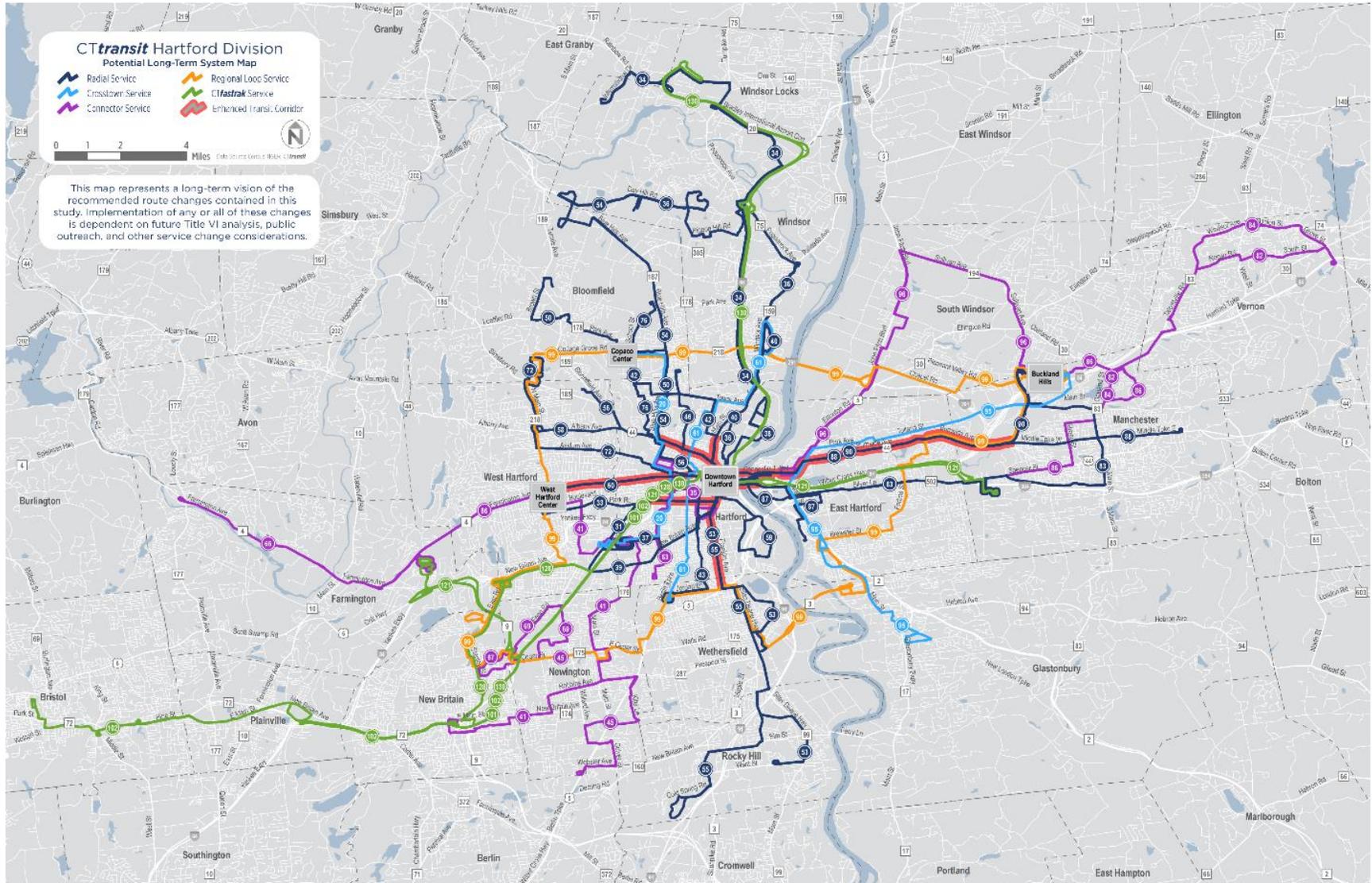
##### *Long-Term (6+ Years)*

- Consolidate routes along identified corridors to offer more frequent service
- Construct capital improvements (bus lanes, transit signal priority, shelters, etc.) to support enhanced service

### **Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes**

- The CSA defined the six transit priority corridors that serve as the basis for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes. These corridors will be confirmed and refined as part of the RapidRoutes effort using updated market and ridership data.

### Hartford Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis Recommended Plan



# CTfastrak Expansion Study (2016)

## Purpose

CTDOT launched the CT *fastrak* Expansion Study in late 2015 to study the potential for CT *fastrak*-branded service east of Hartford and the Connecticut River. No new dedicated guideway was planned as part of the project, but other transit priority capital improvements would be recommended as appropriate.

