

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT and FINAL INDIVIDUAL SECTION 4f EVALUATION

Routes 7/15 Interchange Norwalk, Connecticut

State Project No. 102-358 Federal Project No. 0015(133)

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Regulations for Environmental Impact and Related Procedures 23 CFR Parts 771, 774 and 138, 42 United States Code (USC) 4332 (2)(c), 49 USC 303, and State of Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (General Statutes, Section 22a-1 through 22a-1h), FHWA gives notice that a joint Federal NEPA Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation and State CEPA Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the Routes 7 and 15 Interchange Project. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is undertaking this project; using federal funds provided by the FHWA.

Proposed Action

The Routes 7/15 Interchange Project involves improving connections between Routes 7 and 15 and the local roads in the City of Norwalk, Connecticut.

Overview of the Project Location

The Project is located in the northern portion of Norwalk at the interchange of Routes 7/15 (Interchange 39) and includes the interchange of Route 15 with Main Avenue (Interchange 40); Route 719 (Main Avenue); and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive in the vicinity of Main Avenue.

The proposed limits of construction (Project Site) extend along Route 15 from approximately 0.5 miles west of Route 7 to approximately 0.5 miles east of Main Avenue and along Route 7 from approximately 0.5 miles south to approximately 0.5 miles north of Route 15. The Project Site is illustrated in [Figure E1.1.1](#) of the Executive Summary (Appendix B) attached to this FONSI.

Route 15

The segment of Route 15 in which the Project is located is also known by its original name, the

Merritt Parkway. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significance in the areas of landscape design, transportation, and architecture. It is also designated as a National Scenic Byway and State Scenic Road. Within the Project Site, Route 15 carries traffic over Perry Avenue, Route 7, and Main Avenue, as well as the Norwalk River and Metro North Railroad. This portion of Route 15 includes four historic bridges that are contributing resources to the National Register listing. Also within the Project Site is the Glover Avenue Bridge, which has been determined to be individually eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Route 7

The segment of Route 7 in which the Project is located is a four-lane limited access expressway. Within the Project Site, Route 7 carries traffic over New Canaan Avenue (Route 123), over the Norwalk River, and under Route 15.

Existing Interchanges and Connections

Interchange 39 provides partial connections between Route 7 and Route 15. Interchange 40, a second nearby interchange, provides connections in all directions between Route 15 and Main Avenue. This interchange is located approximately 1,500 feet east of the Route 7 and Merritt Parkway interchange and the Norwalk River. On Route 7, Interchange 2 provides connections in all directions between Route 7 and Route 123.

Local Roadways

Main Avenue is currently a four-lane urban minor arterial that parallels Route 7 and the Norwalk River and extends north and south of the Routes 7/15 interchange. Main Avenue forms a skewed, five-legged signalized-intersection with Glover Avenue, Creeping Hemlock Drive, and the southbound Route 15 on-ramps. The southbound Route 15 off-ramp to southbound Main Avenue is also within the footprint of the intersection and provides STOP-controlled access onto southbound Main Avenue. There are also two other ramps providing access to and from Main Avenue from Route 15 and they are located approximately 300 feet east of the intersection via Creeping Hemlock Drive.

Glover Avenue is a two-lane local road that intersects with Main Avenue approximately 300 feet north of the Route 15. From its intersection with Main Avenue, Glover Avenue spans westward for 600 feet before making a 90 degree turn to the north and continuing nearly a mile before intersecting with Grist Mill Road.

Creeping Hemlock Drive also follows a roughly L-shaped alignment that intersects with Main Avenue. It proceeds eastward from Main Avenue for approximately 0.3 miles to an intersection with the southbound Route 15 ramps before continuing northward into the Creeping Hemlock neighborhood.

Project History and Prior Assessment

In the early 1990s a project to address deficiencies at the Routes 7/15 interchange was initiated and in 2000, the EA/EIE and FONSI was approved. In 2005, when the project was in the early stages of construction, the project was litigated, and work was stopped. In 2006, following a court ruling, the construction contract was cancelled when the court found the project's administrative record did not adequately document that avoidance, minimization and mitigation alternatives associated with impacts to resources within the project area had been fully analyzed.

Following the court's decision CTDOT reviewed the original design alternatives and assessed new alternatives. During this time, CTDOT formed and worked with a public stakeholder group which included representatives from neighboring residents and the lawsuit's lead plaintiff, the Merritt Parkway Conservancy. After reaching consensus with the stakeholder group on a new design alternative, CTDOT presented it in an open public forum in February 2009. The new design concept was well received by the greater public.

However, in 2013, CTDOT filed a letter with FHWA cancelling the project because of insufficient funding with the acknowledgment that if a future project were to be proposed, CTDOT would prepare new studies and a new EA/EIE.

The 2023 EA/EIE represents the new NEPA/CEPA document and presents new studies based on current conditions and evaluates the design concepts developed for the Routes 7/15 intersection from the mid-1990's through 2009 with Stakeholders and community members as well as a new design identified by current stakeholders.

Purpose and Need

The Purpose and Need statement was developed by CTDOT and FHWA with input from agencies, Stakeholders and community members. The Purpose of the Project is to:

- improve roadway system linkage between Route 7 and the Route 15 at Interchange 39;
- improve the mobility for vehicles at both the Route 15 interchanges at Route 7 and at Main Avenue (No. 39 & No. 40), and to improve the mobility for all users (motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists) along the immediate adjacent local roadway network (Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive, and;
- improve safety in the vicinity of these interchanges.

CTDOT and FHWA are proposing the Project to address deficiencies of the existing interchanges and streets in the vicinity of the interchanges. A description of the various Project Needs is as follows:

Roadway System Linkage

The existing Route 15 and Route 7 interchange configuration does not provide all connection between Route 7 and Route 15, specifically the following connections:

- Southbound Route 15 to northbound Route 7
- Southbound Route 15 to southbound Route 7
- Northbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15
- Southbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15

Existing roadway system linkage needs are depicted on Figure E1.1.3 in the attached Executive Summary. Existing connections along Route 15 at the interchanges with Route 7 and Main Avenue are depicted in green whereas connections not currently provided at the existing Routes 7/15 interchange are depicted in red.

Mobility - Vehicular

Interchange 39 currently provides partial connections between Route 7 and Route 15. Connections between Route 7 and Route 15 to and from the north are not provided.

Interchange 40, a second nearby interchange, provides connections in all directions between Route 15 and Main Avenue. However, connections between Route 7 and Main Avenue do not exist in the vicinity of Interchange 39 or Interchange 40.

Mobility – Other Users – (Bike/Pedestrian/Transit)

There are no bicycle facilities in the Project Site, and shoulder widths are less than one foot on Main Avenue. Sidewalks only exist in short, discontinuous segments along Main Avenue. Only one small roadway segment, along with Glover Avenue, is fully in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks within this area are missing and/or lacking safety features for visually or hearing-impaired pedestrians, reducing access and mobility for users with disabilities.

Safety

The existing Main Avenue and Route 15 Interchange ramps have substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes, steep changes in grade, sharp curves, and limited sight distance. These factors contribute to a high number of crashes.

Other Desirable Outcomes for the Project

The list below summarizes other desirable outcomes that were identified for consideration during the alternative analyses screening process, including the Project needs and input provided by stakeholders.

- Reduce congestion
- Provide long term serviceability of the affected roadways within the Project vicinity

- Optimize the value gained from public investment in the Project
- Integrate the Project roadways and landscape with the environment and neighborhood context.

Alternatives Evaluated in the EA/EIE

The alternatives analysis in the EA/EIE, is a two-level screening evaluation that used screening criteria based on the Purpose and Need. CTDOT and FHWA decided to evaluate the 24 alternatives previously presented in the 2000 EA/EIE as well as a new design alternative developed in 2021 and the No Build Alternative. These 26 alternatives were evaluated to ensure that the analysis of new and previous alternatives was based on current conditions.

All 26 alternatives underwent Level 1 screening to qualitatively evaluate the range of possible alternatives and differentiate between those that are reasonable and unreasonable. The results of the Level 1 screening identified four build alternatives (Alternatives 12A, 26, 20B and 21D) as meeting the Purpose and Need and together with the No Build alternative, advanced to Level 2 screening.

Level 2 screening was used to determine which of the alternatives best meet the other desirable outcomes identified for the Project. Based on the Level 2 screening, Alternatives 12A and 20B were eliminated from further consideration and Alternatives 26 and 21D were identified as reasonable and are evaluated along with the No Build Alternative in the EA/EIE.

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, no substantial improvements to the operation, linkages, and capacity of the existing interchanges would be performed nor would significant corridor landscape improvements occur beyond routine maintenance and/or spot safety improvements currently performed by CTDOT. The intersection and interchange geometry would remain as they currently exist within the Project Site.

While the No Build Alternative would avoid certain impacts, including direct impacts to archaeological resources, historic resources, and visual impacts, it would not accomplish the Project's Purpose and Need.

Build Alternatives

The two Build Alternatives, Alternatives 26 and 21D, address the Project's Purpose and Need and have a similar level of environmental impacts. However, analysis in the EA/EIE identified benefits and adverse effects that differ in type and magnitude between the Build Alternatives and were used to identify Alternative 26 as the Selected Alternative. The actions proposed by

Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 are discussed below followed by a comparison between Alternative 26 and Alternative 21D.

Alternative 21D

Alternative 21D would complete the connections at Interchange 39 with traffic movements between Route 7, Route 15, and Main Avenue. The existing Routes 7/15 interchange loop ramps would be retained in the easterly quadrants as would the direct connections in the westerly quadrants. The four remaining Routes 7/15 interchange movements would be achieved with semi-direct connections.

The dual historic Route 15 bridges (Bridge #00530 A & B) over Main Avenue (Interchange 40) would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. In addition, Main Avenue would be lowered to provide the required vertical bridge clearance. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the Project's purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened, and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four existing tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant of the Main Avenue interchange would allow for an eastbound weaving lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop ramp in the southeast quadrant of the Route 7 interchange.

In the westbound direction, the tight Route 15 exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant (to southbound Main Avenue) would be eliminated. Longer Route 15 ramp acceleration and deceleration lanes would also be provided. The westbound entrance ramp would be built between a recently constructed residential apartment building and Route 15. As currently conceived, the new ramps would be at or below the elevation of Route 15.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, this alternative would require the construction of eleven new bridges and modifications or replacements of three existing bridges

for expanded roadways and/or ramps. This includes replacement of two historic bridges (Route 15 over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River).

Alternative 26, The Selected Alternative

Alternative 26 will complete the connections at Interchange 39 with traffic movements between Route 7, Route 15, and Main Avenue. This alternative will introduce two signalized intersections along Route 7 to complete the partial interchange. A modified diamond interchange with Route 15 will retain the existing loop ramp in the northeast quadrant and the existing direct connector ramp in the southwest quadrant to optimize traffic operations at the two signalized intersections.

The loop ramp in the northeast quadrant would be reduced in size from the existing larger ramp, a change made possible by slower speeds on the reclassified Route 7 from a freeway to a signalized arterial. Three northbound and three southbound lanes would be necessary at the signalized Route 7 ramp intersections, with turn lanes at each Route 7 intersection approach. No powerline tower relocations are required for Alternative 26.

The dual historic Route 15 bridges (Bridge #00530 A & B) over Main Avenue (Interchange 40) would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. In addition, Main Avenue would be lowered to provide the required vertical bridge clearance. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the Project's Purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened, and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four existing tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant of the Main Avenue interchange would allow for an eastbound weaving lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop ramp in the southeast quadrant of the Route 7 interchange. In the westbound direction, the tight Route 15 exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant would be eliminated. To avoid further weaving on the westbound Merritt Parkway for the southbound Main Avenue movement, an independent ramp would be located between the westbound weaving lane and the new residential building to the north.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, Alternative 26 would require the construction of four new bridges and the replacement of two existing historic bridges (Route 15 over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River) to incorporate new or widened roadways or ramps.

Comparative Analysis for Alternative 26 and Alternative 21D

Both Alternative 26 and Alternative 21D would complete the connections at Interchange 39 with traffic movements between Route 7, Route 15, and Main Avenue. However, the footprint for Alternative 21D is larger than Alternative 26 and would require the relocation of several towers of power lines, the construction of eleven new bridges and modifications or replacements of three existing bridges for expanded roadways and/or ramps.

Alternative 26 would require the construction of four new bridges. Both Alternative 21D and 26 would require the replacement of the dual historic Route 15 bridges (Bridge #00530 A & B) over Main Avenue (Interchange 40).

Between Alternatives 21D and 26, the analysis shows that there would be no or minimal difference in impacts associated with traffic, bicycles and pedestrians, air quality, noise, rare, threatened and endangered species, groundwater, surface water, floodplain, hazardous material, climate change and resiliency, and environmental justice.

Overall, the comparison shows that Alternative 26 has substantial advantages and fewer impacts over Alternative 21D, including:

- Notably fewer impacts to wetland resources in terms of the number, total area, and linear feet of wetlands and streams impacted compared to Alternative 21D.
- Less impact to wildlife habitat and less increase in impervious cover within the watershed.
- Fewer ramps and bridges and thus more modestly scaled and more in keeping with the context of the Parkway than Alternative 21D.
- Greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems of the Merritt Parkway landscape, integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities, by virtue of its compact footprint of built elements.
- Preliminary capital construction cost estimates are approximately \$109 million for

Alternative 26 compared to \$207 million for Alternative 21D. In addition, a Benefit-Cost Analysis found that Alternative 26 is projected to yield the greatest multiple of benefits to costs with a benefit/cost ratio of 3.89 (more beneficial) whereas Alternative 21D is projected to yield a ratio of 2.37 (less beneficial).

While Alternative 26 has advantages over Alternative 21D, Alternative 26 is anticipated to pose an adverse effect on two of the three archaeological sites in the project area while Alternative 21D would not impact any of the archaeological sites. This adverse effect requires commitments to reduce this impact. Below is a summary of the impacts and mitigation commitments that will be implemented for Alternative 26.

Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation Commitments

The various environmental impacts and analysis associated with this project are described in detail in the EA/EIE. A summary of the environmental impact analysis associated with the project actions are shown on Table E.1.1.1 in the attached Executive Summary. As shown, the EA/EIE assessed the impacts and benefits to the following resources:

- Traffic
- Bicycles and Pedestrians
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise
- Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species
- Wetlands
- Groundwater
- Surface Water
- Floodplains
- Historic and Archaeological Resources
- Visual Impacts
- Merritt Parkway Landscape (Scenic Byway)
- Hazardous Materials
- Climate Change and Resiliency
- Environmental Justice

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated from the proposed action, and the following brief summary of impacts and mitigation commitments supports the decision to issue a FONSI. Furthermore, since circulation of the EA/EIE, no new impacts have been identified. A full list of mitigation commitments is listed in Chapter 7.0 of the EA/EIE.

Traffic

Although a total of 10 locations are projected to be deficient during the weekday morning peak hour and 8 locations are projected to be deficient during the weekday evening peak hour, no significant impacts have been identified. The proposed action is projected to provide improvements to traffic operations and safety in the traffic study area, therefore no mitigation is required.

Bicycles and Pedestrians

Proposed improvements would benefit bicyclists and pedestrians by improving existing connections, adding new connections, and enhancing the safety of this segment for the public. No mitigation is required. CTDOT will continue to coordinate with the community regarding opportunities for improved bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

With the exception of short-term temporary impacts resulting from construction activities, the project would reduce air pollutant, Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT), and GHG Emissions. All temporary impacts during construction will be minimized according to CTDOT's Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction.

Noise

Highway traffic noise would not substantially increase at any of the evaluated receptors. Although the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered reasonable or feasible. No mitigation is proposed. Any temporary construction related noise impacts will be short term and subject to the requirements for minimization and limits in CTDOT's Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges and Incidental Construction (Form 818).

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) Species

Minimal impacts on RTE species are anticipated as result of the project. Federally listed RTE species are not anticipated to occur within the project site as confirmed by field surveys.

Erosion and sediment control measures will be installed as part of the project to minimize runoff to water and wetland resource areas, including the Norwalk River and other streams within the project site. In accordance with the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for the Project, appropriate construction sequencing and water handling methods, including maintaining fish passage, will be followed. Time of year restrictions (no unconfined in-stream work between April 1 and June 30) may be required as part of the permitting process for activities during construction to avoid and minimize impacts to anadromous fish runs in the Norwalk River.

As project design progresses, Essential Fish Habitat coordination and Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation will be conducted, and the Natural Diversity Data Base and Information for Planning and Consultation continually monitored for new or updated listing of species.

Wetlands

The project will result in permanent impacts to approximately 1.4 acres of wetlands, 40 linear feet of intermittent streams, and 410 linear feet of perennial streams. Permanent impacts to the Norwalk River are not expected. Impacts to wetlands and watercourses will be avoided and minimized during design. Any mitigation needs following those avoidance measures would be identified and agreed upon in conjunction with the appropriate regulatory agencies, including ACOE and CTDEEP.

Groundwater

A portion of the project is located within the Kellogg-Deering Aquifer Protection Area (APA), however no new potential pollutant sources will be created by the project. Certain potential construction activities, including storage of hazardous materials and petroleum products, may be necessary onsite. Norwalk first Taxing District would be consulted to provide specific source protection recommendations. Construction would be conducted in accordance with the Department of Public Health's "General Construction Best Management Practices for Sites within a Public Drinking Water Supply Area". Potential groundwater pollutants during construction would be managed per Norwalk First Taxing District and Department of Public Health guidance. During operation, no new contamination sources would be added, and no mitigation would be required.

Stormwater

Impacts could occur during construction due to soil disturbance, earth moving, and equipment use, including sedimentation and silt. Post-construction impacts could occur due to increased impervious surface areas or concentrated flows. The Project design would be in accordance with the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from CTDOT Separate Stormwater Discharge Systems (TS4) to the maximum extent practicable to mitigate any potential increases to current impairments (sedimentation/siltation) identified on the 303(d) list for the segment of the Norwalk River that traverses the Project area (ID CT7300-00_01). Additionally, the project would incorporate the requirements of the Construction Stormwater General Permit due to siltation/sedimentation impairment. Currently CTDOT does not have an overall watershed plan as part of their MS4 program, though they are progressing with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to model their overall system to identify where specific retrofit projects are most effective. However, CTDOT does have requirements for individual construction project to use

Best Management Practices to reduce pollutants of concern which would be incorporated in the Project.

Floodplains

The project would have minimal impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote floodplain development. The project would comply with floodplain standards; therefore, no mitigation is required.

Historic and Archaeological Resources

Based on the current level of design, the proposed project is anticipated to pose an adverse effect on two of the three archaeological sites that were recommended as potentially NRHP-eligible under Criterion D following Phase II testing, as well as the Metro-North Bridge, Norwalk River Bridge, Main Avenue Bridge, Glover Avenue Bridge, and the Merritt Parkway Historic District. To mitigate these effects, Section 106 consultation has occurred, and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to resolve any adverse effect has been executed among FHWA, CTSHP, CTDOT, and the Advisory Council on Historic Properties (ACHP). Under the MOA, CTDOT has agreed to continue consultation on project design and the development of an archaeological data recovery plan for implementation at sites that cannot be avoided by construction. The existing Glover Avenue bridge will be documented to HAER Standards and CTDOT will develop a web based “story map” highlighting the history, development, and important aspects of the Merritt Parkway intended for public use in conjunction with the Merritt Parkway Conservancy’s online Merritt Parkway Museum.

Visual and Merritt Parkway Scenic Landscape

The Section 106 MOA includes stipulations for minimizing the impacts on the Merritt Parkway’s landscape features and for providing context-sensitive design for the new bridges that would replace the Main Avenue Bridge and the Glover Avenue Bridge. The MOA includes stipulations to provide Consulting and Concurring parties including members of the PAC Landscape Subcommittee with the opportunity to review design plans at the thirty (30), sixty (60), 90 (ninety) percent and final design plans for 30 (thirty) days on the landscape design components and design of the Parkway and for replacement of the Main Avenue Bridge and the Glover Avenue Bridge. The form, scale and materials of the will be evaluated in their ability to complement the established aesthetic of the Merritt Parkway Historic District. CTDOT and FHWA will consider all comments as the design progresses. To the degree possible, CTDOT will follow the guidelines in “Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines” (March 2020).

Hazardous Materials

No impacts associated with hazardous materials were identified. If contamination is encountered within the construction area, CTDOT's Office of Environmental Compliance (OEC) would ensure that proper procedures are followed with respect to handling and disposal of materials and – if required – remediation.

Climate Change and Resiliency

Based on the highest sea level scenarios for 2050, the Routes 7/15 interchange is located outside the inundation zones and therefore would not be directly affected by the projected sea level rise. The new structures would be designed based on more recent storm models/rainfall intensities and make the interchange more resilient to climate change-induced storm events.

Environmental Justice

Potential construction period mitigation measures will include the optimization of construction phasing to minimize disruptions to multi-modal traffic, the establishment of haul routes and staging areas, identification of permissible hours of work, ongoing coordination with neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and transit providers within the study area, and the use of temporary traffic control devices to direct traffic and assist with pedestrian crossings.

Timely project updates to neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and transit providers would be provided to help residents, business owners, and commuters prepare and adjust to temporary construction activities, potential changes in vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit traffic patterns and access. Continued care would be taken to provide notices directly to Main Avenue businesses that serve the EJ community and through local media typically accessed by residents in the study area.

Outreach

As detailed in the EA/EIE, throughout the planning and environmental review phases of the project, FHWA and CTDOT provided extensive public involvement and agency coordination opportunities. There were 8 PAC meetings, 1 Public Scoping Meeting, 1 Public Informational Meeting, and 33 stakeholder meetings. A Notice of Availability/Notice of the Public Hearing (NOA) for the EA/EIE was published in the Environmental Monitor on July 18, 2023, to initiate a 45-day public comment period, which ended on August 31, 2023. The NOA was also mailed to all interested parties on July 18, 2023. The NOA for the EA/EIE in the form of a Legal Notice was also published in the following periodicals:

The Norwalk Hour

July 19, 2023

July 26, 2023

August 2, 2023

La Voz Hispana de Connecticut (Spanish)

July 20, 2023

July 27, 2023

August 3, 2023

Public notices, including the NOA and the Interested Party Mailing list are included in Appendix C.

The EA/EIE was made available to the public at the following locations:

- Connecticut Department of Transportation Headquarters on 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131,
- FHWA Connecticut Division Office 450 Main Street, Suite 612, Hartford, CT 06106,
- Connecticut State Library, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06103,
- Norwalk City Hall, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851,
- Norwalk Public Library, Main Branch, 1 Belden Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06850,
- Norwalk City Library South Norwalk Branch, 10 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06854,
- Western Connecticut Council of Governments, 1 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT 06482
- Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) website:
www.ct.gov/environmentaldocumentshttp://7-15norwalk.com/
- Route 7/15 Interchange Project Website: <http://7-15norwalk.com>

A Public Hearing was held on August 16, 2023, at 6:00pm in the Community Room at Norwalk City Hall, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851. A transcript of the public hearing is included as Appendix E.

Written comments were accepted at the public meeting, by email at comments@7-15norwalk.com or mailed on or before August 31, 2023, to the attention of Mr. Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director, Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131. Language assistance was also provided by contacting CTDOT's Language Assistance Call Line at (860) 694-2109, however, no such requests were made.

Public Comments received on the EA/EIE and responses are attached to this FONSI as Appendix D.

An Errata Sheet is included as Appendix A to outline minor edits to be reflected in the EA since the time it was circulated for public review.

Section 4(f) Finding

Based upon the Section 4(f) Evaluation for the NRHP-listed Merritt Parkway Historic District, and in accordance with 23 CFR §774.3(a), FHWA has concluded that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the proposed use of the Merritt Parkway Historic District, including a contributing component (the Main Avenue Bridge), and that the proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) resource (the Merritt Parkway Historic District and its contributing components) resulting from such use. The draft Section 4(f) documentation was provided to the Department of Interior (DOI) for a mandatory 45-day review comment period; however, no comments were received.

Based on the Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for the NRHP-eligible Glover Avenue Bridge, and the results of public and agency consultation, as evidenced by the attachments hereto, the FHWA has determined that:

- This component of the project meets the applicability criteria set forth in the Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges dated July 5, 1983.
- All the alternatives set forth in the Findings section of the Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation have been fully evaluated. Based on those Findings, it is determined that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of Bridge No. 04155 (Glover Avenue over the Norwalk River) in the town of Norwalk.
- This component of the project complies with the Measures to Minimize Harm Section of the Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation; the Section 106 process has been completed and agreement among the FHWA, CTSHPO, and CTDOT has been reached.

The Section 4(f) documentation is included in Appendix F.

National Environmental Policy Act Finding

The FHWA has determined that Alternative 26 will have no significant impact on the human Environment. This FONSI is based on the EA/EIE which has been independently evaluated by FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the Purpose and Need, environmental impacts of the project and appropriate mitigation measures. FHWA has

reviewed all comments received during the public comment period and provided responses to substantive comments.

Pursuant to 23 CFR 771.121, FHWA finds that the Routes 7 and 15 Interchange project, as proposed, will result in no significant impact on the environment. The record provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA which is incorporated by reference to this FONSI.

DAVID W NARDONE Digitally signed by DAVID W NARDONE
Date: 2024.07.31 11:53:49 -04'00'

Date

David Nardone
Acting Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

APPENDIX A

ERRATA SHEET

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT

ERRATA SHEET

Environmental Assessment/ Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation/ Environmental Impact Evaluation

Route 7/15 Interchange Project – Norwalk, Connecticut

State Project No. 102-358 | Federal Project No. 0015(133)

1. Section 3.4.3 Noise Mitigation Measures

Delete the last sentence: “CTDOT’s final recommendation regarding noise abatement would be made during the project’s final design and public involvement process.

Add the language: If the scope of the project changes during the Final Design Phase, CTDOT’s Office of Environmental Planning will review any changes to determine if the Noise Analysis will require re-evaluation.

2. Section 7.0 Environmental Commitments and Mitigation – Page 7.1

In the Commitments Section for Noise :

Delete the statement: Incorporate CTDOT’s final recommendation regarding noise abatement in final design.

Insert: As currently proposed, there are no abatement measures that have been determined to be reasonable or feasible. If the scope of the project changes during the Final Design Phase, CTDOT’s Office of Environmental Planning will review any changes to determine if the Noise Analysis will require re-evaluation.

3. Table 5.2.1 State, Tribal and Federal Agencies

The table does not include the Stockbridge-Munsee Community (SMC) under “Mandatory Section 106 Consulting Parties.” However, please note that the SMC expanded their area of interest to include the project area after the EA/EIE was published. Because of this, FHWA formally consulted with the SMC in FHWA 2024 and provided their Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) with a copy of the MOA for comment. The SMC had no comments; however, the MOA was revised to include a record of this consultation and was recirculated to the Signatories and Concurring Parties.

