

**City of Norwalk
Bike/Walk Commission
Special Meeting Agenda
June 21th at 6:00 pm**

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at <http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

1. Approval to buy 7 crosswalk stanchions or other options – Nancy Rosett
2. Approval to send a letter of support for Norwalk Redevelopment Agency's grant applications – Tanner Thompson (See attached)
3. Adjournment

The first and our current priority is the FTA Grant. Below is some summary information and a link to a map of the proposed area.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1t27B962iSHS88oXveJq6nCPIC1agq7AZ&usp=sharing>

“The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency along with its partner, the Norwalk Transit District, is seeking grant funding to undertake a planning effort that will study the creation of a new fixed guideway public transportation facility and related corridor improvements between the existing Norwalk Bus Hub and a new South Norwalk Intermodal Center to be located at the South Norwalk Train Station, the city's main passenger and commuter train station. New fixed guideway bus service between the two transit centers will increase ridership, decrease travel times, reduce congestion, and induce private investment by creating efficient, desirable, and safe transit service along a corridor with development and growth potential. The new fixed guideway service and related corridor improvements will connect two major transportation centers in the city, a regional bus hub and a passenger train station, thereby improving accessibility to both. The related corridor improvements will include investments in multimodal transportation infrastructure for bikes and pedestrians to further expand access. Recent zoning changes within the corridor encourage Transit-Oriented and Mixed-Use Development and planning for additional transportation facilities and fixed guideway transit stops will generate commercial and residential demand, which can be accommodated through private development and investment along the study corridor. The study will include identifying the infrastructure needs of any proposed new fixed guideway bus service. The planning effort will include private sector participation among business associates, property owners, and developers along the corridor to encourage business to improve their storefronts, property owners to invest in their buildings, and developers to construct new buildings.

Statement of work: Study a new fixed guideway bus facility using a separate right-of-way, fixed catenary system, or Bus Rapid Transit service along the West Avenue, Martin Luther King Drive, and South Main Street corridor between the Norwalk Bus Hub and South Norwalk Intermodal Center. Related improvements to the corridor, including an analysis of commuter shuttles, development of Complete Street guidelines, and an alternatives analysis for South Norwalk Train Station, will also be part of the study.”

The second is the RAISE grant, which used to be called BUILD and before that TIGER. The RAISE grant is focused around the South Norwalk Train Station and involves some streetscape improvements for biker and pedestrian traffic, as well as public transportation. The project description is posted below.

“Project Description

Streets surrounding the station have narrow, substandard, or severely deteriorated sidewalks, and some segments of streets lack sidewalks altogether. Haphazardly-placed utility poles create an additional obstacle for pedestrians and can disrupt the healthy growth of street trees. In this area of the City, safe and contiguous biking facilities are also largely absent. As a result, accessing destinations like the train station on foot or by bike can be difficult, unpleasant, and discouraging. The distance between the existing bus hub and train stations make it difficult for travelers to access

efficient multi-modal transportation routes, forcing them to rely on personal cars or extended travel times with inefficient transfers. Improvements to streetscapes, implementation of complete street practices, and enhanced investment in sustainability will support the future buildout of the site for a second intermodal hub and mixed-use/mixed-income development to utilize the area surrounding the South Norwalk Station for its highest and best use.

Historically, the larger context for this disconnection between the station and core of South Norwalk is due in large to the construction of roads and highways and the relocation of the station itself. In order to accommodate a regrading and expansion of train tracks and the construction of a new bridge in 1895, the South Norwalk train station was demolished and moved farther south - away from Washington Street, the historic business and commercial center of South Norwalk. While the present day location is only .2 miles from the original site, it has been just enough to remove that psychological connection and sense of place. Before preservation movements in the 1960's and pedestrian planning initiatives of today, numerous buildings that would have naturally connected a larger grid of South Norwalk were torn down for new and wider roads and setback residential homes, creating car-dependent neighborhoods and inequity for residents. Construction of I-95 in the 1950s condemned, acquired, and demolished housing, businesses, parkland, and community spaces, displaced or relocated residential and commercial tenants, and constructed a physical and psychological barrier between Norwalk and South Norwalk. Creation of MLK Drive, a wide, multilane, traffic sewer, in the 1960s similarly contributed to further separating South Norwalk and the adjacent neighborhood, tenant displacement, and the creation of irregular parcels of land across from the Train Station. This collective displacement of people and culture had led to the dilapidation of much of South Norwalk by the late 20th century. Recent initiatives have revived the need for pedestrian centered infrastructure and affordable housing in South Norwalk.

The South Norwalk Station TOD Infrastructure Foundation Project is phase one of the larger TOD plan currently in the planning phase with VHB consulting. The end vision is the build out of identified parcels with mixed-use and mixed-income development and creating a secondary bus hub and intermodal center with the goal of improving quality of life, addressing environmental sustainability, and capturing economic competition. To accomplish this, RAISE funds will be utilized for phase one which includes three initiatives to address the fundamental infrastructure of the plan; Street improvements, Station improvements, and Surface parking repurposing.