## Summary

The study identified service needs and key markets, and established three priorities:

- Expand hours of service on existing local routes in the study area to more closely match service levels provided by the existing CT *fastrak* system
- Provide transit connection between the University of Connecticut main campus in Storrs and the CT *fastrak* system
- Improve access to The Shoppes at Buckland Hills in Manchester

As an initial phase of implementation, the study recommended significant improvements to existing local service east of the river, with extended hours of service on weekdays and weekends for several routes.

The second phase of the planning effort focuses on identifying and recommending corridor enhancements:

- **A UConn-to-Hartford route via Route 195 and I-84.** This route would link Tolland and UConn, and introduce a unique connection with Buckland Hills. This recommendation was implemented in August 2017 as CT *transit* Express Route 913.
- **Identifying corridors for on-street bus rapid transit enhancements.** The focus of the study would shift to determining potential corridors for BRT treatments, such as transit stations with real-time bus arrival information and CT *fastrak* shelters, traffic signal preference, and queue jump lanes to reduce travel time and improve the customer experience.

## Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes

- A major part of the study's second phase was identifying appropriate east-of-the-river corridors to target for BRT treatments and other transit enhancements. As part of CRCOG's 2017 Comprehensive Service Analysis, Burnside Avenue was identified as one of six transit priority corridors, and the only one east of the Connecticut River. Investments in Burnside Avenue under Metro Hartford RapidRoutes would build on the original study's goal to enhance transit service and facilities east of Hartford and the river.

# Connect 2045: Capitol Region Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2019)

## Purpose

Connect 2045 is the Capitol Region Council of Government's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which guides how CRCOG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Metro Hartford area, will manage and operate a multi-modal transportation system to meet the region's economic, transportation, development, and sustainability goals, among others, within a fiscally constrained environment. The MTP was completed in 2019 with a planning horizon of 2045.

## Summary

The MTP includes several recommendations that directly inform and support Metro Hartford RapidRoutes:

### *Rapid Transit*

- **Enhanced Transit Corridors.** Support reinstating high frequency transit along each of the six corridors described in the Hartford CSA with transit signal priority, stop consolidation, and enhanced passenger amenities.
- **CTfastrak Expansion.** Advance the second phase of CT *fastrak* expansion east of Hartford.

### *Bus*

- **Bus Stop Consolidation.** Work with CT *transit* to evaluate bus stop locations and consolidate stops to create at least 1,000 feet between stops. Stop consolidation creates faster, more reliable, and more comfortable service while allowing resources for stop improvements such as amenities and accessibility to be focused.
- **Better Bus Service in the Hartford Division Area.** Improve the existing bus system by working with CT *transit* and municipalities to implement the routing recommendations and capital improvements recommended in CRCOG's Hartford CSA to create a more connected, efficient, and accessible local transit system for the region.

### *Transit Technology*

- **Implement Transit Signal Priority (TSP) on Signals within Hartford.** Support projects to upgrade and coordinate traffic signals on the five enhanced transit corridors identified in Hartford.

### *Infrastructure and Capital Improvement*

- **Stop Amenities.** Install benches and shelters at stops with high ridership based on the Sign and Shelter Policy developed by CRCOG. Consider wayfinding improvements at major bus stops and park and ride lots.

- **Bus Shelters.** Continue working with CT *transit*, the Greater Hartford Transit District (GHTD), and municipalities to implement a cohesive and coordinated regional bus shelter program.

The MTP also identifies a selection of demonstration projects to pilot new and innovative strategies. Among the selected project areas, CRCOG recommends a single demonstration project on one of the transit priority corridors selected as part of the Hartford Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis. This could entail extending CT *fastrak* service to the east as an example, highlighting branding of CT *fastrak* and BRT service to connect to Buckland Hills Park-and-Ride.

### Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes

- Metro Hartford RapidRoutes builds on the MTP recommendation supporting enhanced transit corridors, calling for transit signal priority, stop consolidation, and enhanced passenger amenities along the six priority corridors to support high-frequency service.
- Several recommendations direct the evaluation of and investment in strategies that support transit, including strategic bus stop consolidation and improved bus stops, shelters, and other amenities across the CT *transit* network.

## East Hartford Silver Lane Study (2020)

### Purpose

The Silver Lane Corridor Study was initiated by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Town of East Hartford, in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). The study focuses on a two-mile corridor of Silver Lane in East Hartford, from Route 15 east to Forbes Street, with the goal of developing a transportation plan for the corridor based on the existing travel network, the existing travel conditions for a variety of users, and the projected travel needs in the future. The study was completed in February 2020.