APPENDIX B

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT



Executive Summary

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to construct improvements to the US Route 7 (Route 7) and State Route 15 (Route 15) interchange (Routes 7/15) and to improve interconnections with local roads in the City of Norwalk (Norwalk), Connecticut (Project).

E-1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECT SITE

The Project is located in the northern portion of Norwalk at the interchange of Routes 7/15 (Interchange 39) and includes the interchange of Route 15 with Main Avenue (Interchange 40); Route 719 (Main Avenue); and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive in the vicinity of Main Avenue. The proposed limits of construction (Project Site) extends along Route 15 from approximately 0.5 miles west of Route 7 to approximately 0.5 miles east of Main Avenue and along Route 7 from approximately 0.5 miles south to approximately 0.5 miles north of Route 15. The Project Site is illustrated in Figure E1.1.1.

Route 15

The segment of Route 15 in which the Project is located is also known by its original name, the Merritt Parkway. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significance in the areas of landscape design, transportation and architecture. It is also designated as a National Scenic Byway and State Scenic Road. Within the Project Site, Route 15 carries traffic over Perry Avenue, Route 7 and Main Avenue, as well as the Norwalk River and Metro North Railroad. This portion of Route 15 includes four historic bridges that are contributing resources to the National Register listing. Also within the Project Site is the Glover Avenue Bridge, which has been determined to be individually eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Route 7

The segment of Route 7 in which the Project is located is a four-lane limited access expressway. Within the Project Site, Route 7 carries traffic over New Canaan Avenue (Route 123), over the Norwalk River, and under Route 15.

Existing Interchanges

Interchange 39 provides partial connections between Route 7 and Route 15. Interchange 40, a second nearby interchange, provides connections in all directions between Route 15 and Main Avenue. This interchange is located approximately 1,500 feet east of the Route 7 and Merritt Parkway interchange and the Norwalk River. On Route 7, Interchange 2 provides connections in all directions between Route 7 and Route 123.



Figure E1.1.1 Project Site



Local Roadways

Main Avenue is currently a four-lane urban minor arterial that parallels Route 7 and the Norwalk River and extends north and south of the Routes 7/15 interchange. Main Avenue forms a skewed, five-legged signalized-intersection with Glover Avenue, Creeping Hemlock Drive, and the southbound Route 15 on-ramps. The southbound Route 15 off-ramp to southbound Main Avenue is also within the footprint of the intersection and provides STOP-controlled access onto southbound Main Avenue. There are also two other ramps providing access to and from Main Avenue from Route 15 and they are located approximately 300 feet east of the intersection via Creeping Hemlock Drive (Figure E1.1.2).



Figure E1.1.2 Route 15 / Main Avenue Interchange

Glover Avenue is a two-lane local road that intersects with Main Avenue approximately 300 feet north of the Route 15. From its intersection with Main Avenue, Glover Avenue spans westward for 600 feet before making a 90 degree turn to the north and continuing nearly a mile before intersecting with Grist Mill Road.

Creeping Hemlock Drive also follows a roughly L-shaped alignment that intersects with Main Avenue. It proceeds eastward from Main Avenue for approximately 0.3 miles to an intersection with the southbound Route 15 ramps before continuing northward into the Creeping Hemlock neighborhood.

E-2 PROJECT HISTORY AND PRIOR ASSESSMENT

A brief history of prior assessments of the Routes 7/15 interchange is summarized here in order to provide context for the alternatives assessed as part of this Environmental Assessment/



Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE).

In the early 1990s a project to address deficiencies at the Routes 7/15 interchange was initiated and in 2000, the EA/EIE was approved. In 2005, when the project was in the early stages of construction, litigation of the project resulted in a stoppage of work. In 2006, following a court ruling, the construction contract was cancelled when the court found the project's administrative record did not adequately document that avoidance, minimization and mitigation alternatives associated with impacts to resources within the project area had been fully analyzed.

Following the court's decision and resultant construction cancellation, CTDOT undertook a review of the original design alternatives and assessed new alternatives. During this time, CTDOT formed and worked with a public stakeholder group which included representatives from neighboring residents and the lawsuit's lead plaintiff, the Merritt Parkway Conservancy (MPC). After reaching consensus with the stakeholder group on a new design alternative, CTDOT presented it in an open public forum in February 2009. The new design concept was well received by the greater public.

At that time, there was not sufficient funding available for reinitiating the project, but it was anticipated that the strategic plan of the state's transportation system would continue to identify this infrastructure investment as a future need. The Department filed a letter with FHWA cancelling the project and its associated Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI) in 2013.¹ It was acknowledged that if a future project were to be undertaken, CTDOT would prepare new studies based on current needs and deficiencies and a new National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review would be conducted.

This 2021 EA/EIE represents the new NEPA document and presents the new studies required for the reinitiated Route 7/Route 15 interchange project. The 2009 community endorsed alternative was evaluated and screened during the current Project's scoping process and is identified as Alternative 21D in this EA/EIE.

E-3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Project is to:

- improve roadway system linkage between Route 7 and Route 15 at Interchange 39;
- improve the mobility for vehicles at both the Route 15 interchanges at Route 7 and at Main Avenue (No. 39 & No. 40), and to improve the mobility for all users (motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists) along the immediate adjacent local roadway network (Main

¹ Timothy Sullivan (CTDOT) letter to Amy Jackson Grove (FWHA), *Notice of Intent to Cancel NEPA and Close Project Accounts, State Project Nos. 102-269/312, FAP No. 0007(117) Routes 7/15 Norwalk*, dated November 6, 2013.



Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive, and;

- improve safety in the vicinity of these interchanges.

CTDOT and FHWA are proposing the Project to address deficiencies of the existing interchanges and streets in the vicinity of the interchanges. A description of the various Project Needs is below.

Roadway System Linkage

The existing Route 15 and Route 7 Interchange configuration does not provide all connections between Route 7 and Route 15, specifically the following connections:

- Southbound ² Route 15 to northbound Route 7
- Southbound Route 15 to southbound Route 7
- Northbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15
- Southbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15

Note: **Green** arrows indicate existing connections along Route 15 at the interchanges, whereas **red dashed** arrows indicate connections not currently provided at the existing Route 15 and Route 7 interchange.

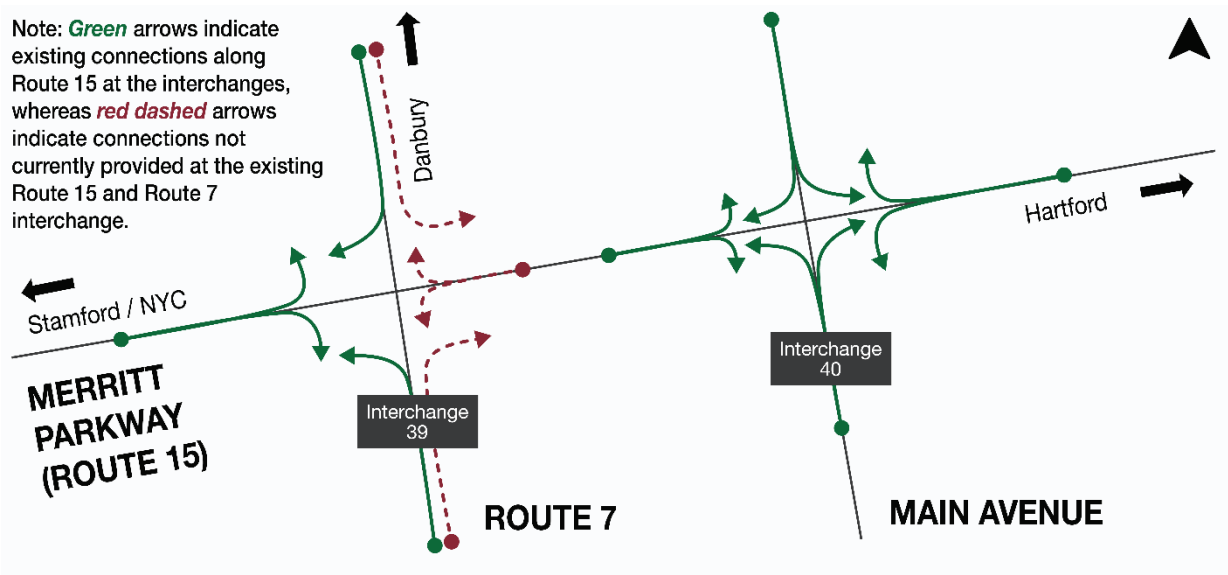


Figure E1.1.3 Existing Needs (Roadway System Linkage)

Existing roadway system linkage needs are depicted in Figure E1.1.3. Existing connections along Route 15 at the interchanges with Route 7 and Main Avenue are depicted in green whereas connections not currently provided at the existing Routes 7/15 interchange are depicted in red.

² Route 15 runs generally southwest to northeast. By convention, Route 15 directions are referred to as “northbound” (northeast) and “southbound” (southwest).



Mobility - Vehicular

Interchange 39 currently provides partial connections between Route 7 and Route 15. Connections between Route 7 and Route 15 to and from the north are not provided.

Interchange 40, a second nearby interchange, provides connections in all directions between Route 15 and Main Avenue. However, connections between Route 7 and Main Avenue do not exist in the vicinity of Interchange 39 or Interchange 40.

Mobility – Other Users – (Bike/Pedestrian/Transit)

There are no bicycle facilities in the Project Site, and shoulder widths are less than one foot on Main Avenue. Sidewalks only exist in short, discontinuous segments along Main Avenue. Only one small roadway segment, along with Glover Avenue, is fully in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks within this area are missing and/or lacking safety features for visually or hearing-impaired pedestrians, reducing access and mobility for users with disabilities.

Safety

The existing Main Avenue and Route 15 Interchange ramps have substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes, steep changes in grade, sharp curves, and limited sight distance. These factors contribute to a high number of crashes.

Other Desirable Outcomes for the Project

The list below summarizes other desirable outcomes that were identified for consideration during the alternative analyses screening process, including the Project needs and input provided by stakeholders.

- Reduce congestion
- Provide long term serviceability of the affected roadways within the Project vicinity
- Optimize the value gained from public investment in the Project
- Integrate the Project roadways and landscape with the environment and neighborhood context.

E-4 ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This section describes the reasonable alternatives identified for assessment in this EA/EIE.

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, no substantial improvements to the operation, linkages, and capacity of the existing interchanges would be performed nor would significant corridor landscape improvements occur beyond routine maintenance and/or spot safety improvements currently performed by CTDOT. The intersection and interchange geometry would remain as they currently exist within the Project Site (Figure E1.1.4).

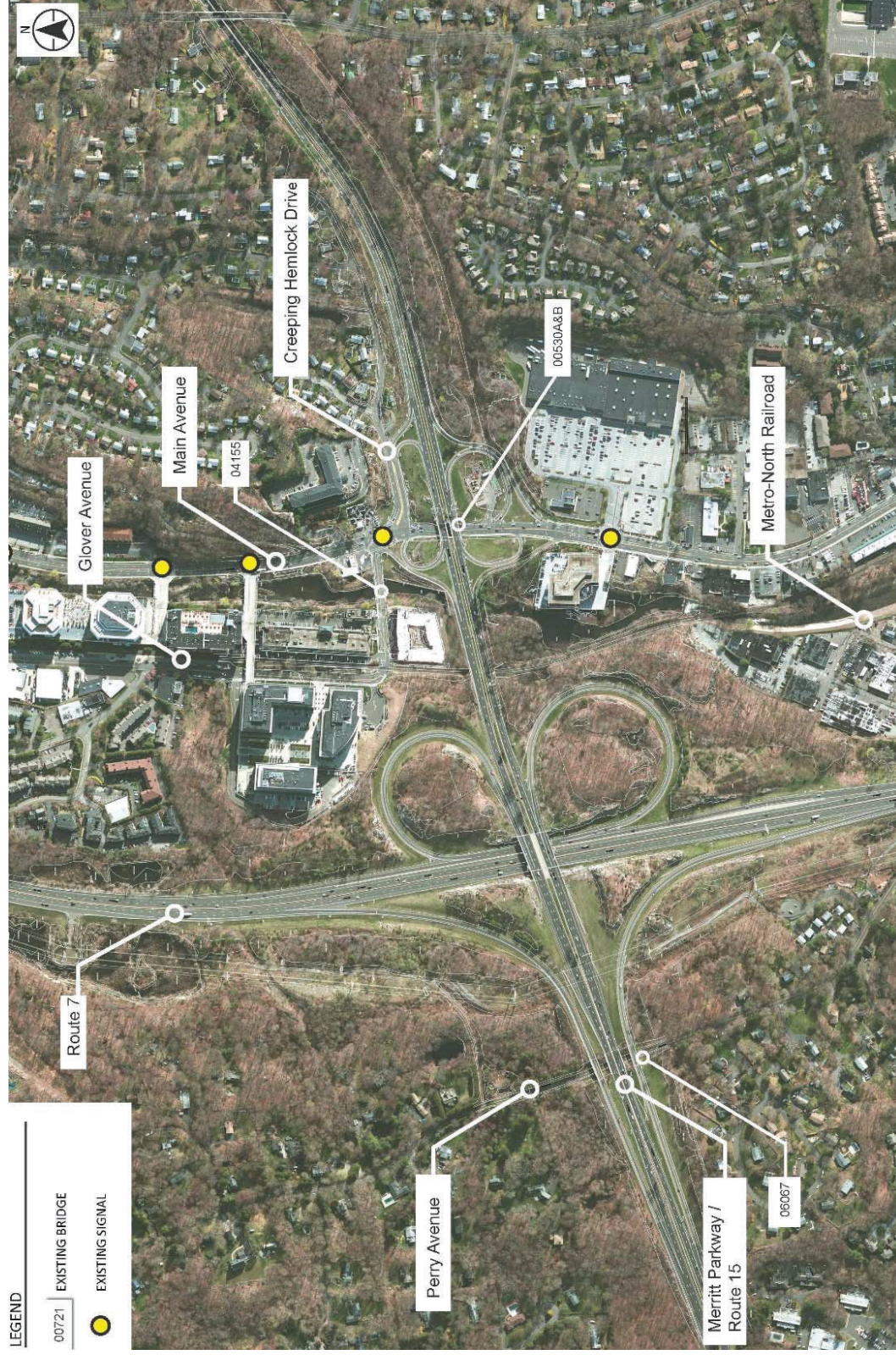


Figure E1.1.4 No Build Alternative (Existing Conditions)



Alternative 26

Alternative 26 would complete the connections at Interchange 39 with traffic movements between Route 7, Route 15, and Main Avenue (Figure 1.1.5). This alternative would introduce two signalized intersections along Route 7 to complete the partial interchange. A modified diamond interchange with Route 15 would retain the existing loop ramp in the northeast quadrant and the existing direct connector ramp in the southwest quadrant to optimize traffic operations at the two signalized intersections.

The loop ramp in the northeast quadrant would be reduced in size from the existing larger ramp, a change made possible by slower speeds on the reclassified Route 7 from a freeway to a signalized arterial. Three northbound and three southbound lanes would be necessary at the signalized Route 7 ramp intersections, with turn lanes at each Route 7 intersection approach. No powerline tower relocations are required for Alternative 26.

The dual historic Route 15 bridges (Bridge #00530 A & B) over Main Avenue (Interchange 40) would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. In addition, Main Avenue would be lowered to provide the required vertical bridge clearance. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the Project's purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened, and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four existing tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant of the Main Avenue interchange would allow for an eastbound weaving lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop ramp in the southeast quadrant of the Route 7 interchange. In the westbound direction, the tight Route 15 exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant would be eliminated. To avoid further weaving on the westbound Merritt Parkway for the southbound Main Avenue movement, an independent ramp would be located between the westbound weaving lane and the new residential building to the north.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, Alternative 26 would require the construction of four new bridges and the replacement of two existing historic bridges (Route 15 over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River) to incorporate new or widened roadways or ramps.

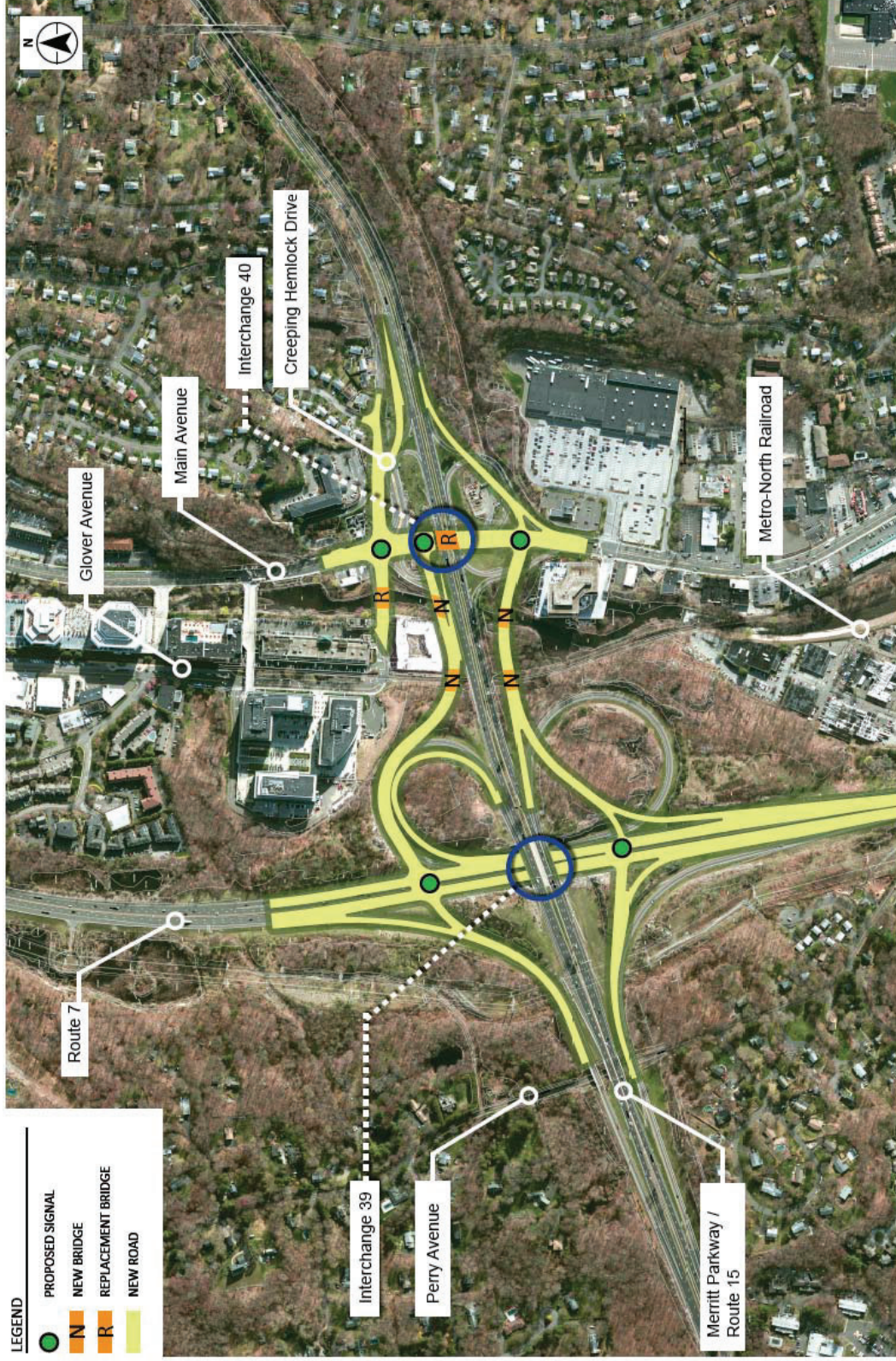


Figure 1.1.5 Alternative 26



Alternative 21D

Alternative 21D would complete the connections at Interchange 39 with traffic movements between Route 7, Route 15, and Main Avenue (Figure E1.1.6). The existing Routes 7/15 interchange loop ramps would be retained in the easterly quadrants as would the direct connections in the westerly quadrants. The four remaining Routes 7/15 interchange movements would be achieved with semi-direct connections. Several towers of a power line may require relocation.

The dual historic Route 15 bridges (Bridge #00530 A & B) over Main Avenue (Interchange 40) would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. In addition, Main Avenue would be lowered to provide the required vertical bridge clearance. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the Project's purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened, and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four existing tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant of the Main Avenue interchange would allow for an eastbound weaving lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop ramp in the southeast quadrant of the Route 7 interchange.

In the westbound direction, the tight Route 15 exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant (to southbound Main Avenue) would be eliminated. Longer Route 15 ramp acceleration and deceleration lanes would also be provided. The westbound entrance ramp would be built between a recently constructed residential apartment building and Route 15. As currently conceived, the new ramps would be at or below the elevation of Route 15.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, this alternative would require the construction of eleven new bridges and modifications or replacements of three existing bridges for expanded roadways and/or ramps. This includes replacement of two historic bridges (Route 15 over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River).

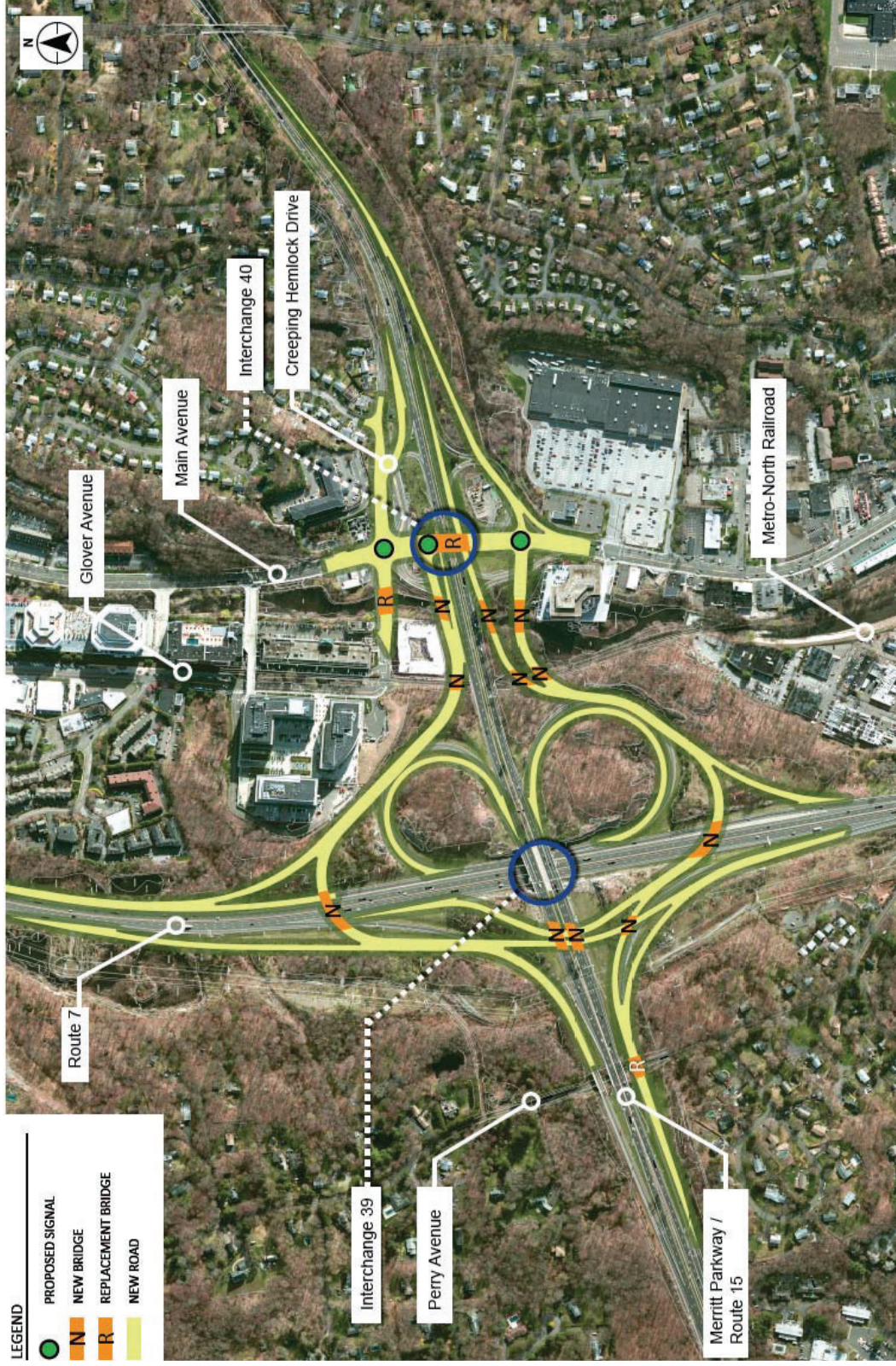


Figure E1.1.6 Alternative 21D



PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In evaluating each alternative, CTDOT and FHWA considered the Project's purpose and need, engineering complexities, constructability, estimated construction and maintenance costs, and potential environmental impacts. In consideration of comments solicited from the public and input from the Project's Project Advisory Committee (PAC) on screening criteria and assessments, CTDOT and FHWA have identified **Alternative 26** as the preferred alternative. As described throughout this document and summarized below, this alternative best addresses the Project's purpose and need while minimizing the environmental impacts.

No Build Alternative

While the No Build Alternative would avoid impacts, including direct impacts to archaeological resources and visual and historical resources, it would not meet the Project's purpose and need, and would not accomplish the other desirable outcomes identified for the Project as described in Section E-3.

Build Alternatives

Alternatives 26 and 21D would both address the Project needs and have similar level of environmental impacts. However, this EA/EIE has identified benefits and adverse effects that differ in type and magnitude between the Build Alternatives and which provide a basis to select a Preferred Alternative.

Based on the current conceptual design, Alternative 26 would impact two of three archaeological sites that were recommended as NRHP-eligible in Phase II testing, however, data recovery may be utilized at sites that cannot be avoided by construction. Alternative 21D would not impact any of the three archaeological sites.

Alternative 26 has substantial advantages over Alternative 21D, including:

- Notably fewer impacts to wetland resources in terms of the number, total area, and linear feet of wetlands and streams impacted compared to Alternative 21D.
- Less impact to wildlife habitat and less increase in impervious cover within the watershed.
- Fewer ramps and bridges and thus more modestly scaled and more in keeping with the context of the Parkway than Alternative 21D.
- Greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems of the Merritt Parkway landscape, integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities, by virtue of its compact footprint of built elements.
- Preliminary capital construction cost estimates are approximately \$109 million for Alternative 26 compared to \$207 million for Alternative 21D. In addition, a Benefit-Cost



Analysis found that Alternative 26 is projected to yield the greatest multiple of benefits to costs with a benefit/cost ratio of 3.89 (more beneficial) whereas Alternative 21D is projected to yield a ratio of 2.37 (less beneficial).