Street improvements is a multifaceted initiative which involves functional and visual solutions to pedestrian and multimodal travel impediments that entice the use of such alternative transportation modes. The implementation of Complete Street practices on Henry Street, Mulvoy Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (MLK), Monroe Street, and Chestnut Street will improve navigation too and throughout the station area. Elements include sidewalk replacement, installation, and widening; sharrows and bike lanes; street redirection; road diets; storm-water management; protected bike lanes; and street trees. See figures (x-x) for planned cross-sections of identified streets. Implementation of Complete Street design will aid in slowing traffic to create safer and more inviting conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, streamlining navigation, and improving sustainability and green infrastructure. Construction of two new roads will improve the flow of traffic in the district. Station Place (figure x) will run along the East side of the station from Monroe to Henry and provide designated drop-off/pick-up space for cars, taxis, and shuttles, provide bike parking, and serve as a temporary bus station until the intermodal center on the west side is constructed. The street will additionally accommodate short-term parking for businesses in the station house. The second road will convert a walkway between the Housing Authority and Charter School properties on Chestnut to a one-way road running from Chestnut to Henry (figure x). The primary function of this new road is to alleviate the congestion from buses off Chestnut Street during school drop off and pickup times which block traffic along the route. Additionally, it will orient the school to face a proper road, create a "T" intersection at the winding road that presently turns into Mulvoy Street from Henry, break up a superblock, and spur the redevelopment of the neglected basketball court and green space on the site as a valuable school and community resource. Utility poles and overhead wires are prone to damage during storms, disrupt tree growth, impede pedestrian movement, and are unsightly. To support future development and address these current issues with overhead wires, undergrounding utilities is a vital infrastructure improvement along Henry, Mulvoy, Bates Court, Franklin St, and

Chestnut (figure x) this covers approximately .56 miles of roadway. The benefits of such street improvement initiatives will dually aid in improving conditions within the site and establishing a cohesive connection with the larger South Norwalk area.

The station itself is in need of visual improvements. The parking garage is the primary visual fixture of the station. The visual mass of the building openly suggests the priority of cars in the city rather than alternative means. Even though these cars are being used to access public transit here, the train is primarily used for longer trips, and therefore still relays the message that cars are essential for trips within town. While efforts like Complete Street practices, a future secondary intermodal center, sidewalk improvements, and extensive bike networks will help curb the culture of Norwalk towards alternative transit modes, the psychological presence of parking infrastructure is in conflict with these goals. The station should be a means for travel short and long distance, for employment and necessities as well as recreation, and for people who economically rely on public transit and those who actively choose it. Norwalk is a diverse city of people and land use. It's important to recognize that while extensive efforts can be made to make the Norwalk more transit and pedestrian friendly, it is naïve to dismiss the suburban sections of Norwalk and think cars will become obsolete anytime in the near future. Therefore, while parking infrastructure must remain, especially to encourage the use of alternative transit for at least some part of their travels, we can improve how it visually and sustainably contributes to the neighborhood. Remedying the unattractive and deteriorating façade, RAISE funds will be used to wrap the garage with green biomaterial panels which will capture CO2 emissions from the garage and increase stormwater management. Installation of a green roof and solar panels will additionally aid in pushing Norwalk toward more sustainable building practices, which have not yet become standard or expected practices in the city. Photovoltaic canopies along the platforms will further our green initiatives while providing protection from the elements while waiting for the train. The addition of Station Wi-Fi will improve the experience of riders and increase economic competitiveness of the city. Station Wi-Fi is part of a larger push for free broadband access throughout the city to reach vulnerable populations that lack funds for personal wireless connection services and increase equity and opportunities. As the center point for the TOD district, the station should be a visual landmark and model for the future. Investment in such initiatives will spur increased interest from the private sector for development on adjacent and surrounding parcels.

The ultimate goal development within the TOD plan bounds when complete and implemented is to increase density and accommodate affordable housing replacement at a minimum of 1:1 ratio to mitigate socio-economic isolation and segregation, health & income disparities, and "gentrification" in South Norwalk. Currently located on the west side of the station is the Housing Authority offices as well as Leroy Downs Senior Affordable housing complex with X units. The complex is nearing physical obsolescence, is segregated from the rest of the community, and does not efficiently utilize the parcel to its highest and best use. Its redevelopment into a higher density, mix-income development, along with additional developments on the west side seek to address this replacement and improvement. Additional opportunity is present on the east side for increased density and additional affordable housing. The east side which currently is comprised of X spots of surface parking; the historical station house with entrance to cross-track tunnel, a waiting area and two local businesses; and a triangular section of wooded area partially owned by DOT and flanked by dilapidated commercial buildings. Plans for this side of the station are largely influenced by private development plans in various phases of development. The triangle area of surface parking (figure x) will be part of a private development on the adjacent site and new Station Place will run through half the site, exiting around the area of the first bend on Henry. The remaining area (shown in figure x) provides supporting opportunity for a public private partnership of additional affordable housing in a mixed-income development. While parking on the east side is heavily utilized, its existence in a large surface lot on prime real estate is undesirable. A new development on the site would absorb lost station parking and provide at least 60 spots for the station, paid for by the city through RAISE to help support its development. Additional space is located on the site for community use. Opportunities to increase the City's affordable housing portfolio to align with and inspire towards exceeding state mandate must be adopted. Much of Norwalk's population are long-term residents who deserve to remain in their communities and experience its growth without fear of displacement. This includes elements of aging in place and providing a diversified housing stock for people at all stages of life."