

Connecticut Department of Transportation

State Project No. 167-108

Heroes Tunnel Project, Bridge No. 00773

Route 15 Wilbur Cross Parkway through West Rock Ridge
Woodbridge, Hamden, New Haven

Wednesday, June 7, 2017

7 P.M.

New Haven Hall of Records

200 Orange Street, New Haven, CT

Minutes of Public Informational Meeting

Present:

Theodore Nezames	CTDOT Bridges	860-594-3272	theodore.nezames@ct.gov
David Cutler	CTDOT BCD	860-594-3210	david.cutler@ct.gov
Derick Lessard	CTDOT BCD	860-594-3216	derick.lessard@ct.gov
Marissa Washburn	CTDOT PDU	860-594-3358	marissa.washburn@ct.gov
Scott Bushee	CTDOT SHD	860-594-2079	scott.bushee@ct.gov
Kevin Fleming	CTDOT OEP	860-594-2924	kevin.fleming@ct.gov
Mike Egan	CDM Smith	860-808-2254	eganmp@cdmsmith.com
David Sousa	CDM Smith	860-808-2261	sousad@cdmsmith.com

Presentation:

The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public of the initiation of the preliminary engineering phase of the Heroes Tunnel Project, and to solicit their questions and comments. A one-half hour open house was hosted before the presentation began to allow the public to view various exhibits.

The project was presented using an MS PowerPoint slideshow along with multiple color boards displayed throughout the room which depicted various elements of the project for the public and were viewed during the open house proceeding the presentation.

In addition to the representatives from the Department and the Consulting Engineers, approximately 25 individuals including private citizens, municipal officials, and members of stakeholder groups were in attendance.

The public informational meeting was organized into three segments; an open house prior to the presentation, a presentation by CTDOT and CDM Smith, and a forum for questions and comments in accordance with Public Information Meeting protocol. Following is a summary of the presentation and comments.

Introduction:

A PowerPoint presentation was given by CTDOT and CDM Smith, organized under the following topics:

- Project Roles
- Project purpose
- Existing conditions
- Rehabilitation Options
- Reconstruction Options
- Environmental Resources
- Environmental Document/Process
- Environmental NEPA/CEPA Tasks
- Public Involvement
- Potential Stakeholders
- Next Steps

The meeting was then opened to questions and comments from the audience.

Public Comment and Questions:

Comment: West River Watershed Coalition (WRWC) is looking to establish a greenway (biking and hiking facilities along the West River). They want to assure that the West River itself is protected and are concerned about polluted runoff from highways, including Route 15 and Route 63. WRWC has some potential solutions and would like to sit down with CTDOT to discuss ways to mitigate water quality impacts.

Response: CTDOT staff expressed willingness to meet with WRWC to discuss their concerns and ideas.

Comment: WRWC requested to be identified as a stakeholder. WRWC discussed existing clogged drainage along Route 15 within the project limits that is causing sediment to make its way into the West River. WRWC also noted that highway runoff may be contributing to flooding is occurring at some homes in Woodbridge North of Route 15. WRWC wanted to know if these issues would be addressed in the project.

Response: Drainage from the tunnel and along Route 15 will be addressed and upgraded as required within the project limits.

Comment: The Tunnel and Exit 59 projects are separate; the speaker was concerned that storm water impacts from both projects would be addressed concurrently, so that potential solutions mesh. The speaker, a resident of Wintergreen Brook area, also indicated the sensitivity of the Wintergreen brook area.

Response: It was noted that although these are separate projects, the designs can address these impacts in their final configuration, during the interim between projects, and during construction.

Comment: Question from a Woodbridge resident (Fred Anderson): Is there a curve for the deterioration of the concrete, is the failure rate accelerating?

Response: In their inspections of the tunnel which are now scheduled every year, CTDOT measures the deterioration and the effect on the lining. From memory, the Department responded that they believed the current concrete deterioration was in the range of two to six percent, and was not changing significantly in the between yearly inspections. CTDOT has not determined if the deterioration a linear progression but is managing it actively.

Comment: A daily user of tunnel stated that he observed the tunnel had icicles that were two to four feet long last winter and could they could break off and cause significant damage to vehicles or even result in death to motorists.

Response: CTDOT Maintenance Forces are being proactive on these icing issues and addressing as well as they can when they come up.

Comment: Justin Elicker of New Haven Land Trust (NHLT) had several comments:

- Managing storm water is a priority and a consistent concern of NHLT members.
- Also, pedestrian-bike access along Whaley Avenue should be considered even if it is not directly associated with the tunnel.
- Are we leaning toward an option and what is the order of magnitude of costs?
- How do the two options impact the road configuration on either side of the tunnel, does the third tunnel affect properties?

Response: The following were the responses:

- As previously indicated, drainage will be addressed within the project limits.
- No comment on Pedestrian/Bike access outside limits of the project.
- It is too early in the process to identify a preferred alternative. Magnitude of costs is significant between the rehabilitation option (\$20M) and reconstruction options (\$200M).
- There would be limited impacts to the either the DOT facility or the West Rock Nature Facility south of Route 15 that is along the proposed alignments for the new tunnel barrel option.

Comment: Representative of the City of New Haven Parks Department:

- What are the traffic capacities that the project is being designed?
- What about traffic ADT...what is target?

Response: The following were the responses:

- A new tunnel barrel would be designed for current geometric standards. (12' lanes and 10' shoulders).
- This will be studied under the NEPA document (Environmental Assessment), but we need to consider levels of service and what issues could occur in future years.

Comment: A resident indicated that access to the tunnel is a problem, rear-end collisions in the tunnel or at its approaches happen once a week and there was a fatality last week.

Response: It was noted that tunnels have a psychological effect on drivers causing a slow-down when they approach the tunnel. Modern tunnel design considers this effect, and attempts to counteract it with wider lanes and better lighting. There are geometric issues as well.

Comment: What is schedule for reconstruction construction?

Response: It depends on the alternative chosen, but an alternative that calls for construction of a new tunnel barrel and rehabbing the existing barrels has estimated construction duration of about 4 ½ years. A new barrel is estimated to take about 2 years to construct, with the remaining time (2 ½ years) to rehabilitate or widen the existing barrels. The two durations would be consecutive. The rehabilitation option is cheapest but causes significant user costs associated with traffic delay.

Comment: Mike Piscitelli, City of New Haven Economic Development Department: Surprised by variation in costs. The scoping of the environmental document should consider a wide net so that we won't have to go back to the Environmental Assessment process because it wasn't scoped well initially.

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: Doug Hausladen – Director of New Haven Transportation, Traffic and Parking Department: CTDOT should consider a transit only street to improve permeability through the tunnel.

Response: We have not considered this, but it may be considered in the environmental documentation process.

Comment: Would it be feasible to put a bike path within the tunnel?

Response: It is not something that CTDOT and the project team have yet looked at, but could be considered in the environmental documentation phase.

Comment: Kathy Fay lives at Wintergreen Brook: Is CTDOT considering policies or recommendations of the Governor's Council on Climate Change? How would that affect travel demand, especially for single-occupant vehicles? How will the goals of other state agencies be coordinated under this project?

Response: These issues will be addressed to some extent in the NEPA/CEPA Documentation and the Alternative Analysis.

Comment: What about the bridge near Whaley Avenue?

Response: It is not part of the Heroes Tunnel Project, but proposed changes to Exit 59 currently being designed under another CTDOT project would be aligned or coordinated with this project.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.