In summary, Alternative 26 would meet the goals with substantial advantages compared to Alternative 21D. Although impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated with Alternative 26, methods to mitigate those impacts have been identified. Therefore Alternative 26 has been identified as the Preferred Alternative.

E-5 PROJECT IMPACTS

Environmental resources/factors evaluated and potentially affected by the Project in this EA/EIE are listed in Table E1.1.1, together with anticipated actions, potential benefits or impacts to these resources, and proposed mitigation measures for adverse effects.



Table E1.1.1 Benefits and Impacts of Project Actions

Resource	Project Build Actions	21D Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation	26 Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation	No Build Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation
Traffic	Removal of bridges/ramps, construction of new ramps/bridges, modified lane widths and signals	10 locations would operate below an acceptable Level of Service (LOS) during the AM peak hour and 9 locations below an acceptable LOS during the PM peak hour. Safety issues would be addressed. Redesigned ramps would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes.	10 locations would operate below an acceptable LOS during the AM peak hour and 8 locations below an acceptable LOS during the PM peak hour. Safety issues would be addressed. Redesigned ramps would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes.	Numerous areas of congestion during peak hours under the No Build condition. 23 locations would operate below an acceptable ³ LOS during the AM peak hour, with 18 below an acceptable LOS during the PM peak hour. Existing safety issues would remain.
Bicycles and Pedestrians	Reconfigured local roadways and connections, new sidewalks and signals	Alternative would include upgraded pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Main and Glover Avenues which would facilitate connections to the planned bike lane improvements near the new Merritt 7 train station.	Alternative would include upgraded pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Main and Glover Avenues which would facilitate connections to the planned bike lane improvements near the new Merritt 7 train station.	Alternative would not include new or improved pedestrian or bicycle facilities. Bicycle and pedestrian activity levels are anticipated to remain limited due to lack of existing infrastructure and connectivity, and safety concerns.
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Reconfigured roadways resulting in changes to vehicle emissions	Air quality modeling results indicate: - lower emissions of volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, mobile air toxics, and greenhouse gases than the No Build condition. - no increase in carbon monoxide emissions.	Air quality modeling results indicate: - lower emissions of volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, mobile air toxics, and greenhouse gases than the No Build condition. - no increase in carbon monoxide emissions.	Vehicular traffic emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions, would continue to increase with projected increases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
Noise	Reconfigured roadways resulting in changes to vehicle traffic	Highway traffic noise would not substantially increase at any of the evaluated receptors. Compared to No Build, the levels would remain the same or decrease slightly (1-2 dBA). Although the NAC is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered reasonable.	Highway traffic noise would not substantially increase at any of the evaluated receptors. Compared to No Build, the levels would remain the same or increase/decrease by no more than 1 dBA. Although the NAC is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered reasonable.	Noise levels would remain the same at most evaluated receptors, with increases of 1 dB(A) predicted at two receptors. ⁴ Although the NAC is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered feasible or reasonable.
Rare/Threatened/Endangered Species	Construction activities in potential plant/wildlife habitat	Time of year restrictions (no unconfined in-stream work between April 1 and June 30) may be required as part of the permitting process for activities during construction to avoid and minimize impacts to anadromous fish runs in the Norwalk River.	Time of year restrictions (no unconfined in-stream work between April 1 and June 30) may be required as part of the permitting process for activities during construction to avoid and minimize impacts to anadromous fish runs in the Norwalk River.	No change
Wetlands	Construction activities in wetland areas	Permanent impacts to approximately 3 acres (AC) of wetlands, approximately 120 linear feet (LF) of intermittent streams, and approximately 650 LF of perennial streams. Permanent impacts to the Norwalk River are not expected.	Permanent impacts to approximately 1.4 AC of wetlands, approximately 40 LF of intermittent streams, and approximately 410 LF of perennial streams. Permanent impacts to the Norwalk River are not expected.	No direct impacts. Indirect impacts from existing infrastructure, including roadway runoff and siltation, and inhibition of wildlife movement, would continue.
Groundwater	Construction activities	Potential groundwater pollutants during construction would be managed per Norwalk First Taxing District and Department of Public Health guidance. During operation, no new contamination sources would be added and no mitigation would be required.	Potential groundwater pollutants during construction would be managed per Norwalk First Taxing District and Department of Public Health guidance. During operation, no new contamination sources would be added and no mitigation would be required.	No change
Surface water	Construction activities; increased impervious surfaces	The Project would adhere to the requirements of Connecticut's Construction Stormwater General Permit, which requires developers and builders to implement a Stormwater Pollution Control Plan to prevent the movement of sediments off construction sites into nearby water bodies and to address the impacts of stormwater discharges from a project after construction is complete.	The Project would adhere to the requirements of Connecticut's Construction Stormwater General Permit, which requires developers and builders to implement a Stormwater Pollution Control Plan to prevent the movement of sediments off construction sites into nearby water bodies and to address the impacts of stormwater discharges from a project after construction is complete.	No change

³ A location is generally assumed to operate acceptably if it achieves a level of service (LOS) rating of D or better.

⁴ A change of 3 dB(A) or less is considered to be undetectable to the human ear in an outdoor environment.



Resource	Project Build Actions	21D Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation		26 Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation	
		Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	No Build Benefits/Impacts and Mitigation No impact to the floodplain or floodway.
Floodplains	Construction activities	Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	Alternative would have little impact on the 100-year floodplain and would not promote additional floodplain development.	No impact to the floodplain or floodway.
Historic & Archaeological Resources	Ground disturbing activities including excavation, trenching, grading, pile driving	Alternative would have no impact to any of the three archaeological sites that were recommended as eligible for listing on the NRHP in the Phase II testing.	Alternative would have no impact to any of the three archaeological sites that were recommended as eligible for listing on the NRHP in the Phase II testing.	Alternative is anticipated to impact two of the three archaeological sites that were recommended as NRHP-eligible in the Phase II testing.	No impact
Visual Impact Assessment	Removal and replacement of historic/scenic roadway elements; reconfiguring existing roadway geometry	Alternative impacts more overall noticeable visual impact on the Project Site than Alternative 26 as it includes more constructed features that add to the overall “highway” feel of the Project Site.	Alternative impacts more overall noticeable visual impact on the Project Site than Alternative 26 as it includes more constructed features that add to the overall “highway” feel of the Project Site.	Alternative has fewer ramps and bridges than Alternative 21D and thus the cumulative visual impact to the Project Site can be considered lower than that of Alternative 21D.	No change
Merritt Parkway Landscape (Scenic Byway)	Removal and replacement of scenic landscape elements	Alternative’s larger footprint provides less opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems. Integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities.	Alternative’s larger footprint provides less opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems. Integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities.	Alternative’s compact nature provides the greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems. Integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities.	No effect on the Parkway, but also no opportunities for remedial past circumstances that have diminished the Parkway’s defining characteristics
Hazardous Materials	Ground disturbing activities including excavation, trenching, grading, pile driving	No active spills, superfund sites or brownfields were identified within the Alternative’s footprint. Standard construction practices would address hazardous materials if encountered during construction.	No active spills, superfund sites or brownfields were identified within the Alternative’s footprint. Standard construction practices would address hazardous materials if encountered during construction.	No active spills, superfund sites or brownfields were identified within the Alternative’s footprint. Standard construction practices would address hazardous materials if encountered during construction.	No change
Benefit Cost Analysis	Site preparation, fill and grading activities. Bridge, ramp, and lane removal/construction	Benefits are greater than costs by a factor of 2.37.	Benefits are greater than costs by a factor of 2.37.	Benefits are greater than costs by a factor of 3.89.	No benefits are generated by the No Build Alternative.
Climate Change and Resiliency	Reconfigured roadways resulting in changes to vehicle traffic	New structures would be designed based on more recent storm models/rainfall intensities and make the interchange more resilient to climate change-induced storm events.	New structures would be designed based on more recent storm models/rainfall intensities and make the interchange more resilient to climate change-induced storm events.	New structures would be designed based on more recent storm models/rainfall intensities and make the interchange more resilient to climate change-induced storm events.	No change
Environmental Justice (EJ)	All above actions plus general construction activities, in EJ and Title VI communities in the Project vicinity	No disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.	No disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.	No disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.	No negative and disparate impacts



Public Participation

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed for this Project. Public outreach and involvement efforts included a CEPA scoping meeting and Open House on October 17, 2017. The scoping session was posted in the Connecticut Environmental Monitor on (October 3, 2017) and was also noticed in multiple local media. CTDOT selected a public scoping meeting venue that met ADA compliance regulations and was easily accessible by bus, Metro-North Railroad, automobile and pedestrian routes. An additional public information meeting was held on October 23, 2019. CTDOT was available to respond to comments and questions throughout the process. Questions/comments and responses are reflected in the documentation in Appendix N.

Launched in August 2016, the Project website offers a publicly-available resource for information on the Project overview, history, schedule, and a documents library, which contains meeting materials and various Project documents. CTDOT also distributes Project newsletters with updates and ways for the public to reach out to the Project Team.

In addition, CTDOT formed a PAC in March 2017 which was composed of approximately 25 individuals representing a variety of local stakeholders including local neighborhood groups, interest groups, economic development groups, municipalities, transit providers, and major landowners / developers. The PAC has met throughout the course of the Project, providing key local knowledge as the study team progressed with the development of this document along with input on screening the alternatives.

Opposition to the Project

While there has been no opposition to the Project as a whole, and recognition that improvements to the interchange area are needed, there is a split in support to the alternatives being considered. Concerns and opposition associated with Alternative 26 include air, noise, and safety concerns with proposed traffic signals on Route 7. Concerns and opposition associated with Alternative 21D include modification of the original design intent of the Merritt Parkway and associated ramps. Additionally, stakeholders have noted concerns whether the 'No Build' alternative would be duly considered in this EA/EIE.

Intergovernmental Coordination

As part of NEPA and the CEPA compliance process, coordination with regulatory agencies has been initiated for input to clearly define the regulatory requirements for the Project. Table E1.1.2 provides an overview of Intergovernmental Coordination and Status.



Table E1.1.2 Agency Regulatory Coordination and Status

Permit/Process	Agency	Status
Section 404 Permit for filling or dredging waters of the United States.	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)	Concurrence on the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative as part of NEPA/404. Application for Section 404 permit would be made after FONSI approval.
Air Quality Conformity Determination	FHWA	Request for determination to be submitted following selection of a preferred alternative.
Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)	Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO)	MOA expected following the circulation of the draft EA-EIE.
Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters Associated with Construction Activities (Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) §22a-430b / §402 of the Clean Water Act (CWA))*	Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP)	Request for approval submitted following final design and prior to commencement of construction activities.
Floodplain Management Certification (CGS 25-68b - 25-68h), Inland Wetland and Watercourses Permitting on the State level	CTDEEP	Application for Flood Management Certification and Inland Wetland approval to be requested during the permitting stage of the Project, after a preferred alternative has been chosen and designed
Water Quality Certification (§401 of the CWA)*	CTDEEP	Request for approval submitted during final design and prior to commencement of construction activities.

* Federal program administered at the State level

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC OUTREACH NOTICES &
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Kevin Carifa
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
Bureau of Policy and Planning

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Carifa".

DATE: July 18, 2023

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability
Environmental Assessment / Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE)
Route 7/15 Norwalk Project
City of Norwalk, Connecticut
State Project No. 102-358

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to construct improvements to the interchange of Route 7 and Route 15 and to improve interconnections with local roads in the City of Norwalk (Norwalk), Connecticut. An Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) was conducted to determine if any significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action.

Purpose and Need

The proposed project will address the missing connections on the existing Route 15 and Route 7 Interchange and would consequently improve the mobility for motorists at the following connections:

- Southbound Route 15 to northbound Route 7
- Southbound Route 15 to southbound Route 7
- Northbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15
- Southbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15

Additionally, improvements to the Route 15 and Main Avenue ramps will address the substandard acceleration lanes, steep changes in grade, sharp curves, and limited sight distance. These factors contribute to a high number of crashes on the Merritt Parkway.

On local networks, Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive will be upgraded to expand mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. The upgrade will include installing bicycle facilities and adequate shoulder widths, where there are none today. Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks will be installed in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Project Location

The Project is in the northern portion of Norwalk at the interchange of Routes 7 and 15 (Interchange 39) and includes the interchange of Route 15 and Main Avenue (Interchange 40); Route 719 (Main Avenue); and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive in the vicinity of Main Avenue. The proposed limits of construction (Project Site) extend along Route 15 from approximately 0.5 miles west of Route 7 to approximately 0.5 miles east of Main Avenue and along Route 7 from approximately 0.5 miles south to approximately 0.5 miles north of Route 15.

The EA/EIE, including a proposed project location map, drawings, analyses of potential impacts, project commitments and mitigation, and additional information about the proposed project is available for inspection at:

CTDOT
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

FHWA CT Division Office
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Connecticut State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

Norwalk Public Library
Main Branch
1 Belden Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Public Library
South Norwalk Branch
10 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

WestCOG
1 Riverside Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

The EA/EIE is also available online at: www.ct.gov/environmentaldocuments or on the Route 7/15 Interchange project website at: <http://7-15norwalk.com>.

A public hearing will be held for the project on Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 7:00 to 9:00 pm in the Community Room of Norwalk City Hall at 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851. There will be an open house held from 6:00 to 7:00 pm in the Community Room before the Public Hearing begins. The public hearing will be recorded and a copy of the recording will be made available on the project website: <http://7-15norwalk.com>.

In accordance with the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), the project was scoped in the Environmental Monitor on October 3, 2017; and a notice of availability of the EA/EIE was posted in the Environmental Monitor on July 18, 2023.

Please address any written comments, and/or requests for document hardcopies to Mr. Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director, CTDOT, Bureau of Policy and Planning, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131 or by email at dot.environmentalplanning@ct.gov by August 31, 2023.

Alternatively, comments may also be submitted through the project website at <http://7-15norwalk.com/ea-comments> prior to the close of business on August 31, 2023.

Route 7 and 15 Interchange Project Environmental Assessment – Interested Parties Mailing List:

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Ms. Mandy Ranslow
401 F Street NW, Suite 308
Washington, DC 20001

American Society of Landscape Architects,
--Connecticut Chapter
34 Wall Street
Norwalk, CT 06850

City of Norwalk
Mr. Steven Kleppin
125 East Ave., Room 223
Norwalk, CT 06856

CT Dep't of Energy & Environmental Protection
(CTDEEP)
Mr. Frederick Riese
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

CT Department of Public Health
Ms. Lori Mathieu
410 Capitol Avenue, MS #12 DWS
P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308

CT Office of Policy & Management
Ms. Rebecca Augur
450 Capitol Avenue MS #54 ORG
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

CT State Historic Preservation Office
Mr. Jonathan Kinney
450 Columbus Blvd., #5
Hartford, CT 06103

Delaware Nation
Ms. Carissa Speck
31064 SH 281
P.O. Box 825
Anadarko, OK 73005

Delaware Tribe of Indians
Ms. Susan Bacher
126 University Circle
Stroud Hall, Room 437
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Federal Transit Administration
Ms. Mary Mello
55 Broadway, Suite 920
Cambridge, MA 02142-0193

First District Water Department
12 New Canaan Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribal Nation
Mr. Michael Kicking Bear Johnson
550 Trolley Line Blvd.
P.O. Box 3202
Mashantucket, CT 06338-3202

Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Mr. Wes Haynes
P.O. Box 17072
Stamford, CT 06907

The Mohegan Tribe
Mr. James Quinn
Mohegan Community & Government Center
13 Crow Hill Road
Uncasville, CT 06382

Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. E.A. Cam
344 Audubon Court
New Haven, CT 06510
Mr. John Brown III
4425A South County Trail
Charlestown, RI 02813

National Trust for Historic Preservation
Ms. Betsy Merritt
600 14th Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners
Ms. Heather Dunne
PMB 731
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Historical Commission
Ms. Dana Laird
41 N. Main Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

Norwalk Historical Society
Ms. Diane Jellerette
P.O. Box 1640
Norwalk, CT 06852

Norwalk Land Trust
Ms. Lisa Shanahan
P.O. Box 34
Norwalk, CT 06853

Norwalk Preservation Trust
Mr. Tod Bryant
P.O. Box 874
Norwalk, CT 06852

Norwalk River Watershed Association
Louise Washer
P.O. Box 7114
Wilton, CT 06897

Office of Senator Duff
Sen. Bob Duff
Mr. Ken Saccente
210 Capitol Ave., Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Preservation Connecticut
Ms. Jane Montanaro
Mr. Christopher Wigren
940 Whitney Avenue
Hamden, CT 06517-4002

Sierra Club CT
Ms. Susan Eastwood
30 Arbor Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Silvermine Community Association
Mr. Peter Viteretto
115 New Canaan Ave., PMB #704
Norwalk, CT 06850

Town of Wilton
Mr. Michael Wrinn
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

US Army Corps of Engineers
New England District
Mr. Daniel Breen
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

US Department of the Interior
Ms. Carol Braegelmann, Division Chief
Mr. Shawn K. Alam
1849 C Street, NW (MS 2629-MIB)
Washington, DC 20240

US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
Mr. Timothy Timmerman
5 Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109

US Fish & Wildlife Service,
New England Field Office
Mr. John Warner
Mr. David Simmons
70 Commercial Street, Suite 308
Concord, NH 03301

Western Connecticut Council of Governments
Mr. Frances Pickering
Ms. Kristin Hadjstylianos
One Riverside Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

MLB

Yankees' veterans starting to make strides at the plate

Gary Phillips
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

As Anthony Rizzo returned to the Yankees' dugout following a home run on Sunday, his teammates initially gave him the silent treatment. It was a fitting response for a player whose quiet bat had not hit a home run in over two months.

Rizzo produced a third-inning solo shot in a win over Kansas City for his first home run since May 20. The much-needed dinger was the highlight of Rizzo's first four-hit game of the season. He also scored three runs, drove in two and hit a double.

"It's easy to look at it and say I'm drowning and I'm in the water, but I just kept saying I'm on the boat and just waiting for the winds to pick up and the sails to set," said Rizzo, who hit .182/.274/.281 in the 45 games between longballs. "You've got to have fun with it. I think the reaction from the dugout and the guys shows that through a down (time), you've got to try to find highs as far as keeping yourself up, staying positive. You got to keep working."

The Yankees are hoping that Rizzo's Sunday outburst — which helped complete a sweep of the lowly Royals — marks the start of a hot streak for the first baseman, who is hitting .253/.338/.398 with 12 home runs and 41 RBI overall. If so, Rizzo would become the team's latest veteran hitter to show signs of life following a prolonged slump.

For example, DJ LeMahieu has quietly gone 13-for-40 (.325) with a .372 on-base percentage and a .500 slugging percentage over his last 10 games. That span includes four extra-base hits and a Saturday home run, the infielder's first since June 13.

Prior to that stretch, LeMahieu hit .258/.335/.337 over his last 22 games. The former batting champion is slashing just .233/.297/.375 this year.



Michael Crago/TNS

The Yankees' Anthony Rizzo (48) celebrates with Giancarlo Stanton (27) after Stanton hit a three-run home run at Colorado on July 15.

Even before replacing hitting coach Dillon Lawson with Sean Casey, the Yankees have attributed LeMahieu's struggles to his load at the plate. Aaron Boone said that a "little adjustment" has allowed LeMahieu to be more "explosive" and "dynamic" lately. Recent results back that up.

"Just trying to simplify, but also staying loose and aggressive," LeMahieu said. "Some stuff I was working on right before the break, I kind of took it into the break and just was really excited to get back after the break and get after it. Now I feel like I'm on the right track."

Giancarlo Stanton is another seasoned vet who could say the same.

While the slugger is only hitting .222 since the second half began, he has six homers and 13 RBI over his last 10 games. That includes four RBI and two HR in nine games since the break ended.

Stanton is now hitting .207/.281/.457 with 13 home runs and 33 RBI over 50 games.

Whether it be Rizzo's Sunday or Stanton or LeMahieu's 10-game stretches, these are small sample sizes we're talking about, and the production has come against a handful of subpar pitching staffs. However, the lineup will take whatever it can get with Aaron Judge still on the mend, as the Yankees have the worst average, third-worst on-base

percentage, fourth-worst wRC+ and sixth-worst slugging percentage since losing the reigning MVP to a torn ligament in his right big toe on June 3.

Judge participated in a simulated game on Sunday at Yankee Stadium.

Even with their sweep over the Royals, the Yankees have been a sub-.500 team without their captain, going 10-22 during Judge's current stint on the injured list. The Bombers also experienced an offensive drought while going 4-6 when a hip injury sidelined Judge earlier this season.

Judge's absences have made it clear that the Yankees, tied with Boston for last place, need to add to their lineup before next week's trade deadline. But even multiple moves won't save a season that still has New York in the Wild Card race.

For that to happen, the Yankees are also going to need the likes of Rizzo, LeMahieu and Stanton to hit like they have over the last few days and weeks. The team has maintained confidence in the trio being able to do that, with Boone often citing the former All-Stars' track records.

"It's been a bit of a grind for sure, as a team and personally," LeMahieu said. "But I think it's going to make us stronger in the long run, personally and as a team. I truly believe that it's going to make us better in the long run."

NBA

Bronny James, son of LeBron, in stable condition after cardiac arrest at USC basketball practice

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bronny James, the oldest son of NBA superstar LeBron James, was hospitalized after going into cardiac arrest while participating in a practice at the University of Southern California, a family spokesman said Tuesday.

The spokesman said medical staff treated the 18-year-old James on site at USC's Galen Center on Monday morning. He was transported to a hospital, where he was in stable condition Tuesday after leaving the intensive care unit.

"We ask for respect and privacy for the James family and we will update media when there is more information," the spokesman said. "LeBron and Savannah wish to publicly send their deepest thanks and appreciation to the USC medical and athletic staff for their incredible work and dedication to the safety of their athletes."

USC spokesman Jeremy Pepper declined a request from The Associated Press for comment or additional details, citing student privacy concerns. The AP also left a message seeking comment from the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who suffered cardiac arrest during an NFL game last season, tweeted his support: "Prayers to Bronny & The James Family as well (prayer emoji) here for you guys just like you have been for me my entire process."

Bronny James announced in May that he would play college basketball for the Trojans, whose campus is less than two miles from the downtown arena of his father's Los Angeles Lakers. USC's basketball team is holding offseason practices in preparation for a two-week European tour next month.

His father is the leading scorer in NBA history and a four-time champion, but Bronny James is an elite talent in his own right, ranking as one of the nation's top point guard recruits before he chose the Trojans late in the commitment cycle.

With his family fame and huge social media following, Bronny James has the top name, image and likeness valuation in sports at \$6.3 million, On3.com estimates. Bronny's decision to stay close to home was a coup for USC, which is expected to have one of college basketball's most compelling teams next season after making its third straight NCAA



Alex Bierens de Haan/Getty Images

Bronny James of the West team talks to his father, LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers, after the 2023 McDonald's High School Boys All-American Game on March 26 at Toyota Center in Houston.

Tournament appearance last March.

LeBron James has spoken frequently about his desire to play a season in the NBA with Bronny, the first of his three children with his wife, Savannah. The elder James recently confirmed he will play his 21st NBA season in the fall with the Lakers, his home since 2018.

Bronny, whose name is LeBron James Jr., was one of the top college prospects in the country last season as a star guard at Sierra Canyon School in suburban Chatsworth. His younger brother, 16-year-old Bryce, played at Sierra Canyon last season before transferring to Campbell Hall School in Studio City for the upcoming high school season.

Bronny James was stricken just over a year after USC freshman 7-footer Vincent Ivuchukwu collapsed during a practice, but he survived and returned to play for the Trojans in the second half of the season.

SWIMMING

Katie Ledecky wins gold in 1,500 at the swimming worlds

By Stephen Wade
AP SPORTS WRITER

FUKUOKA, Japan — Katie Ledecky won the 1,500-meter freestyle with ease on Tuesday at the World Aquatics Championships in a landmark victory which made her the most decorated female swimmer at the worlds with 20 golds overall, 15 of which have come in individual events.

That ties Michael Phelps' record at the worlds for individual gold medals.

American Ryan Murphy added the second American gold medal on Tuesday, winning the 100-meter backstroke. But as usual when the 26-year-old Ledecky swims, she's the story.

Ledecky has won seven Olympic golds, the first coming more than a decade ago in London. And she's talking about racing not just in next year's Paris Olympics, but perhaps also in Los Angeles in 2028.

"I never dreamed of winning one Olympic gold," Ledecky said. "So after I did it, it was like, 'OK, the rest is icing on the cake, a cherry on top,' whatever you call it. I'm just trying to build a really big cake, I guess."

That cake is getting big-

ger for one of the greatest freestylers the sport has ever seen.

She won Tuesday in 15 minutes, 26.27 seconds, the third quickest time of her career.

"The last couple of years I've just tried to be really locked in on my stroke," Ledecky said, improving quickly post-pandemic. "That was a really good performance from me very pleased."

Italy's Simona Quadrella finished 17 seconds behind Ledecky in 15:43.31, with Li Bingjie of China third in 15:45.71.

Ledecky will compete in the 800 on Saturday — her favorite race — and is set to become the only person to win six titles at the worlds in the same event.

Murphy, a four-time Olympic gold medalist and the defending world champion in the 200 backstroke, edged Italian Thomas Ceccon by .05 seconds. Murphy clocked 52.22 and Ceccon 52.27, with bronze for American Hunter Armstrong in 52.58.

"It's awesome to go against a great field, and it's awesome to get two Americans on the podium," Murphy said. "The USA is off to a start. We're starting to build some momentum and we can just keep it rolling from here."

The big shock was 18-year-old Romanian David Popovici, who was a clear favorite in the 200 free. He finished fourth behind two British swimmers. Matthew Richards in 1:44.30, and Tom Dean in 1:44.32. South Korean Hwang Sun-woo took bronze (1:44.42) with Popovici finishing fourth in 1:44.90.

"It felt awful," Popovici said. "But that means that we can improve something and that's a good thing. Because if you have the absolute perfect race... you have nothing else to improve."

"I'm glad it happened now and I'm sure it has a meaning and I'm going to learn from it."

Ruta Meiliute of Lithuania captured gold in the women's 100 breaststroke in 1:04.62, ahead of Tatjana Schoenmaker of South Africa and third-place Lydia Jacoby of the U.S. World-record holder Lilly King was fourth. The American finished in 1:06.02.