### Summary

CT *transit* Route 83 and CT *fastrak* Route 121 operate along the study corridor. The study noted that bus pullouts are not provided at any of the stops along Silver Lane, and many stop locations do not offer sidewalk connections to adjacent land uses that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The study's recommendations were intended to support the findings of the Silver Lane Revitalization Plan and benefit the overall quality-of-life in East Hartford. Several recommendations, particularly those affecting pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit mobility, were evaluated along the entire project corridor to ensure consistency. The primary corridor-wide recommendations are as follows:

- Reconfigure Silver Lane, utilizing a road diet to more equitably allocate space on the roadway for all users
- Provide 10-foot sidepaths on both sides of Silver Lane to enhance bicyclist and pedestrian mobility and connect the gap in the East Coast Greenway
- Consolidate and improve transit stop amenities along Silver Lane
- Relocate overhead utilities

The study recommends improving bus stop facilities for both local and CT *fastrak* bus service, as well as installing bus pullouts at stops served by CT *fastrak*.

In the spring of 2019, an opportunity arose to implement the proposed road diet under CTDOT's Vendor-in-Place (VIP) pavement rehabilitation program. While the long-term vision for this roadway segment includes additional amenities, the Town quickly saw the opportunity to capitalize on implementing the desired lane configuration under an existing funded program. As a result, the road diet was implemented by the time of this study's completion.

### Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes

- Silver Lane is served by two routes, including CT *fastrak* Route 121 to Manchester Community College. However, Silver Lane is not identified as a transit priority corridor under Metro Hartford RapidRoutes.

## Hartford Re-Imagining Main Street Study (2020)

### Purpose

The City of Hartford pursued the Re-Imagining Main Street planning effort to develop a vision for Main Street in downtown Hartford. The effort focused on transforming Main Street into a complete street by introducing new pedestrian and bicycle amenities, enhancing transit access, adding streetscape amenities, creating linkages to major destinations, and addressing traffic operations and safety issues.

### Summary

The effort launched in the spring of 2020 and the final concept design for the corridor was presented in November 2020. Guiding principles for the study were defined as follows:

1. Pedestrians must be a priority
2. Safety of all users is critical
3. Design Main Street to human scale, encouraging a vibrant street life
4. Right-size Main Street with maintainable infrastructure

5. Main Street must support surrounding uses through attractive design

Elements of the final concept include enhanced crossing facilities for pedestrians, including curb bumpouts for shortened crossing distances as well as new midblock crossings, in addition to streetscape amenities, new landscaping, a two-way cycletrack along the eastern side of Main Street, and a roundabout at Main Street and Park Street.

**Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes**

- The Re-Imagining Main Street study area – Main Street from the State House to just south of Park Street – is a critical segment of the CT *transit* network, carrying very high volumes of buses that both terminate and travel through downtown Hartford, and serving a significant number of bus riders as they arrive, depart, or transfer to different routes. Many elements in the final design concept will present challenges to improving transit service and operations along the corridor.

**Re-Imagining Main Street Final Design Concept**



**Greater Hartford Mobility Study (Ongoing)**

CTDOT initiated the Greater Hartford Mobility Study in early 2020 to address several mobility studies and initiatives in the Greater Hartford area. At the time, multiple efforts were already underway, addressing a variety of mobility strategies and at different points of completion; these include the I-84 Hartford Project, CT *fastrak* expansion east of the Connecticut River, Amtrak/Hartford Line Rail Corridor enhancements, I-84/I-91 interchange improvements, East Coast Greenway planning, and expanded bicycle and pedestrian networks around the region. These separate yet concurrent projects address similar mobility challenges across the Greater Hartford region, and advancing one may potentially interfere or conflict with others. To mitigate

this, the Greater Hartford Mobility Study aims to holistically assess these projects and other mobility initiatives as part of one study.

### Implications for Metro Hartford RapidRoutes

- As part of its effort across all modes, the Greater Hartford Mobility Study will include important analysis of transit service and opportunities in the Greater Hartford region, and the study will develop transit recommendations. It will be important to coordinate Metro Hartford RapidRoutes work with the Greater Hartford Mobility Study efforts to ensure that recommendations for both projects are coordinated and consistent.

## Planned Corridor Projects

A number of projects are currently planned or underway along or adjacent to the Metro Hartford RapidRoutes corridors. Most notably, there are planned projects on Farmington Avenue and along a segment of Maple and Franklin Avenues, as described below.

- **Maple Avenue and Franklin Avenue:** Streetscape improvements are planned for a segment of Maple Avenue and Franklin Avenue, from Maple Avenue at Retreat Avenue south to Franklin Avenue at Annawan Street. The project will introduce sidewalk bumpouts to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians, as well as bike lanes the entire length of the project corridor. The Franklin Avenue bike lanes will be the first parking-protected bike lanes in Hartford.
- **Farmington Avenue:** Previous streetscape improvements were completed on Farmington Avenue from Marshall Street to Denison Street in 2016. This upcoming project will complete streetscape improvements on Farmington Avenue from Denison Street to the city's western boundary at Prospect Street. Improvements include sidewalk bumpouts to shorten pedestrian crossing distance and installation of bike lanes.