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Proposed New Trolley System and Mobility Hubs Put Mystic Beyond the Space Age

Mystic Mobility Study Takes a New Spin on an Old Concept

By Bree Shirvell | Email the author | December 7, 2010

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At the [Mystic Mobility Study's](#) second public meeting, transportation engineer Steve Mitchell presented to a room full of cautious optimists, filled with questions about significant changes to the transportation landscape of downtown Mystic.

Mitchell's presentation focused on a proposed new trolley bus system in Mystic. With three previous failed attempts in the 1990s, Mitchell stressed the importance of making sure that the trolley system was more convenient for tourists and residents than simply driving their cars into downtown. Features of the new system would include shorter wait times at each stop, a more direct route, and a cheaper fare.

"It has to be very inexpensive again because we're competing against something that in people's minds is essentially free the automobile," Mitchell said. "Either you have to make the automobile more expensive than the trolley or the trolley less expensive than the automobile and it's harder to get less expensive than the free. The cost of the fare has to be something that's low enough to be a good alternative."

The proposed trolley system would loop from the hotel area north of I-95 to the Aquarium, then to the Seaport, and finally to the Stonington-side of downtown before the drawbridge, in order to decrease trolley time stuck in bridge traffic. The trolley route would not stop on the Groton side of Mystic.

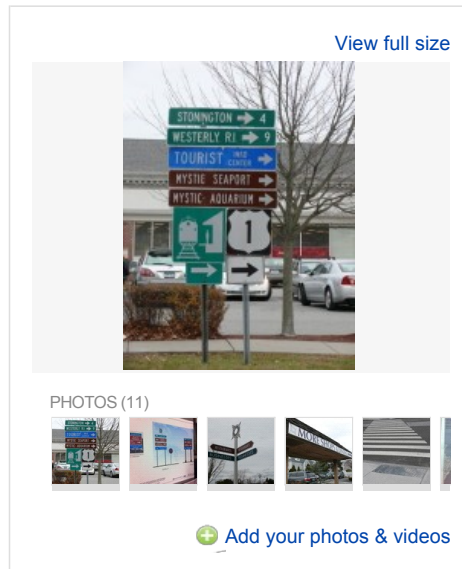
"You've got to have the route set up in such a way that entices them out of their cars and into the trolley," Mitchell said.

The trolley system proposal was met with many cost-related questions from residents who attended the meeting, questions that could not be answered until more research is completed and a final route is selected.

During his presentation, Mitchell also discussed mobility hubs, which are enhanced traditional trolley stops that harness modern technology. One idea is to alert waiting passengers of the next arriving trolley by using a GPS on the trolley that would automatically update a digital display as the trolley got closer.

"A few years ago that would have been space age stuff, but now we are past the space age," Mitchell said.

Mobility hubs would also use touch screen televisions linked to the Internet, to provide tourists with an



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interactive experience to look up all sorts of information, from restaurants to ticket prices.

To prevent Mystic from turning into an episode of The Jetsons, Mitchell stressed that current elements of the streetscape would be incorporated into the architectural design of the mobility hubs, from the style of the benches to the directional signs to the lights and use of bulletin boards.

Other topics in Mitchell's presentation included the rebirth of a water taxi that would stop at the seaport and the Groton-side of downtown, widening the intersection of Route 1 and Route 27, and creating a more bike and pedestrian friendly area at the intersection of Coogan Blvd. and Route 27.

After the formal presentation by Mitchell, residents provided feedback to consultants at five different tables: the mystic trolley bus route determination table, a transit mobility hub location and layout table, signage table, pedestrian bicycling improvements table, and key intersections and roadway improvements table.

At the end of the meeting, questions lingered in preparation for a third public meeting on this topic. Residents' questions ranged from, *would anyone actually bike along Coogan Blvd.?* to *can we put solar panels on the mobility hubs instead of green roofs?*

The third public meeting is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 23, 2011, which will include a presentation of the final report and hopefully some answers to ongoing community concerns.

What do you think of the proposed trolley system? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

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