Kaylee McKeown of Australia won the women's 100 backstroke in 57.53, edging Regan Smith of the United States by 0.25. American Katharine Berkoff took third in 58.25. McKeown was disqualified earlier in the 200 IM for a violation on the backstroke leg, infuriating her and her team.

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LEGAL NOTICE

The Connecticut Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, will hold a public hearing for the **Route 7/15 Norwalk Project** in Norwalk, Connecticut. State Project No. 102-358 Federal Aid Project No. 60161(33)

The hearing concerns the Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation for the referenced project, prepared pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, 23 CFR 771.

The public hearing will be held on: **Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Community Room, Norwalk City Hall, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851

The Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation is available for inspection at:

Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

FHWA Connecticut Division Office
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Connecticut State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Norwalk City Hall
125 East Ave
Norwalk, CT 06851

Norwalk Public Library - Main Branch
1 Belden Ave
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Public Library - South Norwalk Branch
10 Washington St
Norwalk, CT 06854

Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG)
Riverside Rd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

The document is also available online at: <http://www.ct.gov/environmental/docs/documents/http://15norwalk.com/>

Written comments may be submitted either at the public hearing or may be mailed or emailed to comment@15-norwalk.com on or before August 31, 2023 to the attention of:

Mr. Kevin Carilla,
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

ACCESSIBILITY

Language assistance may be requested by contacting CTDOT's Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least five business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

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Ken (203) 558-4951

PUBLIC NOTICES**PUBLIC NOTICES****Notice of Public Sale**

Notice is hereby given that the following individuals are indebted to Secure Self Storage 4 Willard Road, Norwalk CT 06851; for past due rent and other charges.
Auction will be conducted online at Bid4Storage.com on August 10th, 2023 at 11:00AM.
The Contents of the units will be sold online to the highest bidder. This is a cash sale and all sales are final.
Nicholas Cimino Unit #3237 Furniture, tools, Bags.

WESTY SELF STORAGE
50 Keeler Ave
Norwalk, CT 06854

Notice is hereby given that Westy Self Storage has a self-storage lien against the property and owned by

Space #	Name
03723	Fitzgerald Francois
02A06	Lauren Roach
04A24	Luz Sanchez

All such properties will be sold unless the lien is satisfied. Such liens are claimed for occupancy charges, processing fees, cleaning and miscellaneous services of the total reasonable value agreed upon price now due and owing and that a detailed statement of such charges, services and storage with a statement of dates have been previously mailed to the said accounts by certified letters, the said accounts are further notified that if said balance is not paid the personal property above described will be sold by Absolute Auction & Realty on August 17, 2023 at 11:15 am; all as provided for by Chapter 743 of the Lien Law of the State of Connecticut.

LEGAL NOTICE

The Connecticut Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, will hold a public hearing for the
Route 7/15 Norwalk Project
in Norwalk, Connecticut
State Project No. 102-586
Federal Aid Project No. 0015(133)

The hearing concerns the Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Evaluation for the referenced project, prepared pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, 23 CFR 771.

The public hearing will be held on:
Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
in the Community Room
Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue,
Norwalk CT 06851

The Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Evaluation is available for inspection at:

Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

FHWA Connecticut Division Office
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Connecticut State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Norwalk City Hall
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1 Belden Ave
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Public Library- South Norwalk Branch
10 Washington St
Norwalk, CT 06854

Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG)
1 Riverside Rd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

The document is also available online at:
www.ct.gov/environmentaldocuments
<http://7-15norwalk.com/>

Written comments may be submitted either at the public hearing or may be mailed or emailed to comments@7-15norwalk.com on or before August 31, 2023 to the attention of:

Mr. Kevin Carfia,
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

ACCESSIBILITY

Language assistance may be requested by contacting CTDOT's Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least five business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

PUBLIC NOTICES**PUBLIC NOTICES****PUBLIC NOTICES****LEGAL NOTICE**

A certified list of Democratic party-endorsed candidates for the City of Norwalk

for election as :

Mayor
City Treasurer
City Sheriff
Town Clerk
Selectmen
Constables
Board of Education A,B,C,D,E
Councilmen at Large
Councilmen
1st. Taxing District Commissioner
1st. Taxing District Treasurer
2nd. Taxing District Commissioner
2nd. Taxing District Treasurer
3rd. Taxing District Commissioner
3rd. Taxing District Treasurer
6th. Taxing District Commissioner
6th. Taxing District Treasurer

is on file in my office at City Hall Room 102, 125 East Avenue Norwalk, Ct., and copies thereof are available for public distribution.

The certified list as received includes fewer names of party-endorsed candidates than the party is entitled to nominate for the following offices:

Office	Number of Names Certified	Number Entitled to be Nominated
1st. Taxing District Commissioner	0	1
3rd. Taxing District Treasurer	0	1
6th. Taxing District Treasurer	0	1

A Primary will be held September 12, 2023, if, for a particular office, the number of party-endorsed candidates plus the number of candidates filing petitions pursuant to Sections 9-382 to 9-450 of the Connecticut General Statutes exceeds the maximum number which the party is entitled to nominate for that office. Petitions must be filed not later than 4:00 p.m. of August 9, 2023. Petition forms, instructions and information concerning the procedure for filing of opposing candidates, including schedules, may be obtained from:

Stuart Wells III Democrat Registrar of Voters at City Hall Room 103, 125 East Avenue Norwalk Connecticut 06851

Richard A. McQuaid
Municipal Clerk of Norwalk
Dated August 31, 2023

LEGAL NOTICE

A certified list of Republican party-endorsed candidates for the City of Norwalk

For election as;

Mayor
City Treasurer
City Sheriff
Town Clerk
Selectmen
Constables
Board of Education District A,B,C,D,E
Councilmen at Large
Councilmen
1st. Taxing District Commissioner
1st. Taxing District Treasurer
2nd. Taxing District Commissioner
2nd. Taxing District Treasurer
3rd. Taxing District Commissioner
3rd. Taxing District Treasurer
6th. District Commissioner
6th. Taxing District Treasurer

is on file in my office at City Hall 125 Room 102, East Avenue Norwalk, Ct., and copies thereof are available for public distribution.

The certified list as received includes fewer names of party - endorsed candidates than the party is entitled to nominate for the following offices:

Office	Number of Names Certified	Number Entitled to be Nominated
Councilman (District A)	1	2
Councilman (District B)	1	2
Councilman (District C)	1	2
Board of Education	3	5
2ND. Taxing District Commissioner	1	2
2nd. Taxing District Treasurer	0	1
6th. Taxing District Commissioner	0	1

A Primary will be held September 9, 2023, if, for a particular office, the number of party-endorsed candidates plus the number of candidates filing petitions pursuant to Sections 9-382 to 9-450 of the Connecticut General Statutes exceeds the maximum number which the party is entitled to nominate for that office. Petitions must be filed not later than 4:00 p.m. of August 9, 2023. Petition forms, instructions and information concerning the procedure for filing of opposing candidates, including schedules, may be obtained from:

Brian J. Smith, Republican Registrar of Voters at City Hall Room 122, 125 East Avenue Norwalk Connecticut 06851

Richard A. McQuaid
Municipal Clerk of Norwalk
Dated July 31, 2023

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C.J. Fucci, Inc., a CT based construction firm, has an immediate opening for a Quality Control Manager. Applicants must have experience performing construction quality control on Department of Transportation Projects in accordance with the CT Form 818 Quality Control Manager Specifications.

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C.J. Fucci, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

PROJECT MANAGER

C.J. Fucci, Inc., a CT based construction firm has and immediate opening for a Project Manager. Applicants must have experience managing work including but not limited to the installation of underground storm, sewer, water piping and structures of all types including Concrete, PVC, Ductile Iron, etc. in the performance of site and road construction. Minimum of 10 years or equivalent experience.

Fax Resumes to 203-468-6256 or email vfederico@cjfucci.com.

C.J. Fucci, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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WESTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AVISO LEGAL SOBRE EL INICIO DEL PERÍODO DE COMENTARIOS PÚBLICOS

Como anfitrión de Housatonic Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (HVMPO) y South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO), el Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), abre un período de comentarios públicos de 45 días para modificar el Plan de Participación Pública (PIP).

Los comentarios públicos sobre el PIP modificado se aceptarán desde **agosto 1, 2023 hasta las 12:00 p. m. de septiembre 15, 2023**. Las reuniones de información pública se llevarán a cabo **septiembre 7 y 12, 2023**.

Reunión de la junta de WestCOG en septiembre 21, 2023.

Toda la información sobre los horarios de las reuniones, los lugares y la accesibilidad, así como también cómo acceder al PIP y enviar comentarios, se puede encontrar en el sitio web de WestCOG: <https://westcog.org/>

Las personas con acceso limitado a Internet pueden comunicarse con WestCOG por teléfono: 475-323-2060, por correo electrónico: plan@westcog.org, o por correo postal a la oficina de WestCOG (1 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT 06482).

SAVIN ROCK COMMUNITIES LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS SPRING HEIGHTS APARTMENTS WINDOW AND DOOR REPLACEMENT

Savin Rock Communities is seeking sealed bids for the following:
Window and Door Replacement at Spring Heights Apartments in West Haven CT.

A Public Bid Opening will be held at the Administration Office of said Authority located at 15 Glade Street, West Haven, CT on THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. local time.

A pre-bid walk thru will be held on JULY 31, 2022 at 2:00 pm at Spring Heights Apartments located at 15 Glade Street, West Haven CT.

Contract documents including plans & specifications can be viewed on-line and purchased from Digiprint's website beginning on July 24, 2022. Visit www.digiprintplanroom.com.

5% Bid Security (Over \$25K ONLY) and 100% Performance/Payment Bonds (Over \$100K ONLY) are required. Bidders will note requirements of minimum wage rates, nondiscrimination/equal opportunity rules (Executive Order 11246) and related provisions in the General Conditions. No bid shall be withdrawn for ninety (90) days. Complete bidding requirements are noted in the Contract Documents. This project is federally assisted. Therefore, bidders must comply with the following requirements: Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968; Equal Opportunity provisions of Executive Order 11246; Non-Discrimination provision of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Labor Standards provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act and related acts and Contract Work Hours Standards Act; prevailing wage determinations as issued by the United States Department of Labor; and all applicable provisions under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Savin Rock Communities is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and Housing Provider.

John P. Counter, Executive Director Savin Rock Communities
15 Glade Street
West Haven, CT 06516 203-934-8671



AVISO LEGAL

El Departamento de Transporte de Connecticut (CTDOT, por sus siglas en inglés), en cooperación con la Administración Federal de Carreteras (FHWA, por sus siglas en inglés), celebrará una audiencia pública para
Proyecto Ruta 7/15 de Norwalk
en Norwalk, Connecticut
Proyecto Estatal No. 102-358
Proyecto de Ayuda Federal No. 0015(133)

La audiencia se refiere a la Evaluación Ambiental/Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental para el proyecto de referencia, preparado de conformidad con el Código de Regulaciones Federales, 23 CFR 771.

La audiencia pública se celebrará el:
Miércoles, 16 de agosto de 2023 a las 6:00 p.m.
en la Sala Comunitaria (Community Room)
Ayuntamiento de Norwalk (Norwalk City Hall)
125 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851

La Evaluación Ambiental/Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental puede consultarse en:
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

Oficina de la División de Connecticut de la FHWA
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Biblioteca Estatal de Connecticut
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Ayuntamiento de Norwalk (Norwalk City Hall)
125 East Ave
Norwalk, CT 06851

Biblioteca Pública de Norwalk - Sucursal Principal
1 Belden Ave
Norwalk, CT 06850

Biblioteca Pública de Norwalk - Sucursal de South Norwalk
10 Washington St
Norwalk, CT 06854

Consejo de Gobiernos del Oeste de Connecticut (WestCOG, por sus siglas en inglés)
1 Riverside Rd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

El documento también está disponible en línea en:
www.ct.gov/environmentaldocuments
<http://7-15norwalk.com/>

Los comentarios escritos pueden ser presentados en la audiencia pública o pueden ser enviados por correo o por correo electrónico a comments@7-15norwalk.com el 31 de agosto de 2023 o antes, a la atención de:

Sr. Kevin Carifa,
Director de Planificación del Transporte
Departamento de Transporte de Connecticut
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

ACCESIBILIDAD

Puede solicitar asistencia lingüística llamando a la línea de asistencia lingüística de CTDOT (860) 594-2109. Las solicitudes deben realizarse al menos cinco días hábiles antes de la reunión. La asistencia lingüística se proporciona sin costo alguno para el público y se hará todo lo posible por responder a las solicitudes de asistencia a tiempo.



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Norma Rodríguez-Reyes
203-376-0864 • 203-865-2272
norma@lavozhispana.com

STATE OF CONNECTICUT NOTARY PUBLIC



Estoy **CERTIFICADA** por el Departamento de Motores y Vehículos de CT (DMV) para hacer **TRADUCCIONES**.

Norma Rodríguez-Reyes
203-376-0864 • 203-865-2272

APARTAMENTO PARA ALQUILAR EN SPRINGFIELD, MASS

BORINQUEN APARTMENTS

Estamos aceptando aplicaciones para apartamentos recién renovados de 1, 2, 3, y 4 cuartos de dormitorio en Springfield. Estos hermosos apartamentos están subsidiados por el gobierno federal, y ofrecen estufa de cocinar de cinco hornillas, microonda, lavadora de platos, ventilador de techo, sistema de aire y calefacción central. Buena ubicación, cerca del hospital y autobús que le lleva al centro de la ciudad, servicio de lavandería, con oficinas de administradores y seguridad después de ciertas horas. La familia debe beneficiarse de la Vivienda de Bajos Ingresos bajo el Programa de Crédito Fiscal.

Por favor aplique en 2460 Main St., Suite 112, Springfield MA 01107 o visite www.morgankaylee.com o llame al 413-734-1745 o TDD 800-439-2370

APARTAMENTO PARA ALQUILAR EN SPRINGFIELD, MASS

VILLA TAINO TOWN HOMES

Estamos aceptando aplicaciones para apartamentos de 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 cuartos de dormitorios y apartamentos con acceso para personas con incapacidades físicas de 1, 2, 3 cuartos de dormitorios. Estos apartamentos están subsidiados por el gobierno federal. Una porción sustancial de los ingresos de la familia deben provenir de trabajadores agrícolas. Las viviendas son luminosas y espaciosas y ofrecen servicios de lavandería, estacionamiento, área de jardín privada y servicios de emergencia 24 horas. Situados en las calles de Carew, Dwight y Church. Están convenientemente ubicados cerca del hospital y autobús que le lleva al centro de la ciudad.

Por favor aplique en 2748 Main St., Springfield MA 01107 o visite www.morgankaylee.com o llame al 413-734-1745 o TDD (800) 439-2370



WATERBURY AVISO LEGAL

Una lista certificada de los candidatos apoyados por el **PARTIDO DEMÓCRATA** para la Ciudad de Waterbury para la elección como Alcalde, Archivista del Pueblo, Archivista Municipal, Alguacil Municipal, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 1, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 2, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 3, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 4, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 5 y Junta de Educación está archivada en mi oficina en 235 Grand St., Waterbury, Connecticut y copias de la misma están disponibles para distribución pública. Se celebrará una Primaria el 12 de septiembre de 2023, si la(s) petición(es) primaria(s) requerida(s) para candidato(s) opositor(es) se presenta(n), de conformidad con las Secciones 9-382 a 9-450 de los Estatutos Generales de Connecticut, a más tardar a las 4:00PM del 9 de agosto de 2023. Los formularios de petición, las instrucciones y la información relativa al procedimiento de presentación de candidaturas de oposición, incluidos los calendarios, pueden obtenerse de Teresa Bengal, Democratic Registrar of Voters, 236 Grand St., Waterbury.

Una lista certificada de los candidatos respaldados por el **PARTIDO REPUBLICANO** para la Ciudad de Waterbury para la elección de Alcalde, Z, Archivista del Pueblo, Archivista de la Ciudad, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 1, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 2, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 3, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 4, Junta de Concejales-Distrito 5 y Junta de Educación está archivada en mi oficina en 235 Grand St., Waterbury, Connecticut y copias de la misma están disponibles para distribución pública. Se celebrará una Primaria el 12 de septiembre de 2023, si la(s) petición(es) primaria(s) requerida(s) para candidato(s) opositor(es) se presenta(n), de conformidad con las Secciones 9-382 a 9-450 de los Estatutos Generales de Connecticut, a más tardar a las 4:00PM del 9 de agosto de 2023. Formularios de petición, instrucciones e información concerniente al procedimiento para la presentación de candidaturas opositoras, incluyendo horarios, pueden obtenerse de Timothy T. DeCarlo, Republican Registrar of Voters, 236 Grand St., Waterbury.

Antoinette C. Spinelli
Town Clerk, Waterbury

AVISO LEGAL

El Departamento de Transporte de Connecticut (CTDOT, por sus siglas en inglés), en cooperación con la Administración Federal de Carreteras (FHWA, por sus siglas en inglés), celebrará una audiencia pública para **Proyecto Ruta 7/15 de Norwalk** en Norwalk, Connecticut Proyecto Estatal No. 102-358 Proyecto de Ayuda Federal No. 0015(133)

La audiencia se refiere a la Evaluación Ambiental/Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental para el proyecto de referencia, preparado de conformidad con el Código de Regulaciones Federales, 23 CFR 771.

La audiencia pública se celebrará el:
Miércoles, 16 de agosto de 2023 a las 6:00 p.m.
en la Sala Comunitaria (Community Room)
Ayuntamiento de Norwalk (Norwalk City Hall)
125 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851

La Evaluación Ambiental/Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental puede consultarse en:
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

Oficina de la División de Connecticut de la FHWA
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Biblioteca Estatal de Connecticut
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Ayuntamiento de Norwalk (Norwalk City Hall)
125 East Ave
Norwalk, CT 06851

Biblioteca Pública de Norwalk - Sucursal Principal
1 Belden Ave
Norwalk, CT 06850

Biblioteca Pública de Norwalk - Sucursal de South Norwalk
10 Washington St
Norwalk, CT 06854

Consejo de Gobiernos del Oeste de Connecticut (WestCOG, por sus siglas en inglés)
1 Riverside Rd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

El documento también está disponible en línea en:
www.ct.gov/environmentaldocuments
<http://7-15norwalk.com/>

Los comentarios escritos pueden ser presentados en la audiencia pública o pueden ser enviados por correo o por correo electrónico a comments@7-15norwalk.com el 31 de agosto de 2023 o antes, a la atención de:

Sr. Kevin Carifa,
Director de Planificación del Transporte
Departamento de Transporte de Connecticut
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

ACCESIBILIDAD

Puede solicitar asistencia lingüística llamando a la línea de asistencia lingüística de CTDOT (860) 594-2109. Las solicitudes deben realizarse al menos cinco días hábiles antes de la reunión. La asistencia lingüística se proporciona sin costo alguno para el público y se hará todo lo posible por responder a las solicitudes de asistencia a tiempo.

Clasificados *LaVozHispana*

Tel: 203-865-2272

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Savin Rock Communities is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and Housing Provider.

John P. Counter, Executive Director Savin Rock Communities
15 Glade Street
West Haven, CT 06516 203-934-8671



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Departamento de Transporte de Connecticut
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

ACCESIBILIDAD

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Norwalk, CT 06851
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Pregunta por Jong Koo

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Connecticut State Council on Environmental Quality

[CT.gov Home](#) [\(/\)](#) [Council on Environmental Quality](#) [\(/CEQ\)](#) July 18 2023



July 18, 2023

Scoping Notice

1. Notice of Scoping for Pleasant View Water Main Interconnection Project, New Milford.
2. Notice of Scoping for Fellowship Housing Redevelopment Phase I, West Hartford.
3. Notice of Scoping for Ellis Street Commons, New Britain.
4. Notice of Scoping for Whitney House Demolition, Mansfield.
5. Notice of Scoping for Oak Woods, Plymouth.

Scoping Notice - Post-Scoping Notice (Need More Time)

1. **NEW!** Notice of Time Extension for Post-Scoping Notice for Safety Improvements on Route 82 (Phase 1), Norwich.

Post-Scoping Notice

No Post-Scoping Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE)

1. **NEW!** Notice of an Environmental Impact Evaluation for Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange, Norwalk

Agency Record of Decision (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor---Current-Issue#ROD>)

No Record of Decision Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

OPM Determination of Adequacy (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor---Current-Issue#DOA>)

No Determination of Adequacy Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

State Land Transfer (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor---Current-Issue#state>)

No State Land Transfer Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

The next edition of the Environmental Monitor will be published on **August 8, 2023**.

Subscribe (<https://confirmsubscription.com/h/j/ED852A9EE7823EDF>) to e-alerts to receive an e-mail when the Environmental Monitor is published.

Notices in the Environmental Monitor are written and formatted by the sponsoring agencies and are published unedited. Questions about the content of any notice should be directed to the sponsoring agency.

Inquiries and requests to view or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to the sponsoring state agency.

Scoping Notice

"Scoping" is for projects in the earliest stages of planning. At the scoping stage, detailed information on a project's design, alternatives, and environmental impacts does not yet exist. Sponsoring agencies are asking for comments from other agencies and from the public as to the scope of alternatives and environmental impacts that should be considered for further study. Send your comments to the contact person listed for the project by the date indicated. [Read More](https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-6) (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-6>).

The following Scoping Notices have been submitted for publication in this edition.

1. Notice of Scoping for Pleasant View Water Main Interconnection Project

Address of possible location: Prospect Hill Road (CT Route 67), Legion Road, Dorwin Hill Road and Pleasant View Road

Municipality where proposed action might be located: New Milford

Project Description: Aquarion Water Company (Aquarion) proposes to interconnect the Aquarion New Milford Regional (PWSID# CT0960011) water system with the Aquarion Pleasant View (PWSID# CT0960301) water system. This proposal includes installation of approximately 4,260 feet (ft) of water main on Prospect Hill Road, 150 ft of new water main on Legion Road, 4,425 ft of new water main on Dorwin Hill Rd, and 70 ft of new water main on Pleasant View Rd. Aquarion proposes that completing the interconnection between the two systems will eliminate existing water quality concerns, increase capacity, improve reliability and ensure an adequate margin of safety for the Pleasant View water system.

Project Map: [Click here](#) to view a map of the project area.

Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until the close of business on: **July 20, 2023.**

Any person may ask the sponsoring agency to hold a public scoping meeting by sending such a request to the address below. If a public scoping meeting is requested by 25 or more individuals, or by an association that represents 25 or more members, the sponsoring agency shall schedule a public scoping meeting. Such requests must be made by: **June 30, 2023.**

Written comments and/or requests for a public scoping meeting should be sent to:

Name: Eric McPhee

Agency: Department of Public Health, Drinking Water Section

Address: 410 Capitol Avenue, MS #12DWS, PO Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-0308

E-Mail: dph.sourceprotection@ct.gov (<mailto:dph.sourceprotection@ct.gov>).

If you have questions about the scoping for this project, contact:

Name: Eric McPhee

Agency: Department of Public Health, Drinking Water Section

Address: 410 Capitol Avenue, MS #12DWS, PO Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-0308

Phone: 860-509-7333

E-Mail: dph.sourceprotection@ct.gov (<mailto:dph.sourceprotection@ct.gov>).

Inquiries and requests to view and or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to the sponsoring state agency:

Agency: Department of Public Health, Hearing Office

Address: 410 Capitol Avenue, MS #13PHO Hartford, CT 06134-0308

E-Mail: DPH.foi@ct.gov (<mailto:DPH.foi@ct.gov>).

Phone: 860-566-5682

What Happens Next: The sponsoring agency will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

2. Notice of Scoping for West Hartford Fellowship Housing Redevelopment Phase I

Address: 10-30 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT 06117

Municipality: West Hartford

Project Description: Project plans of demolition and re-development for 4 phases and consist of the demolition of 22 of the existing apartment building and construction of six apartment buildings with 300 apartment units and a garage/maintenance building. Phase I includes the demolition of three of the existing one-story buildings consisting of twenty-two apartment units. The re-development and construction consist of two 3-story apartment buildings. Building 1 will consist of 3 studio and 22 one-bedroom apartment units. Building 2 will consist of 4 studios, 30 1-BR, and 6 2-BR units. Phase II consists of the demolition of 6 buildings and the construction of two 3-story buildings. Phase III will consist of the demolition of 8 buildings and construction of one 4-story building Phase IV will consist of the demolition of 4 buildings and construction of one 3-story building and a garage/maintenance building. The assistance anticipated at this time is \$1,201,102, which is considered necessary for completion of Phase I and the State has considered the potential impact of the subsequent phases previously described as well.

Project Map: https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/-/media/DOH/CEPA-Scoping-2023_West-Hartford-Fellowship-Housing-Redevelopment-Phase-I/West-Hartford-Fellowship-Housing-Redevelopment-Phase-I.png?sc_lang=en&hash=D792B9E228211DB6DA521B4C52919B32

Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until the close of business on: **August 3, 2023**

Any person may ask the sponsoring agency to hold a public scoping meeting by sending such a request to the address below. If a public scoping meeting is requested by 25 or more individuals, or by an association that represents 25 or more members, the sponsoring agency shall schedule a public scoping meeting. Such requests must be made by: **July 13, 2023**

Written comments and/or requests for a public scoping meeting should be sent to

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106-7106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>)

Inquiries and requests to view and or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to the sponsoring state agency:

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106-7106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>)

What Happens Next: The sponsoring agency will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

3. Notice of Scoping for Ellis Street Commons

Address: 321 Ellis Street, New Britain, CT 06051

Municipality: New Britain, CT

Project Description: The 321 Ellis Street project consists of the gut rehabilitation of a six-story structure formerly used as an electric mill that was built in 1920. The 7-acre site is located at 321 Ellis Street in the city of New Britain, Connecticut. Ellis Street Commons will comprise a total of One Hundred Fifty-Four (154) residential units to be outfitted with a mix of 79 one-bedroom, 59 two-bedroom, and 16 three-bedroom units serving individuals at 30%, 50%, 60% and 80% area median income. The unit mix in addition to the number of one-bedroom units, will be marketed to senior households, owing to the high demand for affordable senior housing in the city. The 222,030 sq ft building will feature a leasing and management office as well as amenity spaces for residents. The site will be improved to include new open space and include 230 surface parking.

Project Map: https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/-/media/DOH/CEPA-Scoping-2023_Ellis-Street-Commons/321-Ellis-St.png?sc_lang=en&hash=479E2E98B6807E26E287AB3D3BAE25C3

Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until the close of business on: **August 3, 2023**

Any person may ask the sponsoring agency to hold a public scoping meeting by sending such a request to the address below. If a public scoping meeting is requested by 25 or more individuals, or by an association that represents 25 or more members, the sponsoring agency shall schedule a public scoping meeting. Such requests must be made by: **July 13, 2023**

Written comments and/or requests for a public scoping meeting should be sent to

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>).

