

# REPORT OF MEETING

**PROJECT:** State Project No. 167-108 – Heroes Tunnel Environmental Document, Preliminary Design

**LOCATION OF MEETING:** Woodbridge CT Senior Center

**DATE OF MEETING:** September 22, 2016, 7:00 PM

**SUBJECT OF MEETING:** CTDOT Heroes Tunnel Public Scoping Meeting

**ATTENDEES (from the public):** See sign-up sheets (attached)

**ATTENDEES (from CTDOT and CDM Smith):**

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**TRANSACTIONS AND DETERMINATIONS:**

Dave Cutler presented overview of project, Joe Balskus followed up with project information and Dave Sousa presented CTDOT’s proposed program for public involvement.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION** (Note: Both questions/comments from the public and CTDOT staff responses are paraphrased; the following is not a transcription of the discussion). The presentation was followed up by this Q&A session (comments were also solicited through comment cards handed out to attendees):

1. What is the state of the liner of the tunnel?

CTDOT response: As far as we know it is in good shape and there is no issue with the steel frame structure of the tunnel.

2. Funding for the tunnel - will it be state or federal?

CTDOT response: Typically, 80% federal and 20% state match. The money is not obligated yet and CTDOT doesn't yet know what the costs will be.

3. Is the tunnel unsafe now?

CTDOT response: No, the poor condition rating is indicative of the deterioration of the concrete liner, however CTDOT is continually conducting maintenance repairs to maintain tunnel safety.

4. Will one option be to renovate the tunnel? How long would that take?

CTDOT response: It will take longer than commuters will want because all of the traffic studies we have done indicate that there will be unacceptable traffic back-ups and diversions onto local Streets. We are still trying to find a way to renovate the tunnel without major traffic implications.

5. Tunnel is in poor condition, what would have to happen to have it rated in very poor condition that would make it a safety hazard?

CTDOT response: There would have to be a major change in the condition of the tunnel that would cause serious injury to a motorist. A decrease in condition rating would be a result of something more significant than the water damage and miscellaneous falling of concrete that we are dealing with now.

6. What is the probability of that happening?

CTDOT response: I don't know if they made that determination but CTDOT is conducting routine biennial inspections along with special inspections just to make sure the deterioration is not advancing to the point where it would become a serious hazard.

7. This seems like a very extensive process (time and expense). How does this compare to the process used in 1949?

CTDOT response: There is no comparison because this is an operational tunnel and there is need for environmental reviews that were not as prevalent in 1949 as they are now. The National Environmental Policy Act came into effect in 1969.

8. Were there environmental impacts when the tunnel was originally built?

CTDOT response: Yes, I'm sure they were considering they did not have to comply with the environmental guidelines that we follow today.

9. Frank Leo (West River Watershed Coalition): I didn't hear the coalition or West River mentioned in the presentation. There is a drainage structure that is constantly getting clogged and filled with debris causing overflow from the parkway to end up in the river. How will drainage be mitigated with the new project? This is a very important issue because they are both flooding in that area and polluting the river. The state has not been maintaining the systems and there should be better filtration.

CTDOT response: CTDOT will use best management practices to control and treat the drainage water as to minimize pollution. We will incorporate this into our study and design.

10. Is the ventilation shaft still functional?

CTDOT response: No, the mechanics of the ventilation system are not functional and have not been for a number of years.

11. Frank Cochran (West River Watershed Coalition): The Coalition is comprised of a great number of organizations and has been active on the Exit 59 project. The draft stakeholder list did not include the Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection as stakeholders. The West River Watershed Coalition wants to be involved in the process and should have a member on the Community Advisory Committee.

CTDOT response: We do list the Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection and will most definitely be a major stakeholder. We will include the West River Watershed Coalition as the Community Advisory Committee is established.

12. Nancy: The Town is surveying people about development and greenways along Bradley Road, Litchfield Turnpike, and Amity Road with the possibility of adding an on-ramp to Route 15. Will this project be coordinated with the Exit 59 project?

CTDOT response: The tunnel project will be coordinated with both the short-term and long-term Exit 59 projects. They may be constructed at the same time. However, both projects have independent utility and could be constructed separately. There could be benefits to build them in a coordinated manner.

13. Nancy: Land on Bradley and Litchfield is owned by a private developer that could be constructing a new development called Woodbridge Village in close proximity to the tunnel project. Will CTDOT be reviewing the traffic to be generated by that proposed development?

CTDOT response: It is most likely going through the Office of the State Traffic Administration, where it would be reviewed and approved. This project will not be doing that.

14. Fred Cursin: There is sophisticated tunnel boring equipment that could build this tunnel quickly, will that be used here?

CTDOT response: The length of this tunnel is not conducive to that large scale equipment and would not be cost effective to use a tunnel boring machine. It would be more efficient to use controlled drilling and blasting.

