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### *Elm City Cycling Statement on New Haven Downtown Crossing*

The New Haven Downtown Crossing project represents a tremendous opportunity not only to enhance New Haven's economic competitiveness but also to create a better urban landscape for residents, commuters, local business, and other stakeholders. Elm City Cycling applauds the City of New Haven's project team in winning a competitive grant process and bringing federal transportation money to New Haven, and we strongly support the stated goal of the project to "create a more livable and walkable community."

We have concerns, however, about whether Downtown Crossing actually fulfills that goal and meets the City of New Haven's and State of Connecticut's commitment to complete streets. Specifically we have concerns about the number of lanes, crossing distances, and projected vehicle speeds along the two east-west roadways designed to replace the Route 34 highway. We believe that our city could also reap immediate benefits if these and other redesigned streets **fully incorporated the cycle tracks** and other innovations suggested by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)'s new national standards. We are particularly concerned that re-connecting the street grid severed in the 1960s by the Route 34 connector is not included in Phase I of Downtown Crossing, and will only materialize in a later phase of the project for which there is neither funding nor a specific timeline.

We are aware that some of these shortcomings are due to both funding constraints and engineering constraints. We applaud the Connecticut Department Of Transportation's decision to approve the City of New Haven's requests for waivers for engineering modifications to Downtown Crossing. These decisions will allow greater flexibility in making the project design more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly, and we believe they reflect positive changes that have taken place in the philosophy of the DOT towards balancing the interests of different road users. However, we believe that more engineering waivers could have been requested, and should have been granted.

We also have concerns about the process by which Downtown Crossing was developed. It is unclear where and how suggestions we and others made early in the design process were incorporated or even documented. Future projects of the magnitude of Downtown Crossing must include a robust public participation process, not in a perfunctory way, but as an essential and indispensable element of urban planning in New Haven. A design "charrette" would be an appropriate and effective means of ensuring the inclusion of such community input. In fact, the US Department of Transportation specifically mentions the use of charrettes as a public participation tool in its Tiger II information sheet: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/resourcecenter/teams/planning/tpu21.cfm>.

While some of the project funding may be time-sensitive, this should not dictate silent resignation to the flaws of Downtown Crossing. The process of improving the project must be ongoing. The City of New Haven should continue to solicit input from, listen carefully to, and work to incorporate the suggestions of community stakeholders so that Downtown Crossing can truly correct the failures of the past and advance us toward a safer, healthier, more beautiful and functional New Haven.



Elm City Cycling is a nonprofit organization of more than 800 citizens and advocates whose mission is to make the greater New Haven area friendlier and more accessible to users of non-motorized transportation.

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