Inquiries and requests to view and or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to the sponsoring state agency:

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>).

What Happens Next: The sponsoring agency will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

4. Notice of Scoping for Whitney House Demolition at the University of Connecticut

Address of possible location: 1315 Storrs Road

Municipality where proposed action might be located: Mansfield

Project Description: Built between 1802 and 1807, Whitney House is one of the oldest structures on campus and has been a contributing resource to the University of Connecticut Historic District since 1989. Damaged by fire, smoke, and water earlier this year, the building is unsafe for occupancy and beyond reasonable repair. This project will plan, design, and decommission the building for demolition, and will eliminate present hazards and liabilities associated with the existing structure and site.

Project Map: [Click here](#) to view a map of the project area.

Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until 5:00 PM EST on: **Friday, August 4, 2023**

There will be a public scoping meeting online for this proposed action:

DATE: Tuesday, July 25, 2023

TIME: 6:00 PM EST

Register in advance at:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_aBU9fGcXRUKzXAGGDVgusw
(https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_aBU9fGcXRUKzXAGGDVgusw)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Additional information about the project, including a recording of the public scoping meeting, will be available online at: <http://updc.uconn.edu/whitney-house> (<http://updc.uconn.edu/whitney-house>)

Written comments and/or questions about the public scoping meeting, or other questions about the scoping for this project, should be sent to:

Name: James Libby, Sr. Project Manager

Agency: University Planning, Design & Construction

Address: 3 Discovery Drive, U-6038, Storrs, CT 06269

E-Mail: james.libby@uconn.edu

Inquiries and requests to view and or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to: <https://publicrecords.uconn.edu/make-a-request/> (<https://publicrecords.uconn.edu/make-a-request/>)

What Happens Next: The University will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

5. Notice of Scoping for Oak Woods

Address: 9 Scott Road, Terryville, CT 06786

Municipality: Plymouth

Project Description: Oak Woods is located in Terryville (Plymouth), CT - the development will be built on +/- 8 acres. The proposed 59-unit development will be located at 9 Scott Road. The 59-unit development has already attained site plan approval from the town. In fact, much of the infrastructure (e.g., roads and underground plumbing) already been "roughed-in" by the current owner. Therefore, the project is capable of commencing immediately upon funding. The development will be comprised of all 2-bedroom units. Oak Woods Condominiums will service residents at the 25%, 50%, 80% & market rate rent levels. Moreover, the development will enhance the affordable housing stock in Terryville (Plymouth), CT which currently has 7.73% affordable housing units.

There are no floodplain encroachments on the proposed site. There are wetlands, on the site - the site has received wetland approvals from the Town. CT DEEP opined that wetlands approvals is on the local level - no additional review from CT DEEP regarding wetlands. Utility infrastructure, including the access road off of Scott Road, have been installed to the site. The neighborhood for the proposed Oak Woods is within walking distance to a high concentration of residential related services, including, but not limited to, recreational areas, green spaces, medical facilities, banks, schools, grocery stores, sports facilities, library.

Project Map: Map of Oak Woods (https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/-/media/DOH/CEPA-Scoping-2023_Oak-Woods/Map-of-Oak-Woods.PNG?sc_lang=en&hash=FFB006A8840B90A1F4AE68E2A15152C0).

(https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/-/media/DOH/CEPA-Scoping-2023_Oak-Woods/Map-of-Oak-Woods.PNG?sc_lang=en&hash=FFB006A8840B90A1F4AE68E2A15152C0)Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until the close of business on: **August 3, 2023**

Any person may ask the sponsoring agency to hold a public scoping meeting by sending such a request to the address below. If a public scoping meeting is requested by 25 or more individuals, or by an association that represents 25 or more members, the sponsoring agency shall schedule a public scoping meeting. Such requests must be made by: **July 13, 2023**

Written comments and/or requests for a public scoping meeting should be sent to

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106-7106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>).

Inquiries and requests to view and or copy documents, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, must be submitted to the sponsoring state agency:

Name: Mithila Chakraborty

Agency: Department of Housing

Address: 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106-7106

E-Mail: mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov (<mailto:mithila.chakraborty@ct.gov>).

What Happens Next: The sponsoring agency will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

Scoping Notice - Post-Scoping Notice (Need More Time)

If an agency is unable to publish a Post-Scoping Notice within six months after the comment period for scoping, the agency will publish an update with an action status and an estimate as to when a Post-Scoping Notice will be published. Such an update will be published by the agency at six-month intervals until the Post-Scoping Notice is published. **[Read More](https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-7)** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-7>).

1. Notice of Time Extension for Post-Scoping Notice for Safety Improvements on Route 82 (Phase 1)

Address of Possible Project Location: Route 82 (West Main Street) and runs, approximately, from Banas Court (mile point 27.23) to Fairmount Street (mile point 28.13).

Municipality where proposed action would be located: Norwich

Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) Determination: On June 7, 2022, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) published a **Notice of Scoping** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor-Archives/2022/June-7-2022>) to solicit public comments for this action in the *Environmental Monitor*. A public scoping meeting took place on June 23, 2022. On January 3, 2023, CTDOT published a **notice of time extension** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor-Archives/2023/January-3-2023#needmoretime>) since further analysis was needed to make a final CEPA determination. The CTDOT is unable to publish its determination regarding this action at this time.

Action Status: CTDOT is awaiting additional information and performing additional analyses. An additional public informational meeting is anticipated in 2023.

Estimated Publication Date: The CTDOT estimates that a Post-Scoping Notice will be published in the *Environmental Monitor* on or before **January 2, 2024**.

If you have questions about the proposed action, contact:

Name: Mr. Scott Bushee, Transportation Principal Engineer

Agency: Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Engineering and Construction

Address: 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131

Phone: 860-594-2079

E-Mail: Scott.Bushee@ct.gov (<mailto:Scott.Bushee@ct.gov>)

What Happens Next: The CTDOT will make a determination whether to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) or that the project does not require the preparation of an EIE under the CEPA. A Post-Scoping Notice of its decision will appear in a future edition of the *Environmental Monitor*.

Post-Scoping Notice

A Post-Scoping Notice is the determination by a sponsoring agency, after publication of a Scoping Notice and consideration of comments received, whether an **Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE)** (https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_439.htm#sec_22a-1b) needs to be prepared for a proposed State action. (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations>) **Read More** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-7>)

No Post-Scoping Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

EIE Notice

After Scoping, an agency that wishes to undertake an action that could significantly affect the environment must produce, for public review and comment, a detailed written evaluation of the expected environmental impacts. This is called an **Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE)** (https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_439.htm#sec_22a-1b). **Read More** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-8>)

The following EIE Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

1. Notice of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) for Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange

Address of Possible Project Location: The proposed project is located in the northern portion of Norwalk at the interchange of Routes 7 and 15 (Interchange 39) and includes the interchange of Route 15 and Main Avenue (Interchange 40); Route 719 (Main Avenue); and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive in the vicinity of Main Avenue. The proposed limits of construction extend along Route 15 from approximately 0.5 miles west of Route 7 to approximately 0.5 miles east of Main Avenue and along Route 7 from approximately 0.5 miles south to approximately 0.5 miles north of Route 15.

Municipality where proposed action is to be located: Norwalk

Project Description: The proposed project will address the missing connections on the existing Route 15 and Route 7 interchange and would consequently improve the mobility for motorists at the following locations:

- Southbound Route 15 to northbound Route 7
- Southbound Route 15 to southbound Route 7
- Northbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15
- Southbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15

Additionally, improvements to the Route 15 and Main Avenue ramps will address the substandard acceleration lanes, steep changes in grade, sharp curves, and limited sight distance. These factors contribute to a high number of crashes on the Merritt Parkway.

Project Map: [Click here](#) to view a map of the project area.

Scoping Notice and Post Scoping Notice: The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) published a Scoping Notice on **October 3, 2017** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor-Archives/2017/October-3-2017>), and a Post-Scoping Notice on **June 16, 2020** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor-Archives/2020/June-16-2020>), for the proposed project in the Environmental Monitor.

Comments on this EIE will be accepted until the close of business on: **August 31, 2023**

The public can view a copy of this EIE on the project website at www.7-15norwalk.com (<http://www.7-15norwalk.com/>) or on CTDOT's Environmental Document's page by clicking [here](https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/Bureau-of-Policy/Environmental-Impact-Evaluations/EnvironmentalIntermodal-Documents) (<https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/Bureau-of-Policy/Environmental-Impact-Evaluations/EnvironmentalIntermodal-Documents>). The document is also available in hardcopy at the following locations:

- CTDOT, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131
- FHWA CT Division Office, 450 Main Street, Suite 612, Hartford, CT 06103
- CT State Library 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
- Norwalk City Hall (City Clerk Office), 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851
- Norwalk Public Library (Main Branch), 1 Belden Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06850
- Norwalk Public Library (South Norwalk Branch), 10 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06854
- Western CT Council of Governments, 1 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT 06482

Other information: Since the project involves Federal funding through FHWA, the project must also comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Therefore, the document is a joint NEPA/CEPA Environmental Assessment (EA)/ EIE. Additional project information is available on the project website: www.7-15norwalk.com (<http://www.7-15norwalk.com/>).

There is a public hearing scheduled for this EIE on:

DATE: August 16, 2023

TIME: Open House at 6:00 p.m. Hearing to begin at 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Norwalk City Hall, Community Room, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851

NOTES: The hearing location is ADA accessible. Persons needing ADA accommodations or language assistance, including American Sign Language, may contact CTDOT's Language Assistance Call Line at (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least 5 business days prior to the hearing. ADA accommodations and/or language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance. Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS).

Send your written questions or comments (E-Mail preferred) about this EIE to:

Name: Mr. Kevin F. Carifa, Transportation Planning Director

Agency: CT Department of Transportation, Bureau of Policy and Planning

Address: 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131

E-Mail: comments@7-15norwalk.com

What happens next: The CTDOT will review the comments received and may conduct further environmental study and analysis or amend the evaluation. The CTDOT will prepare responses to the substantive issues raised in review of and comment on the EIE and any supplemental materials or amendments. Those responses and all supplemental materials and comments shall be made available in a "Record of Decision" which will appear in the *Environmental Monitor* for public inspection.

Agency Record of Decision

After an **Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE)** (https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_439.htm#sec_22a-1b) is developed, an agency will prepare a concise public record of decision, which takes into consideration the agency's findings in the EIE, and any comments received on that evaluation. **Read More** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-10>)

No Record of Decision Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

OPM's Determination of Adequacy

After an **Environmental Impact Evaluation** (https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_439.htm#sec_22a-1b) (EIE) and record of decision are developed, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) will determine if the EIE and the associated process are adequate. If not, OPM will specify the areas of inadequacy with reference to CEPA or the CEPA regulations and specify the corrective action required. **Read More** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/CEPA-Regulations#22a-1a-10>).

No Determination of Adequacy Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

State Land Transfer Notice

Connecticut General Statutes **Section 4b-47** (https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_059.htm#sec_4b-47) requires public notice of most proposed sales and transfers of state-owned lands. The public has an opportunity to comment on any such proposed transfer. Each notice includes an address where comments should be sent. **Read more about the process** (<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/State-Lands-Transfer-Process>).

No State Land Transfer Notice has been submitted for publication in this edition.

CEPA Project Inventory

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) maintains a list of projects that have entered the CEPA process. It shows each project's status. The inventory can be found [here](#) .

CEQ Contact Information

All inquiries and requests of the Council should be sent electronically to: paul.aresta@ct.gov (<mailto:paul.aresta@ct.gov>).

APPENDIX D

PUBLIC/AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED &
RESPONSES

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
1	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	I am Anthony Costanzo from Stamford here representing myself as a member of the public. I am glad that we have the crash specific slide here, because this really supports my point. Currently, Exit 40 has over 300 crashes in the 2015 to 2018 timeframe. It is statistically the most dangerous interchange on the parkway. Right next door, Exit 39, only had 65 in the same time period, which is rather impressive considering the volume of traffic that moves through that interchange, so it's really one of the safest interchanges on the parkway. But that's not as in jeopardy with the preferred alternative, because there is a proposal to add two traffic signals which means conflict points where vehicles will be crossing each other's paths which creates opportunities for more crashes. Now, in the statement of purposes and need talks about improving safety, so why are we doing this change to Exit 39 that going to make it less safe. Yes, it will create connections, but it's not worth it. You're going -- you're playing with peoples' lives here. So I would say that the alternative that I haven't seen considered, but I really think should be considered is that Exit 40 should be fixed, it needs to be fixed, it's old and dangerous, but if we can't come up with an alternative to do something to Exit 39 to create the missing connections in a free flowing matter that preserves the safety that's already there, just leave it alone. Fix 40, leave 39 alone.	Addressing the missing connections at Exit 39 improves mobility and shifts some of the traffic demand at the Exit 40 interchange to the completed Exit 39 interchange resulting in improved safety at the Exit 40 interchange. The two interchanges must be designed together, given the proximity and operations of the two closely spaced interchanges. The design of the proposed intersections will meet the Department's standards to ensure they are designed safely. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area.
2	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	I just want to say the alternative that will have additional traffic lights if it's being considered like to make them kind of like smart lights not add additional driving time for the people in the project. So, I didn't really see how much information on how much travel time would be impacted, so it's important to be included maybe for future.	When traffic conditions were modeled, all alternatives impacted travel time due to the change in traffic flows. Overall, Alternative 26 is projected to improve travel times for the missing interchange movements when compared to the No Build Alternative. All traffic signals under the Build Alternative will be coordinated to reduce stoppage time and improve traffic flow along the Main Avenue and Rte. 7 corridors. Cameras and other technology will be implemented to allow traffic signals to detect traffic and therefore operate the most efficiently and effectively in real-time.
3	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	I am a member of the Merritt Parkway Advisory Committee for the 7/15 project. I have been working on this project since 1990 and have had many conversations with numerous DOT engineers about this. Currently, the state DOT has put forward alternate 26 as a preferred choice for the 7/15 project. This alternate would convert Route 7 to a full -- currently the state DOT has put forward alternate 26 as a preferred choice for this project. This alternate would convert Route 7 to a 4-lane boulevard by changing the character of the roadway using intersections and introducing traffic signals on Route 7. It may be the state's preferred plan, but it is not mine. The following is my opinion on alternate 26: (A) By adding traffic signals on the Route 7 expressway, I think that too many rear-end collisions would result since motorists are extremely impatient, especially in densely populated Fairfield County. (B) If you add traffic signals, the road becomes like the existing Main Avenue, state road 719. The purpose of the expressway is to avoid the traffic signals. Traffic signals will create further backups, which already exist at the a.m. and p.m. rush hours.	(A) Comments acknowledged. Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential and severity of crashes. (B) Main Avenue corridor has various establishments (Office, Retail, Residential) that contribute to the existing delays on the corridor, which is not present within the section of Route 7 of the project limits. The proposed improvements on Route 7 will provide additional means to bypass Main Avenue between State Route 123 (New Canaan Ave) and Route 15, eliminating the need to use Exit 2 on Route 7 to access areas north of Route 15. As a result, this will alleviate local congestion on Main Avenue. (C) The traffic generated from the developments was considered when projecting traffic to 2045 by reviewing all planned developments and applying an appropriate CTDOT growth rate. A supplemental traffic data collection program was performed in 2022. A comparison of 2022 traffic data against 2016 traffic data confirmed that the 2016

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			(C) There are many Norwalk projects in the pipeline that will impact the Main Avenue corridor, mainly new apartments and a hotel on the 1 part property on Main Avenue, BJs or another big box store being proposed on a 5-acre property on Main Avenue. In Wilton, on Danbury Road, there is a huge apartment building under construction right now. When the Walmart closes on Connecticut Avenue in Norwalk soon, the existing Walmart on Main Avenue will definitely have more shoppers using this store, which is across the street from Hyde Park. Consequently, there will be much more traffic in this area. Is alternate 26 really the answer to this increased traffic? Some questions that I have concerning the alternate 26 are: 1. How will CONNDOT prevent drivers from blocking the box at the traffic signal. 2. Will CONNDOT install lighting at the traffic light. 3. How will traffic lights be timed to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the expressway. 4. Does CONNDOT plan to implement methods to slow traffic on the busy expressway heading up to the traffic lights. 5. Has this type of boulevard plan been instituted in other parts of Connecticut. 6. What about a power outage during a Nor-easter or hurricane or emergency evacuation, what will happen then. Think about the future. Implementing alternate 21D is very shortsighted since the expressway should be completed all the way to Route 33 near Orem's Diner in Wilton as proposed many years ago. I support alternate 21D with free flow traffic with direct on and off-ramps. In my opinion 21 -- alternate 26 is going to be a traffic nightmare with traffic lights resulting in heavy congestion and long delays. Let's do it right the first time.	traffic volumes were still valid for use in the draft EA/EIE, and the 2016 results are still valid. The analysis took into account traffic from the new and planned developments in the area. 1. Comment acknowledged. This is an enforcement issue that the Legal Traffic Authority is responsible for. 2. Design phase will address the need to provide appropriate lighting throughout the project area where warranted (and permitted as regards Merritt Parkway). 3. Traffic signals timing will be addressed during design and will optimize Rte. 7 and Main Ave corridors through deployment of technology for efficient travel time. 4. Design going forward will address the necessary changes to re-characterize Route 7 leading to the signalized intersections (e.g., pavement markings, shoulder widths, signage, roadside plantings). 5. Alternative 26 is similar to other freeway terminations in the State and in the country. The proposed treatment at Rte. 7 (with new signals) is essentially taking the terminus of Rte. 7 at Grist Mill Road and shifting 1 mile south. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. 6. During power outages, the signals may turn to flashing operation or the intersection is treated as all way stop controlled per state law.
4	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I just had a up couple of other follow-up questions about something that I read in EIE. The first one is about projected traffic. I did read over the numbers and I was pretty interested to find that the projected traffic over the no build alternate is about negligible and actually went down a little bit. I'd be curious to hear some more follow-ups from the parties about how those numbers were generated because I think that the typical line of thought is if you build -- I'm sure you're all very familiar with the concept. So, I didn't know how that was generated. I saw that there was like a framework provided, I'm not an expert in this field, by any means, so I'm not like familiar with exactly how those numbers are come up with, but I didn't know if maybe the analysis looked at changes in land use spurred by additional highway development, and I know you see this a lot, especially in the sunbelt, a build out, a new highway, and then you start seeing a bunch of developments cropping up where you wouldn't have seen them previously, and with this added productivity in the project, you can say that it's now easier maybe to live in some areas and commute to others because you're not needing to take this detour off the highway anymore and will that generate any difference in land use over the following decades after the project is completed.	The traffic volumes generated from the proposed developments are included as part of the applicable CTDOT growth rate for this project. Traffic growth depends on many factors and varies across the entire State. The CT Travel Demand Model accounts for demographic data including but not limited to population, employment, households, vehicle ownership etc. The purpose of this project is to provide missing linkages, improve mobility and safety and is not to increase capacity.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
5	Public Hearing- Transcript	PAC	So, following up on Ben's point about the VMT numbers. I actually read them with Ben, and we took a look at the travel times and the average speed through there, as well. I want to call attention to them, not because I suspect that they're wrong, I think actually that they're probably right, and that is the travel times through the intersection projected into 2045. I don't have them in front of me, but if my memory serves me right, in 2045 the travel time through the interchange, I want to say it was on the Merritt, currently -- I'm sorry, it's not the travel time, but the current average speed. The current average speed is something that we would all expect like around the speed limit, it was right on the order of 45 to 50 miles an hour, but in 2045, with the know build option, it's like a 20 mile an hour figure, and with either of the alternatives, the number was even lower than it. It was 17 or 18 in one case and like 13 in other case. We're talking average speed in miles per hour through the corridor. I think that it is interesting, in this particular case, that the building of the interchange makes the traffic move even slower, but what I also want to call attention to is the fact that in the next 20 years the traffic is, regardless of whether we do it or not or which alternative we pick, is going to get a lot slower, and I think that really speaks to the need for us to invest in other forms of transportation. We could continue widening the Merritt, but we would have to keep doing it every few years, because that how it works. That's what the data bears out. Right? If you widen it, you've got to widen it again five years later. That's the only way to keep the traffic flowing, whereas there are a lot of other forms of transportation that are much more space efficient. Right? We could be investing, like John mentioned, in more robust public transportation. On the east/west corridor that probably looks like investing in Metro North; right? Which if we're going something, we can do more of that. Right? And \$100 million, which is a difference between the two alternatives, that goes a long way, and it goes an even longer way when it comes to walking and biking transportation, as I've already pointed out, but I wanted to bring up that data point, because I think it speaks volumes.	Travel speeds on the Merritt Parkway are lower in the future years due to traffic growth and the fact that the existing configuration of two thru lanes in each direction remain. There are no current or future plans to widen the Merritt Parkway in this corridor. The Department has and continues to ensure our Capital Plan includes improvements for all modes of transportation to ensure the travelling public is provided with multiple options.
6	Email	General Public	I am appalled that no one from the local Norwalk government bothered to attend this meeting. It will have an enormous impact on the neighborhood. Speaks volumes. 1. I live off of Glover Avenue. We've endured major construction for more than 2 years. It is STILL going on. The road has been dug up several times and we have had to contend with mud, exposed manhole covers not clearly marked, one way traffic, and blocked access. This pending project will once again impact Glover Avenue for years. 2. Norwalk P & Z approved construction of two huge apartment buildings, one 15 story and one 11 story. This will be an additional 1300 units and potential for 1300 additional cars. No one has considered this project hitting the timeline of the 7-15 project. People living on Glover will never be able to leave their homes. There was no mention of this at the presentation.	Comments acknowledged. As with all CTDOT projects, design will be coordinated with other local/regional projects. The Department has coordinated with the City of Norwalk and they have been on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The traffic volumes generated from the proposed developments are included as part of the applicable CTDOT growth rate for this project.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			3. The fascination with bike lanes amazes me. Bike lanes have been added to Glover Avenue with markings on the road and multiple signs. I go up and down Glover and, at best, see two bikes a week. There is one lone bike at the train station. The other day, the bike rider was in front of me in the car lane. He was not using the bike lane. A joke!!! I am really tired of my neighborhood being under siege.	
7	Website Form	General Public	As a retired Traffic Engineer with more than 33 years traffic engineering experience including many CTDOT projects, I would like to voice my strong opposition to Alternative 26. This alternative, which adds two traffic control signals to the Route 7 expressway is unsafe and will cause unnecessary traffic congestion on an otherwise free-moving expressway. Alternative 26 will result in a similar traffic and safety condition to that on Route 9 in Middletown with extensive traffic congestion and a high rate of rear end collisions. That should be unacceptable to the state since it does not safely and efficiently accommodate the traveling public. Need I remind you that the state is about to rebuild Route 9 to remove those signals. Why would CTDOT consider building similar unsafe inefficient interchange when they finally eliminating that one. It makes no sense. I understand that the opposition to the safer and more traffic efficient Alternative 21D is the visual impact to the Merritt Parkway, and while I strongly support maintaining the visual integrity of the Scenic Highway, that should not override safety. The visual impact to the parkway could be lessened by eliminating lower volume ramps (Route 7 SB to Route 15 NB; Route 7 SB to Main Avenue; Route 7 NB to Main Avenue), constructing architecturally unique bridges in the interchange and improving landscaping. This would provide a safe, efficient and attractive interchange. Please reconsider this. Thank you.	Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. The signals on Route 9 are situated between two freeway segments. The proposed treatment at Rte. 7 (with new signals) is essentially moving the terminus of the expressway from Rte. 7 at Grist Mill Road, to just south of the proposed Exit 39 completed interchange. The removal of the identified exits would have negative impact on mobility, one of the key P&N tenets for the project. The alignment of various ramps at the 7 & 15 interchange will continue to be evaluated during the design process.
8	Website Form	General Public	Hi. I am someone in the industry who prefers to remain anonymous. I have been familiar with this project for some time and am discouraged, but understanding, to see the preferred alternative presented. I strongly advise that any design beyond this point that accounts for traffic signals along an existing freeway mainline consider providing traffic calming along the US Route 7 right of way for some distance to either side of the project site at CT Route 15. Specifically, I recommend a variable width grass median, introducing slight curvature with a lower speed limit to the mainline, and providing context- and community-sensitive design elements along the side of the roadway that will contribute it being downgraded, in the perception of the motorist, from a freeway to a limited-access arterial with cross movements. The more supporting context that can be provided with this solution, the safer it will be to implement. My preferred solution remains the originally considered (going back many years) completion of the interchange along the Merritt Parkway with all ramps present, understanding that the design compromises that led to the current half-interchange are unlikely to be able to be overridden. I would also love to see a northern extension of the	The project Purpose and Needs statement notes that the existing Main Avenue and Route 15 interchange ramps have substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes, steep changes in grades, sharp curves, and limited sight distance, all factors leading to an elevated occurrence of crashes at interchange 40. Safety was evaluated for all proposed Alternatives. Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39.