15. Tom Eversold (volunteer trail maintenance): Trails in West Rock Park were built by CCC crews which would make them of historic significance. There is also a need to add the CT Forest and Park Association, the West Rock Ridge Park Association and the West Rock Ridge Park Advisory Council as stakeholders.

CTDOT response: This project is not likely to affect trails in the park but we can add those organizations to the stakeholder list.

16. Any knowledge of how many truckloads of rock needs to be removed?

CTDOT response: No, that quantity will be developed at a later stage. We will also quantify noise and emissions from construction. We expect that the excavation of the tunnel will progress at about 10 linear feet per day with the proposed cross section.

17. Has any consideration been given to the impact this will have on homes on Merritt, Miles, and Manila Avenues? During the construction of the original tunnel noise levels were unbearable and homes were damaged due to the blasting.

CTDOT response: New blasting techniques result in blasts with minimal vibrations. We will put the maximum allowable vibration within our blasting specification to ensure noise and vibrations are minimized. Blasting will occur only during the day and there should be no noticeable impacts. Noise impacts will be studied during the environmental review process.

18. Josh LeCar (City of New Haven): Some engineering staff in New Haven has asked about an option for a better connection for local street traffic through the tunnel if grade changes on the east side allow. Options that would enhance connections to trails in the park and local streets should be considered.

19. What do you do specifically or what can stakeholders do to ensure that the State is coordinating the three projects (the tunnel, Exit 59 interim work, and Exit 59 long-term work)?

CTDOT response: The Exit 59 project will build on the deficiency and needs study. The specific design of the tunnel project doesn't have a big bearing on the configuration of the interchange project because the acceleration lanes end in advance of the tunnel. The Exit 59 team is still in the scoping phase and will be meeting with Town of Woodbridge this fall. Communication among the two will be key. The projects will be on parallel paths and timeframes so that should enable better coordination.

20. Ellen Scalettar (Town of Woodbridge First Selectman): I am glad to see two project teams present tonight. However, I encourage you to include all three project teams (the tunnel, Exit 59 interim work, and Exit 59 long-term work) in the future as they will all have a large impact on the community.

CTDOT response: We will be more diligent to have all three project teams present for future meetings.

21. When the tunnel was built in 1948 a spring was buried and water has been seeping into the tunnel since. How will the new tunnel address that?

CTDOT response: CTDOT will pay particular attention to water influences and water protection measures.

22. Ms. Nixon: What about the re-routing of traffic for the interchange project? At one point we were told this will be a 30-year project. Then a year and a half ago at a meeting in New Haven, we were told a project was supposed to be started in 3 years. Why is the project now on track to be started in 5 years?

CTDOT response: During the Interchange 59 Deficiencies and Needs Study CTDOT heard clearly how important it is to address congestion in a shorter time frame, which is why an interim traffic improvement project was initiated that is scheduled to start in 2018. It will include auxiliary lanes on off-ramps and eliminate left turns out of Pond Lily Avenue, eliminating an entire signal phase to greatly enhance traffic flow. The larger interchange improvements are on the longer 5-year timeline. (resident follow-up statement: But a no-left on Pond Lilly will result in more diversions to Woodbridge).

23. Barbara: Please explain the structure of the existing tunnel.

CTDOT response: The existing structure has steel framing at intervals behind a concrete liner. Steel beams and steel supports or ribs are provided where the quality of the rock was bad. All steel is encased in concrete. Spacing of the steel members may be variable. The first 100 feet at both ends was built with cut and cover techniques. They did not have plastic waterproofing when the tunnel was built so water damage is an issue.

24. Archeological Survey: A dissertation was recently written about how there were Indian hunting grounds on the West Rock Ridge.

25. Tom Bouchard: It was mentioned that the structural steel parts are in good condition but the rebar is deteriorating. Can we see the structural steel parts and why are they not also deteriorating?

CTDOT response: Inspection with non-destructive imaging indicates that the steel ribs are not corroding because there is enough concrete cover over the structural steel, which is not the case with the rebar. The first 200 feet of the tunnel are in the worst condition due to freeze and thaw cycles. New tunnels are built for a life expectancy of 120 years but this tunnel was built to different standards and has exceeded its service life.

26. Fred Cursin: Is it true that before they decided to construct the tunnel, which they tried to blast a canyon from it and then decided to stop? If this is true wouldn't this destroy any Indian burial grounds that were there?

Response from Robert Cursin of the public: The dip in the hill above the tunnel is a natural low point where a possible Indian/deer trail was.

27. The West River Coalition would like to be a stakeholder and also be involved in protecting trails in the park.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Copy of Powerpoint Presentation
- Copy of Handout
- Copy of Comment Form
- Transcription of Written Comments Received at Meeting
- Copy of Attendance/Sign-In Sheet (General Public)

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