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			existing northern stub end of the freeway to better tie into the US 7 mainline. In an ideal world there would be upgrades to provide 2 lanes each direction between the Merritt Parkway and I-84, but I realistically cannot expect that to be considered at this time. I just want the solution that is the safest and most easily understood by motorists. Thank you for your consideration.	Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area.
9	Website Form	Non-profit group	Where is the proposed rendering of this revised plan? Additionally: 1. I do not see any studies of the impact of electric vehicles which weigh more than standard vehicles on the design specifications. 2. The plan does not address the future of autonomous vehicles, connected CCV2 standards, and safety measures that will impact the spread of fire safety during accidents involving vehicles with lithium-ion batteries.	Renderings of the alternatives (including Alternative 26) are incorporated in various sections of the EA/EIE, and specifically Appendix A. Additional renderings will be developed as the design progresses. The Purpose and Need of this project is independent of the implementation EV and CAV infrastructure. The project's proposed enhancements are designed to satisfy CTDOT's latest design standards.
10	Website Form	General Public	Dear All, This connector must be built. Given the volume of traffic and upcoming developments in Norwalk / Wilton / Westport area this connector would benefit all three towns and more importantly the nearby businesses from easy flowing traffic. I sincerely hope to see this project completed as soon as possible. Thanks Nilanjan Bhowmik	Comment acknowledged.
11	Website Form	General Public	Glover Avenue has been a total mess of a road for over 22 years. no more I am so sick and tired of the wear and tear on my vehicle year after year. NO Thank you! Stay away please!	Comment acknowledged.
12	Website Form	General Public	I am requesting the collaboration between ConnDOT and the NRVt to plan a viable route for the NRVt as a way for ASML employees to one day commute to the office by bike. This move would help alleviate traffic in route 7 in Wilton and help reduce the states carbon footprint.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
13	Website Form	General Public	This would be beneficial and well used by members of the Norwalk community to commute to work on Route 77 offices	Comment acknowledged.
14	Website Form	General Public	I strongly suggest project team to take Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) in to the scope consideration. The NRVt could be much of benefit to improve traffic and safety because of alternative commute options for many people currently have no choice of driving in the area. Thank you.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
15	Website Form	General Public	As a frequent biker on the empire rail trail it's an absolutely shame that CT hasn't committed to this project. One big advantage to funding and completing this project would be the smaller number of cars on the road in the Wilton Norwalk area as it is a	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage

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			hub with a lot of big companies who would more than likely give their employees an incentive to ride their bike to work like the EU	with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
16	Website Form	General Public	Please consider the bike infrastructure here. The NRVt still needs to go by this area to connect Norwalk to Wilton (and then on to Danbury).	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
17	Website Form	General Public	Please take into consideration of taking NRVt as part of the project. That will make it possible for many of the people working in North Norwalk/South Wilton to bike ride to work, reduce the traffic congestion on the Main Ave.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
18	Website Form	General Public	As someone who works in Wilton and loves to bike ride, I would love to see the biking infrastructure greatly improved. If I were able to bike to work my commute would greatly improve, my quality of life would greatly improve, and I would be able to do my part in helping with global warming and ecological steps being taken to fight climate change. My commute alone would save around 15 KG of CO2 (this number is for a 1 way commute! double that for a full day commute to and from work) from entering the atmosphere (numbers calculated based on current bike commute I sometimes take from my house (but am too scared to do all the time because of the lack of infrastructure to keep me safe.))	Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2). CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
19	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRVt option in your planning.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
20	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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			The NRV T is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRV T around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRV T option in your planning.	
21	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRV T is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRV T around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRV T option in your planning.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRV T throughout the EA/EIE process and NRV T is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
22	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRV T is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRV T around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRV T option in your planning. Sincerely, Philip Choi	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRV T throughout the EA/EIE process and NRV T is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
23	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRV T throughout the EA/EIE process and NRV T is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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			The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRVt option in your planning.	
24	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRVt option in your planning.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
25	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRVt option in your planning.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
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27	Website Form	General Public	The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Several others gave this sentiment at the public comment meeting this evening, but I want to express my support for the NRVt connection through the area. I live at 1 Glover, right in the vicinity of this interchange, and Merritt currently is a major obstacle in any sort of safe bike access to the south.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
28	Website Form	General Public	Several others gave this sentiment at the public comment meeting this evening, but I want to express my support for the NRVt connection through the area. I live at 1 Glover, right in the vicinity of this interchange, and Merritt currently is a major obstacle in any sort of safe bike access to the south.	Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (Refer to Chapter 3.2). CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
29	Website Form	General Public	Hi EA/EIE/CTDOT Please consider non-automotive aspects in the Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Rt 7 clover leaf upgrade. The Rt 7 corridor development is fast paced and has no end in sight. Along with that development will come congestion. Having alternatives to driving is an economical and environmentally sound initiative to complement road upgrades. The NRVt is a growing alternative to driving in the Rt 7 corridor and links up with rail stations. Currently the options for routing the NRVt around the parkway are unattractive, forcing the trail to share busy narrow roads, leading to unsafe situations. Please consider accommodating the NRVt option in your planning.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
30	Website Form	General Public	Thank you for considering public comments on this important project. While larger in scope, any option for this project that does NOT include placing traffic lights on the RT 7 connector is/are the only logical choices. RT 7 is a major artery to Norwalk Hospital from all points north. Emergency vehicles must travel at high rates of speed to reach medical care without concern for lights and further congestion and even accidents caused by lights on a highway. Placing traffic lights on a perfectly functioning and widely used highway should be considered the opposite of progress. In addition, please consider the pressure Hartford politicians are putting on the growth of the Norwalk area. Traffic is increasing and is about to explode with the building of high-rise apartments in the along the RT corridor. Lastly, a reminder that in retrospect, we all deserve the right to get smarter as time goes on. (hindsight) Please do not move forward with the shortsighted Alternative 26 or any other option that puts traffic lights on RT 7 Connector. Status quo would be preferred.	Comment acknowledged. Installation of traffic lights as proposed in Alternative 26 will not disrupt emergency operations. State laws granting emergency vehicles rights-of-way over common traffic are applicable here, and all approaches are required to yield to an emergency vehicle with lights and sirens activated.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
31	Website Form	General Public	I am writing in concern that the project outcome will be that of a car centric idea that has permeated the past few decades. The option chosen should have the least amount of tarmac as possible to limit impermeable surfaces and also include careful design considerations for the NRVt that will be intersecting of rt 15. Alternative 26 is the ideal choice with NRVt consideration in the plan. The NRVt offers a unique and safe alternative to motorized transit and recreation destination. Alternative 26 is also the most cost effective. Two additional red lights are a small price to pay to the surrounding community that needs more old growth trees and safe pedestrian access along the connections.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
32	Website Form	General Public	I believe alternate 21d would be the preferred choice as it allows longer straights to be able to merge safely onto route 15	Comment acknowledged.
33	Website Form	General Public	I was extremely disappointed to see there were no accommodations made to provide access for the NRVt. As drawn this cut off the Main Ave offices and residents from pedestrian and bicycle access from the rest of Norwalk. Use some of the money saved in the plan to open up access to the NRVt	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
34	Website Form	General Public	I approve and support the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project. I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project and I support the findings in the Environmental Assessment. I also approve and support the build alternative (Alternative 26) for the Route 7/15 Norwalk Project because the build alternative will improve safety by eliminating the loop ramps from CT-15 E to US-7 N and from US-7 N to CT-15 W which will reduce weaving movements on US-7.	Comment acknowledged.
35	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 1 of 5	Thank you for the opportunity to review the NEPA Environmental Assessment/ CEPA Environmental Impact Evaluation for the proposed reconfiguration and reconstruction of Interchanges 39 and 40 of the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk. Much of this ambitious project would take place within the footprint of the existing interchanges, however several significant elements of this project involve construction on new areas adjacent to the existing interchanges and highways. DEEP staff have reviewed the above-referenced document as well as conducted a limited site review of the project area and attended the August 16 public hearing at Norwalk City Hall. Regulatory Authority of DEEP Documents prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) typically contain a section listing and discussing the necessary federal, state and municipal permits and approvals required for a proposed action. Though this EA/EIE does not contain such a discussion or listing, it appears that the relevant permits for this project are acknowledged within it. Appendix H, Floodplain Study, in particular addresses the relevant permits. The area of land disturbance during construction activities will require a General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters Associated with Construction Activities (DEEP-WPED-GP-015). Several wetlands as well	Comment acknowledged. As a point of clarification, the proposed bridges along the Norwalk River are designed to prevent water surface increases to the floodplain and floodway. In the preliminary analysis, water surface elevations do not increase. Appendix H of the EA/EIE includes language on the removal of the downstream Flock Process Dam. The dam removal lowers water surface elevations approximately 1.5-feet in the upstream area, the elevations do not increase. The modeling will be provided with the permit applications for DEEP's review.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			as the Norwalk River will be impacted by construction activities as well as the placement of permanent fill and structures, thus requiring an Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Permit. It is also anticipated that either a General or Individual Section 401 Water Quality Certificate will be required for the proposed action. Appendix H addresses the placement of permanent fill within the Norwalk River floodplain and acknowledges the need for a Floodplain Management Certification for these materials. All of the above permits would be obtained from the DEEP Land and Water Resources Division (LWRD). The estimated increase of 1.5 feet in the 100-year flood water surface elevation will be evaluated as part of the Floodplain Management Certification. A Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) must be obtained from FEMA before submitting any application to the LWRD for Floodplain Management Certification. The City of Norwalk may also have flood management ordinances that may be applicable for this project. Selection of Alternative 26 as the Preferred Alternative The Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Evaluation analyzes two build alternatives, namely Alternatives 21 D and 26, in depth. Alternative 26 is described as ConnDOT's preferred alternative in the EA/EIE although it has not been officially selected as the build concept to be advanced to design and permitting. Assumedly this will occur in the Record of Decision. DEEP concurs that the selection of Alternative 26 is a logical and reasonable choice based on a multitude of environmental, cost, and maintenance factors. As laid out in Chapter 2 of the EA/EIE, Alternative 26 has a significant construction cost advantage over Alternative 21 D (\$109 million vs. \$207 million), has a smaller project footprint, fewer road miles of construction, half as many bridge structures (14 vs. 7), easier constructability, lesser on-going maintenance needs, and lesser wetlands impacts, among other advantages, while still satisfying the project purpose and need. Some local preference has been expressed for Alternative 21 D based on its provision of free flow ramps for all movements without traffic signals, but this advantage does not outweigh the other disadvantages of Alternative 21 D relative to Alternative 26.	
36	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 2 of 5	Kellogg-Deering Aquifer Protection Area Page 3.28 of the EA/EIE briefly discusses the Kellogg-Deering Wellfield of the First Taxing District of Norwalk and mentions that this wellfield supplies 50% of the public drinking water supply for Norwalk. The Routes 7/15 interchange Project No. 102-358 is partially located within the final adopted mapped Level A Aquifer Protection Area for the Norwalk First Taxing District's Kellogg-Deering Well Field. The southern portion of the project extends to within .036 miles of the well. Norwalk has delineated the aquifer protection area boundary on the town zoning map and adopted local aquifer protection area regulations, City of Norwalk, Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Regulations,	Future project documents (design reports, design plans), where appropriate, can include identification of the APA boundaries. In addition, during construction, Best Management Practices will be implemented in accordance with CTDOT's Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 818 section 1.10

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			consistent with the state regulations pursuant to Section 22a-354p of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be required for construction within this area. BMPs from the Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program Manual entitled, Road and Highway Construction/Reconstruction in Aquifer Protection Areas, are found in the Appendices 14.4.3. Most importantly, preventing illicit discharges to stormwater, including fuel and chemical pollution releases to the ground, is critically important, and catch basins and curbs should be installed in this area and designed to control runoff. We recommend that a plan/figure be added to future project documents with the parcel property boundary overlaid with the aquifer protection area boundary to inform all parties working in this sensitive drinking water area. See the example below:	
37	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 3 of 5	One Glover Apartments Both build alternatives include a new lane constructed along the northern edge (or westbound lanes) of the Merritt Parkway between Main Avenue and Glover Avenue. This new lane would be part of a new direct connection from Main Avenue to US Route 7 and would run between the existing Merritt Parkway embankment and the One Glover Apartments building on Glover Avenue. The One Glover Apartments building contains 132 units on five floors. It is in close proximity to the existing westbound lanes of the Merritt Parkway, separated from it by a row of parking spaces behind the building and a narrow strip of lawn. Constructing the new lane through this narrow corridor would put the ramp significantly closer to the rear apartments of the One Glover building, which is currently, according to the M39e Noise Study of Appendix E, the single site of the nineteen modeled locations exceeding the Noise Abatement Criteria levels. Though Appendix E finds that this location does not meet the thresholds to construct any noise barrier or other measures, the proximity of the new ramp to these apartments unquestionably will expose their residents to additional noise impacts as well as increased impacts from headlights of passing cars. If a barrier to reduce noise and block lights is not built here, might it be feasible to increase the separation between the new lane and the One Glover Apartments by excavating and removing a portion of the existing highway embankment and shifting the alignment of the new lane southward at least partially into the space currently occupied by the lower half of the embankment. This would provide some incremental value in attenuating both noise and lighting impacts to these apartments.	Any shift in the alignments for the ramps would require major reconstruction of the Route 15 (Merritt Parkway) mainline and have a major impact on the visual and aesthetic character of the Parkway. As the design progresses, the project team will continue to evaluate other measures (design features, landscaping, etc.) to alleviate concerns at this location.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
38	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 4 of 5	Norwalk River Valley Trail The value of extending the Norwalk River Valley Trail through the project area as a strategy to encourage non-motorized travel and, in particular, to reduce congestion on Main Avenue, was a prominent theme raised at the August 16 public hearing. As ConnDOT is surely aware, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments was successful in procuring a \$4.53 million RAISE grant to study the Norwalk River Valley Trail corridor, and two connecting trail corridors. This grant is to designate a final alignment for this trail, finish planning for the trail, as well as to undertake design work and prepare construction documents to advance the trail to a shovel-ready stage. ConnDOT should coordinate with these planning efforts to ensure compatibility of the Merritt Parkway project design and the Norwalk River Valley Trail plans and possibly incorporate design elements such as a pedestrian bridge over the Parkway corridor when this stage is reached.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVV throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVV is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
39	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 5 of 5	Miscellaneous Observations and Comments on the EA/EIE [numbering added] - The EA/EIE describes both build alternatives as including the realignment of Creeping Hemlock Drive northward and widening it. The document does not discuss the purpose of this realignment. Is it to improve the geometry of the intersection of Main Avenue, Glover Avenue and Creeping Hemlock Drive? This would seem logical, but it is never stated in the document. During the DEEP field review on August 16, it was noted that a 15' tall rock outcrop exists immediately north of Creeping Hemlock Drive at its approach to Main Avenue. Would this outcrop need to be cut back to accomplish the planned realignment? - Several speakers at the August 16 public hearing commented that the two planned traffic signals on US Route 7 would lead to numerous accidents as drivers transitioned from an expressway profile to an urban arterial profile on that road. It might be informative to review the accident rates and history on Route 9 at the signalized intersections in downtown Middletown where a similar transition occurs from expressway profiles to the north and south of the signalized intersections to a signalized urban arterial roadway. - Discussion on page 3.68 of the EA/EIE speaks of the function the Merritt Parkway landscaping performs to enhance resiliency by, among other things, absorbing stormwater and reducing stormwater runoff to the Norwalk River and to neighboring streets and properties. In designing the new Parkway landscaping for the reconstructed interchanges and the affected segment of the Parkway, ConnDOT should consider opportunities to incorporate, as appropriate and consistent with other landscaping objectives, water quality swales and vegetated rain gardens to facilitate infiltration of stormwater on the site. - At Interchange 40, the infield of the southeastern quadrant loop ramp was seen, on August 16, to be full of construction equipment, Jersey barriers, piles of soil and aggregate and other construction materials. Are these equipment and materials	- The purpose of the widening is to provide additional road capacity and turning lanes to appropriately meet traffic needs in the design year. The identified rock outcrop will be required to be cut back for proposed improvements. An initial review of any proposed rock cut reveals it not an issue to hotel property and limits of cut will remain on State ROW. - Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. - The signals on Route 9 are situated between two freeway segments as opposed to this proposed condition where the freeway terminus will be shifted from Grist Mill to just south of the Exit 39 interchange. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. - Stormwater management practices will be designed in accordance with CTDOT MS4 Permit and Stormwater Management Plan including nonpoint discharges and opportunities for green infrastructure will be a focus of the stormwater plan and will be addressed in design. - The area in question is a staging area for ongoing safety improvements to the Merritt Parkway not associated with this project.

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			simply being staged there for use on another site or is some work on this ramp or elsewhere in this interchange occurring or contemplated in the very near future? 5. Lastly, and amusingly, text in Section 3.1 of the EA/EIE states that in assessing future traffic levels, the design year of 2045 is used to assess the projected traffic impact 20 years after the completion of the Project (2025). One has to assume that this latter date is simply a relic of some previous version of this report rather than an optimistic assessment of the timeframe for design, permitting and construction of this project.	5. All alternatives were compared under 2045 traffic conditions. The 2025 traffic analysis was used as an intermediary comparison and the EA/EIE most commonly compares traffic in 2045.
40	Website Form	General Public	SAVE PROJECT TIME & \$\$\$\$. Please remove exits/entrances at 40A 40B connecting Main Ave & the Merritt Pkwy. They have become redundant with the addition of the Grist Mill exit/entrance & (exit 2) exits/entrances & New Canaan Ave. each less than a mile from 40A & 40B. Removing 40A & 40B will also address a huge SAFETY issue of vehicles trying to enter or exit the Merritt Pkwy located at the bottom of large hills in both directions generating a large traffic shear in adjacent lanes. Please reconsider this phase of the 7/15 Norwalk Project.	Comment acknowledged. Note the removal of the identified exits would have negative impact on mobility, one of the key P&N tenets for the project.
41	Website Form	General Public	It seems like the project should incorporate the Norwalk River Valley Trail bike path. Building a new interchange would be a great opportunity to build bicycle access into the design, rather than attempting to add it afterwards. If CT DOT and the city of Norwalk are truly serious about promoting cycling infrastructure, they should consider altering the design to include that. Further, any increase in bike accessibility is positive for the environment, as bike transport is emissions free.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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42	Website Form	General Public	Overall, Alternative 26 seems like a superior option in terms of minimizing cost and environmental impact while still providing adequate connections for Route 7 and the Merritt Pkwy. I am concerned about the use of traffic lights on the ramp connections to Main Ave and Route 7. I would like to encourage CTDOT to consider safer alternatives for these intersections, such as roundabouts. Pedestrian and cycle improvements on Main Avenue are very welcome and this is a growing area of town and improving walking & biking infrastructure will allow people in Merritt 7 to more easily reach stores on Main Ave (e.g., Stop & Shop). I look forward to seeing plans for protected pedestrian & bike infrastructure alongside the improved local roads. However, the proposed path for the Norwalk River Valley Trail is not adequate and it is doubtful there is enough room under the Perry Ave bridge for a protected path wide enough for pedestrians & cyclists. There is, however, plenty of space under the Merritt Pkwy bridge over Route 7, so a protected pedestrian & cycling right-of-way could be created there. In order to address long-term traffic challenges and properly connect Norwalk North and South of the Merritt Pkwy, the project should incorporate space for a protected pedestrian & cycling path over or under the Merritt Pkwy. The Merritt Pkwy divides Norwalk, and there are not many places it can be safely crossed without a car. If CTDOT is making improvements to the Parkway, it should also be working to address this issue that pedestrians and cyclists face. Additionally, as this project will resolve the issue of drivers needing to use local roads to connect between state highways, Main Avenue south of Grist Mill Road should be returned to local control once the project is complete, so the city of Norwalk can build and maintain appropriate local infrastructure for this increasingly important and densely-developed part of town.	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, roundabouts were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals. Other alternative concepts (i.e., Single Point Urban Interchanges (SPUI) and Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI) were examined and also found not to be acceptable due to poor levels of service.
43	Website Form	General Public	The 7/15 project should include plans to include the Norwalk River Valley Trail. The Trail is planned to cross the Merritt and connect to the station just north of the interchange, but is planning a less direct route through the Perry Ave. tunnel instead of parallel to Main Ave. I think it would be much safer for pedestrians if they did not have to share the narrow tunnel on Perry with traffic and could safely pass the interchange without interacting with traffic as they do now on Main Ave. I think giving the trail a new underpass decoupled from the road would greatly improve the safety and quality of the trail and reduce conflicts between pedestrians/cyclists and traffic.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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44	Website Form	General Public	I am concerned that while the new interchange project has been advertised to the public as friendly to biking and walking, Norwalk's most prominent bike path is left out of the plans. The trail will have to cross the Merritt Parkway as it is expanded and current crossings like Perry Avenue do not offer enough space or protection from traffic for riders and pedestrians. Including the Norwalk River Valley Trail in the new interchange plan would show that Norwalk and the Connecticut DOT are serious about building sustainable cycling and walking infrastructure for our citizens and improving road and bike safety in our city. Please consider this as this is a once in a lifetime chance to make such a big impact at a small price. Thank you (p.s. this comment field does not allow any single or double quotation marks - so apologize for that punctuation).	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
45	Website Form	PAC	Please see attached letter for public comment from the Friends of the NRVt, Inc. Friends of the NRVt is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to facilitate the design, construction, and maintenance of a regionally significant, safe, universally accessible, multipurpose trail linking Norwalk, Wilton, Redding, Ridgefield, and Danbury that fosters increased recreational opportunities, alternative transportation options, and a healthy lifestyle. For any questions, please contact Andrea Gartner, Executive Director, NRVt, agartner@nrvt-trail.com; 203-470-8005. This will present the position of the Friends of the Norwalk River Valley Trail with respect to the proposed Alternative 26 revision of the 7/15 interchange. It is our view that Alternative 26 as presented fails to provide adequate (any) accommodation for the NRVt through this interchange. As the major regional trail in Fairfield County and as a critical alternative transportation link, this is a major disappointment and a meaningful missed planning opportunity. In particular, Alternative 26 (and all of the alternatives) severs the NRVt and the dense residential and commercial centers that lie on both sides of the interchange in Norwalk along the Route 7/Main Ave. corridor. We realize the roots of this project reach back 20 or so years to a time when the NRVt was not a reality. But obviously times have changed. Millions of dollars of public and private investment have gone into the NRVt and now about 15 miles of trail are completed along the route from Norwalk to Danbury... and millions more have been committed to continue construction. Obviously, times have changed and so should the scope of this project. We recognize that other important constituencies must also be served by this project. In an effort of collaboration and to live within the proposed Alternative 26, the NRVt has, at our expense, hired a consultant to review the feasibility of a route through the interchange, some of which are more economically feasible than others. While not necessarily an EA/EIE concern, during the design phase we would ask the DOT to consider and fund the most prudent alternative and are willing to assist in the development of that solution. A viable route for the NRVt through this fatal choke point	The Department thanks the NRVt for their continued participation throughout the EA/EIE process and their representation on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with your group as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Subsequent to the hearing, the Department has received the feasibility report from NRVt and will coordinate with the NRVt and the City after the review is complete.

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			must be found given our State and National goals of environmentally responsible alternative transportation. The community support for the vital economic and transportation engine that the NRVt represents for this area was reflected in the grassroot showing at the recent public hearing. This was truly reflective of the community at large and was not a product of any NRVt effort. We, the Friends of the NRVt, have been and continue to look forward to being partners with Stantec and CTDOT in the realization of our trail. Revising 7/15 is a once in a lifetime opportunity, it should be a stimulus for, not an impediment to, safe alternative transportation that drives smart economic growth. We all must work together to realize this vision and suggest that we schedule a meeting with the NRVt, our consultant and DOT to review the options the NRVt has developed. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit these comments. Should you have any questions concerning any issues or topics discussed herein, please feel free to contact me at (860) 424-4110 or at kate@elsilc.net.	
46	Email	General Public	Just wondering if there might be an animated video showing the various vehicle approaches for the different proposals. If there isn't one, this might be a good project for some computer savvy visual arts student. A bit off-topic, but I have always been hopeful that the "new" Rte. 7 might someday be extended from Grist Hill Road through our homogeneous communities to the north, up to the Ridgefield/Danbury line. Back in the day, this was the original plan, or so I've heard. Any thoughts on this?	A 3D visualization model was created for this project including Alt 21D and Alt 26. This was shared with the Project Advisory Committee and graphics from the models were incorporated in the EA/EIE Visual Impacts section. The model will be updated once design of Alt 26 advances and it will be shared with the public. The extension of Route 7 from Grist Mill Road is beyond the scope of this project. Currently, there are no plans to extend Route 7.
47	Email	General Public	My name is Angelo, and I wanted to briefly comment on the 7/15 Norwalk Project. I am concerned about bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the area, as well as the planned routing of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) proposed by this project. As someone who doesn't own a car, I walk, take public transit, and use alternative forms of transportation to get around, as do many in Norwalk. However, the area of Main Avenue in the study area is currently dangerous to walk and bike, and is poorly served by public transit. As highlighted in the project's Environmental Assessment, many of the roads in the area completely lack sidewalks, very few of the existing sidewalks are ADA accessible, and much of the sidewalks are degraded beyond use. As the Assessment discovered, very few people bike in the area, driven by a complete lack of infrastructure, and the high speeds and volumes of vehicles driving along Main Avenue and exiting the Merritt Parkway. Furthermore, I am concerned with the routing of the NRVt that would result from the project's current plans. Currently, the project would force the trail underneath the Merritt Parkway via Perry Avenue. However, the area in question already barely has space for a sidewalk, and will undoubtedly have no space for a dedicated bike trail. Any	Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2). CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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			proposal that would result in people on bikes having to ride in traffic along Perry Avenue with cars will jeopardize the safety and pleasure of those using the NRVt. I implore the project to strongly consider the needs of people who walk, bike, and use public transit to get around the area, such as myself. Adding sidewalks and protected bike lanes to the roads in the study area will improve safety and reduce the acts of traffic violence which have plagued Connecticut residents in recent years. Furthermore, to promote future use of the NRVt, the trail should not be forced to operate in mixed traffic, but instead should have its own dedicated pathway, or protected lane. These considerations will help Norwalk reconnect neighborhoods long divided by Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway, cost a miniscule fraction of the spending proposed for car infrastructure changes, and help the NRVt become a first-class trail for all of Norwalk's residents to enjoy. I implore the project to take these proposals into consideration, and adopt these ideas.	
48	Written Comment	General Public	Noise is a major detractor of quality of life in the Merritt/ Rt. 7 area, motorcyclists and souped-up cars are encroaching on the sound environment. The problem is too complex to be addressed thru legislation or law enforcement (I've tried!) We now have a chance to solve the problem thru this physical environment we are creating. The decibel "not worse" is a really weak showing for noise concerns that are a high priority. Roundabouts should be considered. They do promote civilities and noise vandals can't do their thing. People in Greenwich can have anything they want. They have roundabouts.	The EA/EIE addresses Noise in Chapter 3.4. The analysis finds that Alternative 26 does not increase noise (over the current condition) in the various identified measured and modeled locations throughout the project area in any discernable amount, and in fact in some instances decreases noise levels. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals.
49	Written Comment	General Public	What's an "Open House" without delicious munchies and drinks? CONNDOT employees should have titles or roles on their name badges. Was CT State police included in the 7-15 PAC?	State Police are not on the 7-15 PAC but were contacted and commented favorably on the concept. Crash data provided by State Police were obtained from the DOT/UConn database.
50	Written Comment	General Public	Moderator (Amy Stula) was well spoken, easy to understand. Orderly. Glad to have full access interchange for Route 7 & Route 15. At Creeping Hemlock is a 1st taxing district water building that contains pumps, gauges & other essential drinking water distribution infrastructure. Has 1st taxing district been part of the conversation? If not, you need to make them part of the conversation. Not just CBYD. Initially I thought Alternative 26 would be awful because of installing traffic signals on Route 7 "freeway". Having seen & heard the presentation, I now think <u>Alternative 26 is preferable</u> and the best way to make this interchange a full 4-way connection.	The Project team has met with Norwalk First Taxing District to obtain their input throughout the EA/EIE process and will continue to coordinate with them as design progresses. In addition, during construction, Best Management Practices will be implemented in accordance with CTDOT's Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 818 section 1.10
51	Written Comment	General Public	Sidewalks and pedestrian movability. Main Ave. & Glover is not pedestrian friendly.	Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (Refer to Chapter 3.2)

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52	Email	USFWS	My only comment is that we are expecting to see a final rule to list the tri-colored bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in the near future. That species did not appear on the IPaC report, but I recommend following the progress of that listing action and considering minimizing effects to that species, as applicable.	As noted in EA Section 3.5.3, CTDOT will continue to monitor the IPaC database for new or updated listings of species that may occur within the Project Area (e.g., Monarch Butterfly and Tri-colored Bat) and will coordinate with USFWS and CTDEEP as required to address applicable state and federal requirements as design and construction progress.
53	Email	General Public	You have destroyed the Merritt 7 landmark and you have destroyed too many beautiful trees (hmmmm who profited from your destruction?). I will research every person behind this destruction, and my vote will indicate my disapproval.	Comment acknowledged.
54	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I live at 14 Haviland Street in South Norwalk, Connecticut, and I work in Wilton and I ride my bike to work every day. I'm well-acquainted with how the current state of the project area is an impediment to people trying to walk or bike between Norwalk and Wilton. My main feedback for the project team tonight is I think that there's a need for additional planning for a fully separated route through the NRVt project area. I think that, as probably most people in this room know, the NRVt will one day make up the whole backbone of the whole region's bike network. But a change is only as strong as its weakest link. The current proposed route on Perry Ave will put trail users in with mixed traffic, and I think that will make it a much less attractive option for a lot of people who don't feel comfortable riding in mixed traffic, and you'll see a lot less usage of the trail if that is the route that is ultimately chosen. I think this project provides a once in a generation opportunity to provide a safe, great separated route through the project area that all users will feel comfortable using. I think this is better for regional connectivity, reducing congestion and putting in air quality, all of which are stated project goals. So, I think that a separated path is really key for making sure that the project, in its entirety, all users can meet its goals. Looking through the EIE, I haven't seen a lot of evidence that the project is considering this. It does show the baseline routing on Perry, but it doesn't really give much priority to alternative routings, especially ones that are fully separated. I think that this is the best change that we have to do this and planning for the NRVt needs to be fully integrated with planning for the project as a whole. I hope that you're working closely with the NRVt organization, and whatever other relevant stakeholders are involved, to make sure that we do this right, because this is our best chance and it also would be really cheap. You know, as the cost was just shown, over \$100 million for the cheap option. No matter how crazy you want to get with bridges or tunnels for bikes, it's going to be on the order of a few percent of the total project cost. So, I think it's very feasible to do, and I think we should do this the right way because the region deserves a quality bike path in this area.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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55	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I fully agree with the previous speaker on every element. Norwalk River Valley Trail is what he was talking about, and I think it's vital that, given even with 365 crashes, we're talking about something like, if I'm doing the math right, 300,000 per crash, the cost of this project. So, I really think we need to give more attention to cyclists and pedestrians in what is becoming a very dense urban area and will be even more dense by 2045, and I hope that there's more density in Norwalk near the Metro-North and that there's more investment in the Metro-North, and this doesn't really contemplate that, except in a very small way. And the other piece I note from the superhighway that was created only up until Grist Mill Road is that it went right through a big body of water and that there's development right encroaching on the other side of that body of water, and there are birds are in there and everything, and I just want to be careful before doing a whole bunch more. And the other piece is that I happen to live really close to the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk, and I never realized that all of the trees were going to be denuded. There is a member of our planning and zoning department, who is a good friend, and he explained to me that they were native trees that are going to be replanted and that a lot of the trees that were cut were diseased. All of that is well and good, but it has really taken away a large carbon sink for us for the next 20 years before those replanted trees get mature, and also the views have changed for, especially a lot of my neighbors who live really right on the Merritt, and they didn't get compensated for that. That superhighway part is a lot wider, so the risk to cars, which was the whole justification of cutting down all the trees, from increased climate changes is much lower from the midsize, so I hope that the plans in response to this public hearing will consider that more seriously. We need more urban reforestation, and that goes throughout the state. So, thank very much, and I live on Chestnut Hill Road in Norwalk.	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2). With regard to replanting, Alt 26 will rehabilitate remnant, scarred and cluttered areas within the Project area to enhance Parkway character through planting design as part of the commitment memorialized in the MOA to adhere to the "Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines" (March 2020).
56	Public Hearing- Transcript	PAC	I'm an appointed official. I'm the chair of the Bike/Walk Commission here in Norwalk and I'm also speaking as a resident and representative of an advocacy group called Sustainable Streets, which is somewhat new. Some of our members are here. I do want to put the request for the NRVt in context, first by acknowledging all the things that the project is doing well. The lower cost of the preferred alternative over 21 is great. The fact that connection is being made is going to make peoples' lives easier. I think that re-characterizing Route 7 is the right move. It will enable traffic calming and opening the door for maybe re-imagining all that land that's north of the interchange. I think the point that was made about stoplights is a valid one, and I would love to see whether, in the past or in the future, roundabouts have been or could be considered in place of those stoplights because they have a much better safety record, but still move a comparable amount of traffic in a lot of cases.	Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2).

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			The fact that the project is going to alleviate some of the traffic and the pressure on Main Avenue is a huge win for pedestrian and bike safety, because that's a very unsafe corridor right now. I have biked it and I have walked it, and I know firsthand. I really appreciate the stated commitment to mobility for all users, especially on the Main Avenue corridor, especially going under the Merritt bridge. I don't want that to be lost in all the requests for accommodations for NRVt, because that's going to be a game changer for that area, but the requests for that sort of mobility accommodation and the request for the accommodations for the actual route of the NRVt serve two different purposes: one's local, one's regional. One serves more commuters and adults, frankly, and the other serves people of all abilities and all ages. But I want to provide a little context for why we should care about the NRVt. The interest in the NRVt and walking and biking generally has grown dramatically since this project started. During the pandemic, the usage of the trail has spiked like three times, and it has stayed stable like over two times the baseline right before the pandemic. Norwalk just opened a new section of trail, the Federal Department of Transportation just awarded a one half a million dollar grant for planning and design for the entire rest of the trail, so it's a much bigger deal than it was in 2016 when I understand this project started and it started before that even, right? Additionally, Norwalk is investing in a citywide complete street project, a plan, a commitment. There are ambitious goals in our transportation master plan about access for walking and biking. There's a transit-oriented focus of our draft zoning code that's being reviewed right now. There's a new train station at Merritt 7, which is right next to the project area, and then we've got this increasing job density along Route 7 in Wilton, which is outside the project scope, but the fact that we're putting more jobs on a road that is pretty narrow and is already pretty congested, it just speaks to the need for a greater vision for non-car and for structure for walking and biking and public transportation. That's why we're all talking about the NRVt today. The NRVt board has done a lot of work and they've spent a lot of money of that they had to fundraise for to look for alternatives as to how to get the main route of the NRVt through the project area and what they found is that, by their standards, they have getting money from grants to do their stuff. Like Ben mentioned, in the context of this project, we're talking like peanuts. So, we could get like a top quality connection for the NRVt through the project area on the order of 1 percent or maybe 2 percent of the total project cost. So that's what I'm asking for. I understand that the official scope of the project doesn't include the NRVt, but I guess I'm asking for the to be officially expanded to include that, because it is critical regional connectivity and will make the project more holistic and not just about moving more cars. To spend a ton of money to do it. This is a group, again, that is fundraising their own money and they're getting money from grants to do their stuff.	

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57	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I'm a resident of Haviland Street in South Norwalk. I just want to thank everyone for the work they've done on this project. I'm also in favor of alternative 26, the cheaper one. I think I would like to see some of the money that the state of Connecticut and the federal government was willing to fork over for alternative 21D potentially be repurposed into adding the NRVt, as a couple of people already mentioned, through the project area.	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
58	Public Hearing- Transcript	PAC	I'm the president of the Norwalk Association of 25 Silvermine Homeowners. Thank you very much. You guys have been great, very transparent and collaborative with us as part of the PAC. Thank you very much. It's great to see. My biggest concern is that we're getting slammed in Norwalk and, you know, we talk about timing and stuff like that, and I just want to make sure that, as much as it can be, 95 is done being constructed, I know there's another project for Grist Mill to be continued on, which is a separate DOT project group, and it doesn't seem like there's a lot of coordination in timing. We have the Rock Bridge being constructed. Norwalk really needs help with coordinating so that it's not happening all at once for us. And my second comment is on a personal level as someone -- I do ride my bike to work across town down Main Avenue, and the lights are almost never really coordinated really well, so as part of the project if we can make sure that if there are lights added to the expressway, that there is a real look at how lights are coordinated for safety.	Comment acknowledged. As with all CTDOT projects, design will be coordinated with other local/regional projects. Traffic signal coordination along Main Avenue will be addressed in the design phase of the project. Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2).
59	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I am here to speak about the lack of connectivity incorporated in the project for NRVt. The NRVt is originally -- it's a regional spine in regard to the bicycle network. I ride it quite often and, as we all know, it's disjointed because it's going -- it's being built in piecemeal fashion, but it really lends itself to being a good corridor that people can go to jobs and businesses on the north side. It's great for recreation, not just for cycles, but for pedestrians and all walkers. It provides a lot of economic activity. By not having it fully connect through this project could possibly jeopardize that economic activity it provides, because we all know that businesses and property values go up when there's an off-road bike path of this sort there including in NRVt in it and have a really robust right of way incorporated in the project. I would also like to see if we go with the alternative 26, those signals be turned into roundabouts. With more traffic they've been shown to be better for safety and also reduce some articulate matter and ozone gasses.	Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.
60	Public Hearing- Transcript	PAC	The Conservancy, as many of you probably know, is a private nonprofit organization that was established by the governor about 20 years ago. We have a 3-prong mission. Our first is to --we're committed to ensure the Merritt Parkway's beauty is kept and revitalized in construction and maintenance projects and changes necessitated to upgrade safety are done with the spirit of its delightful original design, and we also strive to keep the public informed about the history and value of this really unusual resource. Our mission was stress tested by this interchange soon after we were organized 20 years ago when demolition of the historic Main Avenue bridge began for the interchange designed with a large network or flyover bridges and ramps that was not parklike by any	Comment acknowledged.

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			means. We successfully litigated to stop the construction, and we're here tonight and very pleased to say that for the first time, out of all the alternatives that have been discussed, we strongly support alternative 26. The compact interchange between Route 7 and the Merritt is clearly preferable to the much larger one in 21D in terms of conserving natural features, wetlands, wildlife habitat and minimizing impervious cover with the watershed. At least half the size of all previous proposals with significant cost saving to the taxpayers are an important benefit. We do represent the public aspect of the Merritt Parkway. It substantially reduces both construction costs, as well as ongoing maintenance costs in the future. So, in closing, I just want to say that I really appreciate on behalf of the Conservancy, and I speak for the board, Stantec and CONNDOT and FHWA for their thoroughness in this alternative analysis and in hearing our concerns over the scale compatibility and costs and incorporating them all in alternative 26.	
61	Public Hearing- Transcript	CTDEEP	I'm with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and I will be submitting comments in that capacity later on. Two or three short things. One, I had a note in the EIE/EA, page 31, it talks about looking at traffic volumes for the low impact and for the no build and the two builds for the year 2045, which would be 20 years after the completion of the project in 2025. I don't think anybody here really believes that the project is completed in 2025, so I think that number may be left over from some previous iteration of this project. Second comment, I appreciated Anthony's opening remarks and some of the other remarks about changing the character of Route from the expressway to signalized, I'm just wondering if, looking at the traffic, the accident rates for Route 9 going through Middletown, which has signalized intersections with full expressways through north and south, if that might provide any guidance as to how to successfully bring about what you're trying to bring about. The other comment that I had -- I spent this afternoon, it was a much warmer day than I anticipated, walking much of the alignments and the neighborhoods and side streets and working up with pretty good sweat. The point I wanted to bring up is both of the build alternative show a new 2-lane on the northern side or westbound side of Route 15 between Main Avenue and Route 7 and going between the existing highway and the 1 Glover apartment building and having walked behind the 1 Glover apartment building, there is a very, very small width between the bottom of the embankment of the highway and the back of the apartment building. So, I'm hoping the EA -- the final EA can maybe address that, and a couple of things I would think might be helpful. One is if the new lane can encroach into the existing embankment, maybe with retaining walls, or something, to give you a little more width to work with, and the other would be some kind of noise barrier/light barrier could be incorporated those new lanes and the 1 Glover apartment building, because it really seems like additional lanes there are going to be almost like in	All alternatives were compared under 2045 traffic conditions. The 2025 traffic analysis was used as an intermediary comparison and the EA/EIE most commonly compares traffic in 2045. Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for severe crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. The signals on Route 9 are situated between two freeway segments as opposed to this proposed condition where the freeway terminus will be shifted from Grist Mill to just south of the Exit 39 interchange. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. Any shift in the alignments for the ramps would require major reconstruction of the Route 15 (Merritt Parkway) mainline and have a major impact on the visual and aesthetic character of the Parkway. As the design progresses, the project team will continue to evaluate other measures (design features, landscaping, etc.) to alleviate concerns at this location. The noise analysis finds that Alternative 26 does not increase noise (over the current condition) in the various identified measured and modeled locations throughout the project area in any discernable amount, and in fact in some instances decreases noise levels.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			the windows of those apartments. It's a really narrow corridor, so I wanted to make those comments.	Please also see responses to written comments received from CTDEEP included separately in this matrix.
62	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I like the alternative 26. It has less permeable services, less of that water runoff coming from all those vehicles contaminating the soil, contaminating the water, ultimately going back into our drinking water, which we're having a problem with now, and I also concur with a lot of NRV. I mean, that should be a priority. Everything should be built around that, to be totally honest with you, in my perspective. I was actually hit by a car on Main Avenue right after that bridge, because it's really that unsafe for your bicycle. Crossed over two lanes, a lady I hit me head on. Luckily, I'm fine, but still I'm glad that it's being taken into consideration how important that is, not just for recreational cyclists but other micro mobility.	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRV throughout the EA/EIE process and NRV is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2).
63	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I want to echo earlier comments about the importance of the NRV. I really think that if we're looking at providing better connections, we need to not just consider cars, we need to consider pedestrians and bicyclists. And right now, the Merritt Parkway kind of cuts off pedestrian and bicyclists, and the proposal to run through Perry Avenue, that's a very narrow bridge. It's probably not safe for a protected bike path on that, so it would be mixed traffic. I don't think that would be very safe. It's not a pedestrian friendly road. So, finding a path for the NRV where it can be fully protected, I think is crucial. The other comment that I had was just also to echo concerns about putting traffic lights on Route 7. There's obviously a lot of risk there. I'd like to ask that alternative, like roundabouts, be studied for that as well.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRV throughout the EA/EIE process and NRV is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area. Alternative 26 has committed to making bike/ped improvements in the Main Avenue corridor within the project limits (refer to Chapter 3.2). Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals.
64	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I live in the southwest quadrant of that intersection we've been talking about. I appreciate the transparency of this process. I think this is my first meeting in Norwalk with the people in the city, so I'd like to take the opportunity to make some noise about the noise. I notice that the noise is one of the very top things people are concerned about. But paraphrase what I've heard, noise is really important, but our alternative doesn't change or abate the noise in any way. I have no expertise on how you do this, but I want to tell you that, as I sit on my back deck amongst the lovely trees around the Riverside, River View Drive, I occasionally end up with lemonade on my lap because a motorcycle has gone racing by, and this is a real impact on the quality of life. I don't know how many of the rest of you feel this, but for me to hear bird songs punctuated by people racing in cars that are made to be as loud as they can possibly be or to have motorcycles racing	The EA/EIE addresses Noise in Chapter 3.4. The analysis finds that Alternative 26 does not increase noise (over the current condition) in the various identified measured and modeled locations throughout the project area in any discernable amount, and in fact in some instances decreases noise levels. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			to show off their gear shifting skills while I'm trying to enjoy myself is a problem for me and I wonder if it is for you. So physical solutions to that, I don't know. Maybe let's talk about roundabouts. I'm trying to picture a motorcycle trying to show off on a roundabout a flipping up in the air and ending somewhere on the curbing, which would probably please me. In any event, there may and must be some ways to abate sound.	
65	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I'm really quite impressed with this process, and I do want to share my thoughts on this project and transportation in Connecticut, in general. I would like to draw our attention to the future. I think that much of this project is focused on solving the problems that we had in the past with that intersection and accessibility. But this is an exciting time for transportation. Technology is changing. Things are going to be different in the future, and I think we should look forward to some of these important changes. Cars, in particular, in the future, actually the present, but certainly more in the future, cars are going to be electric. Cars will be shared, cars will also be autonomous, and they will be smart, and they're actually going to be much, much safer than they are now. Besides cars, roads are going to be different. Roads are actually going to be smarter and things like traffic enforcement and safety and traffic monitoring is all going to be more accessible, cheaper, and better. Besides roads and cars, I actually think people are going to be different. I think that the residents are going to be much less interested in spending much time commuting, and we will see job and lifestyle choices by people that live in Connecticut that will cause them to be commuting much, much less. I think also the residents of the future, actually the present but certainly more so in the future, residents are going to crave lifestyle oriented recreational resources, which will enhance things like bike ability and walkability. Also, I think that public transportation will finally and, rightly, enjoy a much greater share of public transportation funding relative to private transportation. That's long overdue, and I think we'll be getting that. So, this all circles back to an extraordinary resource that's just been developed over the last couple of years, although long planned, and that's the NRVt trail. It is an amazing resource, not just for the people that live in Norwalk and surrounding communities now but especially for the ones that are moving to this area, who are going to look at this resource as being a transportation network for them for things like recreation and commuting and work. It is already, but certainly for more in the future. Further in the future, that amazing resource, the NRVt, is going to be enhanced even further because eventually, I'm quite confident, we'll have a green way along the length of the Merritt Parkway, as we should have. And that's going to even further enhance the value of the Norwalk River Valley Trail as a recreation and transportation resource. So, I just want to say, please make sure that you look to the future and recognize that the NRVt is an absolute gem of a resource that will be growing in value for the residents of the future.	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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66	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	Having this presentation, I really appreciate it, to become more aware of what has been going on. Given these different alternatives, one, I've been watching this go on for -- since 1972. So, I've seen the changes when this road was going to start and nothing happened. Then we got it started and then they tore down all the trees and made a mess and the road was stopped. It only goes to Grist Mill Road. I go on those roads every other day or so. It's horrendous. No one knows how to stop at the traffic light, they don't know which lane to be in. We're very unintelligent on using all these facilities and we -- you know, the alternative may be a good thing, but I don't know with putting more traffic lights. I mean, I see all the people stopping and I worry about the pollution, and I don't know who's measuring that, and now we're going to put in a couple more traffic lights. What are we doing? This is all happening to Norwalk, and I don't think it's right. I mean, it's almost leave it alone, unless you can come up with something better. Fix the roads the way they are. We talk about the number of accidents, and I don't know number wise. I go on the Merritt Parkway a great deal. I'm really surprised that there's been that many in that area versus a lot further south more towards Stamford. It's very surprising to me. Because I move in that traffic, I'm always aware of it. My children have grown up here, one of them lives in Trumbull. We're always worried about the traffic coming the other way, so I'm very aware of what goes on. I don't know if they're that dangerous or how bad the accidents have been or if they've been minor, but I haven't seen that much of it here. I mean, I appreciate it all, but I don't -- you know, maybe doing something without the traffic lights, doing a roundabout may be a way of going. But I think before we do anything, this road should have gone -- I never wanted the road, but if it was going, then it should have gone through Wilton, through Ridgefield and finished the road. I have a husband who leaves at 6 o'clock in the morning just to go to Danbury, because the traffic is so horrendous, and the pollution, and I don't know who's studying that, because I haven't heard anything, going up Belden Hill Road, there are stoplights. There's only a stoplight because the road goes for a mile, then there's a stoplight and then the next one, until you get all the way up about five miles into Wilton.	Comment acknowledged. Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals. Chapter 3.3 of the EA/EIE presents the results of an air quality analysis for the Project which found that over the long-term: - Both Build Alternatives would result in lower emissions of the precursors to ozone (O3) when compared to the No Build Alternative. - The Project would not substantially increase the number of diesel vehicles or emissions of PM2.5 at any of the evaluated intersections. - Concentrations of CO would be well below the NAAQS under all Alternatives. - Both Build Alternatives would reduce the total vehicle miles traveled and resultant emissions of MSATs compared to the No Build Alternative. - Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would decrease for both Build Alternatives compared to the No Build Alternative. - The Project is included in the 2015 State Transportation Improvement Program which was evaluated and approved by the EPA. Therefore, the Project follows the Clean Air Act's Transportation Conformity Rule requirements.
67	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	So, I'm Diane from Norwalk again, and I didn't say which one of the alternatives, because I clearly wanted the cheaper one of the two we were given, but the -- I was an air quality transportation planner in Middletown for the state regional planning earlier in my career, and so I studied the air pollution that comes from traffic signals, and it's not good. Carbon monoxide is generated every time a car is idling, and that is bad for people with lung conditions and heart conditions and for children and for pregnant women. So, it's really not a great idea. And there was a great article in the New York Times about traffic circles, and I happened to have traveled to Sedona, Arizona where there's a million traffic circles and it actually cultivates courtesy among people and it slows traffic down. So, I	Chapter 3.3 of the EA/EIE presents the results of an air quality analysis for the Project which found that over the long-term: - Both Build Alternatives would result in lower emissions of the precursors to ozone (O3) when compared to the No Build Alternative. - The Project would not substantially increase the number of diesel vehicles or emissions of PM2.5 at any of the evaluated intersections. - Concentrations of CO would be well below the NAAQS under all Alternatives. - Both Build Alternatives would reduce the total vehicle miles traveled and resultant emissions of MSATs compared to the No Build Alternative.

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			think that that would be a much preferable design, so I'm wondering whether DOT actually considered that in the 20-plus original ideas and, if not, can we go back to the drawing board and look at that.	- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would decrease for both Build Alternatives compared to the No Build Alternative. - The Project is included in the 2015 State Transportation Improvement Program which was evaluated and approved by the EPA. Therefore, the Project is in compliance with the Clean Air Act's Transportation Conformity Rule requirements. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals.
68	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	Just like that previous lady, I also forgot to say which of the alternatives I thought was the one that I liked. Also 26. You know, I say people are like, I guess, quite concerned that there would be traffic lights on Route 7. It's not going to be a concern. I'm telling you, in the future cars are going to be safe and they're not going to be jumping into each other and not going to be running over kids and bicycles. Traffic lights will be fine. The lights are going to be so much more efficient and wait time there is going to be so reduced at all of these intersections, just because it's going to be a smarter transportation device. So -- and also the cars are going to be electric. So, the Norwalk problems are going to go away, which is a good thing, and the cars are going to be electric so the air pollution problems are going to be -- not entirely go away, they're just going to be moved to the location where the electricity is produced and, hopefully, that will be green electricity in Connecticut. I think it's going to be -- is going to work out just fine and there's really good technological solutions coming down the pike. People are going to look back and say traffic lights are no big deal.	Comment acknowledged.
69	Public Hearing- Transcript	General Public	I totally agree with Mrs. Molinari, the person that spoke before this gentleman. She told it like it was and she's absolutely correct on every count, as far as I'm concerned. She knows Norwalk, she's lived here, she's seen what has happened. Nothing really has happened to Norwalk in a long, long time, in my estimation. The marker dates back to 1992. We in Fairfield County, especially in Norwalk, it's a growing city day by day and traffic is going to get worse. Believe me. I live right next to the Merritt Parkway. I see it morning and night. I hear the sirens. I hear the sirens on Route 7, so good luck. If you try 26, you're going to have a lot of honking horns.	Comment acknowledged.

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70	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	I know a lot of speakers have talked about the potential safety issues of the traffic lights and the potential for roundabouts. For people who haven't spent an entire evening gazing through the appendices of the EIE, EIE there was actually an alternative looked, which is alternative 7A, which is a high speed roundabout, and I know that the reason that was axed is because it introduced weaving into the traffic pattern and traffic design, but I'm curious if the, if it's better practice to have traffic lights on a high speed road, such as Route 7, versus introducing weaving, if weaving is worse. You know, anecdotally, I find weaving to be kind of annoying but, you know, I guess I don't know, in industry standards, how bad that really is. So, yeah, I would just be curious to hear a little bit more justification for why that's considered to be a deal breaker on this project.	Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. The referenced Alternative 7A did not meet at least one of the purpose and needs of the project (safety) and was eliminated from consideration. Roundabouts for both Main Avenue and Route 7 intersections were studied as part of the alternatives development process. The analysis found that due to significant peak hour demand and poor levels of service, they were not found to be an acceptable alternative to signals.
71	Email	General Public	I have lived near the Merritt Parkway in Stamford for the majority of my life and found myself passing through the Merritt/7 interchange on many occasions for many reasons. I used it the day I first got my drivers' license. I appreciate the efforts the state of Connecticut has made to try and build the missing movements at this interchange and I understand that after years and years consideration it simply is not possible to build a full free-flowing interchange without either negatively impacting the historic character of the parkway or negatively impacting the property values of nearby homeowners. However, I am very concerned about the safety impact of adding signalized intersections to a high speed roadway and do not think it is possible to sufficiently mitigate these impacts with simple approach treatments when the horizontal and vertical geometry of Route 7 are and will still be designed to accommodate high speeds. Thru traffic on route 7 is going to continue traveling at high speed and if these intersections are built it will be a question of when, not if, someone is killed at one of them. I therefore implore the state to please simply leave the interchange with Route 7 as it is and focus just on reconstructing Exit 40 with Main Ave to improve safety there.	Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area

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72	Email	General Public	I write today to submit comments in strong disfavor as to the findings of Environmental Assessment/Draft 4(f) evaluation of the 7/15 interchange project, in which Alternative 26 has been identified as the Preferred Alternative. For the reasons set forth below, I would strongly urge stakeholders to reevaluate the data underlying the evaluation and its ultimate conclusions as to environmental impact and the overall safety and efficiency of this design. The data supporting CTDOT's preference for Alt. 26 as preferred is outdated and no longer reflects reality for those living in Norwalk and the surrounding area. Notably, traffic studies and other data referenced in the evaluation appear to be 6-7 years old, gathered in 2016-2017. Since then, the area has seen a significant increase in the number of apartment buildings and total number of residents, particularly in the area of Glover Avenue/Merritt 7. Supply for housing is nevertheless strained, and demand for affordable single-family and multi-family housing has never been higher. Traffic data gathered in connection with the various studies surrounding the 7/15 project are outdated and not likely to reflect more recent traffic patterns or overall volume. Moreover, CTDOT's focus on maintaining a "park-like setting" for this project is misplaced and will not serve the needs of travelers that necessitated this project in the first instance. As set forth in the EA/EIE, there is a negligible difference in the overall environmental impact between both alternatives. There is nothing "park-like" about the Merritt as it runs through that section of Norwalk. In any event, I cannot think of any park I've visited lately where drivers regularly weave in and out of traffic at 85-90 MPH. To this end, any considerations that the Merritt will somehow lose its "defining historical characteristics" (which are severely outdated and do not reflect the concerns of average users of the parkway), should be dismissed, particularly in light of Alternative 21D's superior design. To put it bluntly, the proposal to put traffic signals on Route 7 is nothing short of a horrendous idea that will lead to increased traffic and associated noise and accidents, and will overall lead to people avoiding Norwalk altogether. Route 7 has served as a freeway/limited access highway since its inception. Changing the core characteristics of the road to incorporate traffic lights, particularly where there are no driveways, businesses, storefronts, or any other intersections, would be confusing for drivers and decrease safety on the roadway. Placing traffic lights on what essentially amounts to a freeway would only invite people to disregard the signal and cause major, high-speed accidents. And, as recent history tells us, we cannot rely on the CT state police to ethically monitor our roadways (https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/connecticut-state-police-fake-traffic-tickets/). Moreover, tractor trailers and other large trucks like construction vehicles that frequent Route 7 as is would make significantly more noise as they decelerate (and use their J-brakes) to suddenly stop at a changing light. There simply does not seem like any safe way to convert the road to one with traffic lights.	Comments acknowledged. A supplemental traffic data collection program was performed in 2022. A comparison of 2022 traffic data against 2016 traffic data confirmed that the 2016 traffic volumes were still valid for use in the draft EA/EIE, and the 2016 results are still valid. The analysis took into account significant traffic from the new and planned developments in the area. Alternative 26 combines ramp/freeway vehicles at lower vehicular speeds compared to other alternatives, which reduces the potential for and severity of crashes. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. The EA/EIE addresses proposed Noise in Chapter 3.4. The analysis finds that Alternative 26 does not increase noise (over the No-Build current condition) in the various identified measured and modeled locations throughout the project area in any discernable amount, and in fact in some instances decreases noise levels.

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			Placing signals along Route 7 would be an unmitigated disaster. Frankly, focus should be placed instead on extending Route 7 to connect to Danbury, as originally intended. The local roads surrounding Route 7 and Main Ave. have suffered for long enough with heavy vehicles and impatient commuters cutting through West Rocks Road, East Rocks Road, Silvermine Ave, William St., Strawberry Hill Ave., New Canaan Ave., and other surrounding streets. Traffic signals on Route 7 would only further encourage drivers to seek out less congested local roads and further contribute to the increasingly dangerous behavior of drivers in our neighborhoods. It's also unclear whether the folks conducting this study looked at the 8/25 interchange in Trumbull. It did not seem like any focus was placed on maintaining the Merritt's historical properties when that (fully complete) interchange was completed. Moreover, I am old enough to remember the federal lawsuit that previously derailed these efforts decades ago, and the primary concern was the multiple-level flyover bridges that were proposed at that time. Alt. 21D represents a clear and reasonable compromise between the extensive work previously called for in the abandoned plans from decades ago, with the unrealistic and dangerous "preferred" Alt. 26. Alternative 26 is a half measure that will make life significantly more difficult both for those of us living in Norwalk and those unfortunate enough to use the highways that pass through the area. The bottom line is that people want to get to where they need to be as safely and as quickly as possible, and Alt. 26 would accomplish neither of those goals. Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts and please feel free to reach me with any questions or to discuss further.	
73	Email	General Public	Exit 40B on southbound Merritt Pkway. Approaching the exit, there is no deceleration lane/space, causing abrupt braking and increased danger. I'm sure there are other exits and entrances with the same problem.	Increased deceleration lanes as noted at this location have recently been constructed under CTDOT Project No. 0102-0368 (Route 15 Safety Improvements, Resurfacing, Enhancements, and Bridge Improvements). The Route 7/15 Interchange project is proposing to maintain these increased deceleration lanes.
74	Email	General Public	Although I attended the meeting last night, I did not take home one of the forms for comment. I'd like to make a short comment here. I am a resident of Silvermine, a board member of NASH, and on the Advisory Board for the Merritt Parkway Conservancy. Needless to say I support the smaller, less invasive design, Alternative 26. What struck me most, other than the presentation, was the large turnout of Norwalk River Valley Trail supporters and the plea for a commuting trail to Wilton for bikers/pedestrians to be included in the design. Having lived in Silvermine for over 40 years, I am very much aware of the rural, narrow road known as Perry Ave. We are a dark sky historic area. Some of the old houses are right on the road. At night, in winter, after as early as 4 pm, no biker should be using Perry Ave. as a commute. It is dangerous and there are parts of it that are barely two cars wide. Please consider adding a commuter bike/pedestrian trail to your design using a small amount of the 100 million you have saved on 26. You will make a lot of friends in the	Comment acknowledged. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVT throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVT is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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			NRVT group and I think in Silvermine as well. We do welcome recreational bikers but commuters should be on a different trail and it should parallel the Norwalk River not the Silvermine branch. Thank you for reading this letter and forwarding it on to whomever should be taking it into account.	
75	Email	CEQ Comment 1 of 4:	The Council questions whether the EIE should also include a review and analysis of the potential impacts to 1) carbon sequestration and storage for the potential permanent impacts to wetlands, and 2) values and functions for the remaining nearby wetlands resulting from the potential permanent impacts to wetlands within the proposed project area.	- The wetlands proposed to be impacted, as well as nearby wetlands, are in locations which, although they contain poorly drained and or very poorly drained hydric soils, are not classified as histosols. Soils classified as histosols have the greatest potential to achieve measurable and meaningful carbon sequestration and storage. - The primary functions and values of nearby wetlands are sediment/ toxication retention and stormwater flood/flow alteration. These functions and values are anticipated to be unaffected by the changes to the directly impacted wetlands.
76	Email	CEQ Comment 2 of 4:	The Council recommends that the DOT prioritize avoidance during the project design for reducing potential permanent impacts to wetlands. If permanent impacts to wetlands are unavoidable, the Council recommends that the DOT explore restoration and enhancement of impaired wetlands within the proposed project area or along the Route 7 and Route 15 corridor as mitigation before exploring compensatory creation of wetlands. In all circumstances, the Council recommends that the permanent loss of wetlands be addressed by restorative or compensatory measures at a ratio greater than 1:1 for the proposed mitigation to have a net benefit to the wetland system.	- During the design of each alternative wetland impacts were reviewed and Best Management Practices and design alterations were implemented to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands to the extent practicable while still achieving the project's goals and objectives. - Mitigation for at the federal level for the US Army Corps of Engineers will consists of payment into the In-Leu-Fee program which will result in wetland funded projects within the southwest coast major watershed. - In accordance with the CTDEEP the project plans to provide wetland mitigation at the state level at greater than a 1:1 ratio at the state level consisting of creation, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands. Two locations have preliminarily been identified for this purpose. One site is within the project area which would result in direct compensation and replacement of lost functions and values at the project site. The second site is located within the southwest coast major drainage basin and would result in the creation of additional wetland area, enhancement of existing wetlands, rare and endangered habitat enhancement, and the expansion of an existing large contiguous forest/wetland system. Not only would the principal functions and values initially lost by the project be replaced, but other more critical functions and values would be realized on this site due to project mitigation.

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77	Email	CEQ Comment 3 of 4:	The Council received a complaint from a resident of Westport in May 2022 regarding noise generated by traffic travelling along Route 15 over bridge expansion joints in the Westport area. The EIE notes that because the noise level would exceed the noise abatement criteria (NAC) within the project area, evaluation of abatement strategies is required. In sections 3.4.3 and 7 it states that "CTDOT's final recommendation regarding noise abatement would be made during the project's final design and public involvement process". However, in Tables 2.4.2 and E1.1.1, for both alternative 21D and the preferred alternative 26, the EIE states that "although the NAC is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered reasonable." Consequently, the Council questions how noise generated by traffic within the project area, including noise potentially generated by vehicles travelling over the expansion joints for the four new bridges and two existing historic bridges for the preferred alternative 262, would be mitigated in the final design for nearby receptors.	The EA/EIE addresses proposed Noise in Chapter 3.4. Additional clarification regarding the noise analysis and subsequent determination that abatement is not warranted or feasible is provided in the errata sheet attached to the FONSI. The analysis finds that Alternative 26 does not increase noise (over the No-Build current condition) in the various identified measured and modeled locations throughout the project area in any discernable amount (increase no more than 1 dB(A)), and in fact in some instances decreases noise levels. With specific reference to expansion joints: the bridge types in our project on Merritt Parkway and Glover Avenue are less likely to have noise issues due to the construction type (rigid frame and arch, which would not be constructed with expansion joints). The Merritt Parkway bridge over Route 7 is the only bridge within the project limits with existing expansion joints. Link slabs are currently being studied at this bridge, which would be less prone to generate noise than if expansion joints similar to the existing ones were installed.
78	Email	CEQ Comment 4 of 4:	The EIE states in sections 3.8.3 and 7 that "the Project design would be in accordance with the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from CTDOT Separate Stormwater Discharge Systems (TS4) to the maximum extent practicable to mitigate any potential increases to current impairments (sedimentation/siltation) identified on the 303(d) list for the segment of the Norwalk River that traverses the Project area (ID CT7300-00_01)". The EIE also states that the DOT will "identify specific stormwater management and monitoring practices during Project design, including practices to mitigate sedimentation or siltation to the Norwalk River". The Council questions under what circumstances the DOT would not be able to meet the requirements of the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater, what potential impacts could result from failing to meet the General Permit requirements, and how could the project design eliminate and not just mitigate sedimentation or siltation of the Norwalk River, potentially resulting from the proposed project.	The Project design will be in accordance with the General Permit, including minimization of siltation and sedimentation and any site-specific measures required for conformance with stormwater regulations.

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79	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 1 of 3	I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA) and its over 2500 members and participants in Norwalk, Wilton, Ridgefield, New Canaan, Redding, and Weston. NRWA works to protect and restore water quality and fish and wildlife habitats in the Norwalk River Watershed. Thank you for the presentation at the public hearing. I write today to say that we disagree with the statement from the EA/EIE that "Permanent impacts to the Norwalk River are not expected" for the build alternatives for this project. Permanent impacts to approximately 1.4 AC of wetlands, approximately 40 LF of intermittent streams, and approximately 410 LF of perennial streams, increased runoff and concentrated flows from additional impervious surfaces, and diminished riparian buffers as outlined in the EA/EIE without question will result in permanent impacts to the water quality in the Norwalk River, Silvermine River, and Long Island Sound and to the wildlife habitat in the area. Added to those permanent impacts will be increased sediment and potentially harmful chemicals during construction. As a result, we ask that DOT plans include mitigation for these effects. This community requests a system be put in place to collect stormwater runoff from the ramps and bridges, like the system in place on Yankee Doodle bridge over the Norwalk River, for filtration. In addition, we ask that there be replacement of the destroyed wetlands with reconstructed wetlands like the ones the DOT put in along Route 7 in Wilton. Those reconstructed wetlands have been shown to support wildlife. Reconstructed wetlands would also likely help filter runoff and improve flood resilience. We request that the fill and grading placed into wetlands be certified to be clean and without invasive plant seeds. In addition, on-going removal of invasives after the project should be included in the plan. We also expect replacement of all trees removed and would like to see plans for that included as a mitigation measure. Since the replacement trees will be small, they will not meet the carbon reduction and stormwater filtration services provided by the older trees that would be removed, so we request replacement of trees at a greater than one-for-one ratio. The EA/EIE states, essentially, that because development has already harmed wildlife habitat, more harming of wildlife habitat should be allowed without mitigation. <i>"Both Alternatives 26 and 21D include work within developed areas north of Route 15 and within fragments of undeveloped forests south of the Parkway, including riparian areas associated with the Norwalk River. Some tree cutting and land disturbance is anticipated under either Build Alternative. The natural communities and habitats have been degraded and fragmented as a result of adjacent land uses including roadways, railways, and commercial developments as well as the continued spread of non-native invasive species. Therefore, minimal</i>	- The EA acknowledges the potential for impacts to the Norwalk River during construction and operation of the Project and notes that specific stormwater management and monitoring practices would be identified during Project design, including practices to mitigate sedimentation or siltation to the Norwalk River. - During the design of each alternative, wetland impacts were reviewed, and best management practices and design alterations were implemented to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands and watercourses to the extent practicable while still achieving the project's goals and objectives. - Mitigation for wetland impacts at the federal level for the US Army Corps of Engineers will consist of payment into the In-Lieu-Fee program, which will result in wetland funded projects within the southwest coast major water basin. - In accordance with CTDEEP, the proposed project plans to provide wetland mitigation at the state level at a greater than 1:1 ratio, consisting of a combination of creation, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands. Two locations have been preliminarily identified for this purpose. One site is within the project area, which would result in direct compensation and replacement of lost functions and values at the project site. The second site is located within the southwest coast major water basin and will provide the remaining quantity of mitigation required to achieve a wetland mitigation ratio of greater than 1:1. The proposed mitigation between the sites will replace in kind the principal functions and values initially lost by the project and potentially create and enhance other currently non-existent functions and values within the major water basin. - Replacing every tree removed by the project is not practical or a suitable means to provide carbon reduction or to improve the habitat in the project area. The fact that the project area is already degraded provides ample opportunity to improve the existing habitats by means of removal of invasive species of vegetation and the addition of strategically planted native species which will be included in the planting plan. Known RTE species will be coordinated through the CTDEEP Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB) program. NDDDB will provide permit conditions, as appropriate, to protect and preserve specific RTE species critical habitats within the project areas.

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			<i>Impacts on RTE species are anticipated for either alternative as a result of the Project."</i> The impairment of our river and urban forests is the result of death by a thousand cuts. Arguing that the landscape, wetlands, streams, and rivers are already ruined, so DOT should be able to ruin them further without mitigation perpetuates the problem and is not acceptable.	
80	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 2 of 3	We have also have a few specific questions about language in the EA/EIE as follows: The EA/EIE reads: "If in-water work is required during construction, temporary protections may be installed around resource areas during new ramp/bridge construction for both Alternatives 26 and 21D. Time of year restrictions (no unconfined in-stream work between April 1 and June 30) may be required as part of the permitting process for activities during construction to avoid and minimize impacts to anadromous fish runs in the Norwalk River." We request a language change to: "would be installed" and "would be required". Decades of work by NRWA, Trout Unlimited, Harbor Watch, City of Norwalk, Save the Sound and others have gone into improving water quality and opening the Norwalk River to anadromous fish. It is imperative that every precaution be taken to protect the returning fish, including blueback herring (a Species of Special Concern in Connecticut), lamprey eel, and others known to be present in this part of the river since the removal of the Flock Process dam in 2018. We appreciate that, "CTDOT would avoid and minimize wetland and watercourse impacts during design. Any mitigation needs following those avoidance measures would be identified and agreed upon in conjunction with the appropriate regulatory agencies, including the ACOE and CTDEEP." But we request that since at least 1.4 acres of wetlands will be destroyed and filled and there will known new sources of runoff and concentrated flows to streams, wetlands and watercourses, that the need for mitigation be recognized now and included in plans for the construction.	- As noted above, the need for mitigation is recognized in the plan and will be included in construction plans, with appropriate agency review and approvals. - The EA/EIE is planning level document. Specific Best Management Practices and time of year restrictions will be incorporated within the permitting phase, subject to review and approval by CTDEEP and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries.

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			Without a commitment to significant mitigations that help restore tree canopy and protect water quality, NRW is of the position that our community is better off with a no-build option.	
81	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 3 of 3	We also feel strongly that the plans should include off-road bike trails as part of the Norwalk River Valley Trail as it passes through this area.	CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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82	Email	WESTCOG	As the EA/EIE is an extensive document, we have reproduced certain sections of the EA/EIE (in italics) to call attention to specific concerns that we have, and to follow up with comments or questions as detailed (in regular type) below: 1. Page 1.14, 1.4 OTHER ACTIONS AT THE PROJECT LOCATION There are two CTDOT actions (i.e., current projects) at the project locations which are summarized below. CTDOT would look to incorporate improvements related to these actions during design. <i>a. Investigation and Identification of Methods to Improve Notification of Height Restrictions on the Merritt Parkway: Under direction of the Connecticut General Assembly Under section 13a-26a of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), CTDOT performed a study to investigate and identify methods to improve notification of height restrictions on Route 15. This study, completed in 2019, recommended several types of improvements aimed at keeping overweight vehicles off of Route 15.</i> <i>b. Merritt Parkway (Route 15) Safety Improvements, Resurfacing, Enhancements And Bridge Improvements: This project involves roadway improvements, safety improvements, and aesthetic enhancements for a 6.5 mile segment of Route 15 in both directions from Route 124 in New Canaan to Newtown Turnpike in Westport. The northern section of this project (Project 0102-0368; Main Avenue in Norwalk to Newtown Turnpike in Westport) is in construction and is scheduled for completion in 2022. The southern section of this project (Project 0102-0296; Main Avenue in Norwalk to Route 124 in New Canaan) is in design and construction is scheduled to begin in 2023. There are no other CTDOT actions (i.e., completed studies, pending projects) outside the scope of this EA/EIE that would reasonably be anticipated to affect the Project within the Project Site.</i> WestCOG has reviewed the analysis of transportation operations and recommends that the Project provide for the incorporation of active traffic management technologies such as adaptive signal coordination, dynamically variable on-and/or off ramp metering, and variable messaging. Note that WestCOG intends to pursue the feasibility of a networked, dynamically variable flow control system on Route 15 through the USDOT SMART program. Part of what we propose includes potential detection of overheight/commercial vehicles and use of the adaptive management technology (whether at dedicated ramp meters or existing signals) to control flow on/off the Parkway. WestCOG suggests that the Preferred Alternative, at a minimum, include coordination of all signals off Parkway and, preferably, provide for current or future coordination with traffic flow on the Parkway itself. Should it not be feasible to	(Broken down to their sections): 1. a. & b. Active traffic management technologies referenced can be assessed for appropriateness to this specific project as future design phase progresses. The project team will continue to coordinate design with WestCOG activities including potential improvement (e.g., detection systems, and adaptive management technologies in the project area. Coordination of signals throughout the project area will be addressed in the design phase of the project. c. & d. Noting the reference to Rte. 9, the proposed signals on Rte. 7 under this project is a different situation than Rte. 9. The signals on Route 9 are situated between two freeway segments as opposed to this proposed condition where the freeway terminus will be shifted from Grist Mill to just south of the Exit 39 interchange. Additionally, Route 7 will be re-characterized to function as an urban boulevard and various design features (narrow shoulders, signage, roadside plantings, etc.) will be incorporated to inform drivers and help reduce travel speeds within the project area. 2. The project team and CTDOT have continued to engage with the CTDOT Office of Rails to review proposals for new or changes to bridges. All design work will be in accordance with rail needs (e.g., electrification etc.). This coordination will continue through the design process. 3. Increases in traffic volumes are accounted for using CTDOT growth rates to account for planned future developments. The Department will review the traffic data and Origin-Destination Data as the Design progresses and assess if revisions are required. 4. The Department will evaluate the need to construct the improvements in phases if applicable. 5. CTDOT has actively coordinated with NRVt throughout the EA/EIE process and NRVt is represented on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). CTDOT will continue to engage with them as design progresses. Alternative 26 does not preclude the future construction of a multi-use trail through the project area.

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			deploy such technology at present, the provision of electric service, fiber, and/or conduit should be considered to allow for its future implementation. c. <i>Build Alternatives: Both Build Alternatives are projected to provide comparable improvements to traffic operations through reductions in deficient locations in the design year when compared to the No Build Alternative. With both Build Alternatives, a total of ten locations are projected to be deficient during the weekday morning peak hour. During the weekday evening peak hour, a total of eight locations are projected to be deficient with Alternative 26 and nine locations are projected to be deficient under Alternative 21D. Alternative 26 proposes to complete the missing movements using new signalized intersections (with turn lanes for some of the high-volume turning movements), in comparison to Alternative 21D which proposes to complete the missing movements at the Routes 7/15 interchange using free-flow connections. As such, Alternative 21D is projected to generally provide faster travel times for the missing interchange movements when compared to the No Build Alternative. In most cases, Alternative 26 is also projected to provide faster travel times for the missing interchange movements when compared to the No Build Alternative, albeit to a lesser extent. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. Furthermore, the Main Avenue corridor would provide additional accommodation for pedestrians and bicyclists.</i> d. <i>Mitigation Measures: no significant adverse impacts have been identified for either Build Alternative. Both Build Alternatives provide comparable improvements to traffic operations and safety in the traffic study area. Therefore, no mitigation is required.</i> Regarding the addition of traffic signals to US-7: WestCOG is concerned this could produce an outcome similar to Connecticut Route 9 in Middletown, where the design of the highway is inconsistent with traffic signals, confounding driver expectations, and produces backups that regularly stretch for miles. (Note that, while the addition of traffic signals is being proposed here, the reverse is being proposed for Route 9 in Middletown.) From a regional traffic movement perspective, free-flowing connections in all directions between US-7 and Route 15 (Alternative 21D) are preferable. Given concerns about intersection capacity, congestion, and back-ups, should	

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			Alternative 26 advance, WestCOG suggests maintaining as many movements as free-flow as is possible, especially movements from Route 15 to US-7. The illustrations for Alternative 26 appear to redirect certain movements that currently are made by freeway-to-freeway ramps through intersections (whether directly through a light or via a slip lane). Given more favorable volume-to-capacity ratios on Route 7 than Route 15, designs that maintain throughput of vehicles from Route 15 onto US-7 may be important in preventing/reducing back-ups onto Route 15. 2. <i>p.3-37: Metro-North Bridge: The Metro-North Bridge, a rigid-frame concrete bridge that carries the Merritt Parkway over the Danbury Branch, is a contributing resource to the Merritt Parkway NHP historic district. At present, the bridge is readily visible from Glover Avenue. As currently planned, both Build Alternatives would retain the bridge but would result in an indirect adverse effect as construction of a new ramp would obscure the bridge from view from Glover Avenue, diminishing its integrity of setting.</i> CTDOT should ensure in the EA/EI/E (and in the design process to follow) that the new bridges and other structures to be constructed as part Project will not impact the current operations of, or future use of, the MNCW operations on the Danbury Branch, particularly for the restoration of electric and second track service. This should apply to any new structures above or adjacent to the Branch and to the Merritt 7 station, which is being upgraded now. In addition, the Project should not contribute to any loss of capacity at the Merritt 7 station. Bear in mind that the improvement of the Danbury Branch and upgrading of passenger rail service on the Branch is an integral part of the South Western Region MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan. We have two additional questions and one comment: 3. Adequacy of design: Does the analysis account for changes in larger-scale traffic patterns? Improved connections between US-7 and Route 15 may result in a) substantial traffic diversion from I-95 and b) an overall increase in vehicle trips. The difficulty associated with connecting between Route 15 and US-7 may limit the number of drivers that make these movements; drivers instead may use I-95. It is WestCOG's expectation that driver behavior (in part guided by GPS systems that minimize total travel time and route complexity) will change substantially following the opening of a better connection between US-7 and Route 15. While this may ease congestion somewhat on I-95, it may result in greater-than-anticipated vehicle volumes in the Project Area, if the analysis did not account for this eventuality.	

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			Furthermore, insofar as the project improves the ability to drive through the Project Area, it may stimulate more drivers to make such a trip at peak hour or to make such a trip at all. Transportation demand is generally elastic with respect to price, especially over the long-term, so that when the cost of traveling falls, the quantity of traveling rises. While this is not a negative - people generally do not travel for the sake of traveling, but rather to improve their socioeconomic opportunities - it is not clear that the analysis accounts for the potential for the Project to enable additional trips and the impact of those trips on the infrastructure in question. WestCOG suggests that the analysis, if it has not already done so, model diversions from I-95 and any additional "induced demand." 4. Extensibility: will the Preferred Alternative be designed to allow for future modification in the event that traffic conditions warrant it? WestCOG has concerns regarding the performance of the traffic signals proposed. The only freeway with traffic signals in Connecticut, Route 9, regularly experiences multi-mile back-ups. WestCOG suggests that, in addition to directly incorporating or providing for the future use of active traffic management technologies and maintaining existing free-flow movements, Alternative 26, where possible, avoid design choices that could increase the cost or decrease the feasibility of making additional improvements, such as grade separation, should it become necessary. 5. Multimodal transportation: WestCOG underscores the importance of pedestrian and bicycle connections in the Project Area, particularly for the continued development of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (N RVT). At the public hearing on 8/16/23, several of the commenters advocated for an N RVT design through the Project Area that encourages safe walking and bicycling in equal measure to the effort being focused on motor vehicle travel through the area. In design, the N RVT should not only be safe, but should connect well with the adjacent land uses and have sufficient design capacity to function as a regional facility.	

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83	Email	PAC	I have served on the PAC (Project Advisory Committee) for this project since its inception. In fact, I caused the initial ruckus which led to this committee when I discovered that plans were underway to construct the new 7/15 Interchange in my Silvermine neighborhood. Representative Larry Cafaro helped raise public awareness and get that effort terminated and the interchange subsequently moved back East into the river valley where it logically belongs. Connecticut, and more importantly, Fairfield County, deserve a full-service interchange between these two important coastal highways. If we believe that climate change will continue on the current trajectory and that seas will rise and storms will become more severe, this interchange will be an important part of any coastal evacuation plan. With the service levels of Alternate 26 being so close to unacceptable, Alternate 21D is clearly the sustainable choice. Since the environmental impacts of both Alternates are quite similar, cost seems to be the only differentiating factor that makes Alternate 26 the “preferred” choice. We are at a point in time when there is a lot of money available for infrastructure projects. We are spending \$1 Billion on another project that will allow tall ships to travel all the way to Wall St. in Norwalk. If adopting Alternate 21D doubles the cost to \$200 Million, it’s a bargain! Let’s not shortchange Norwalk, Fairfield County, and the State of Connecticut! Do the right thing. A great deal has been said over the years about maintaining the original vistas and design concepts of the original Parkway, however, much has changed since then. Automobiles travel more than 40 MPH and the Parkway is part of many citizens’ daily commute. This is first and foremost a transportation project. I trust our DOT to be respectful to the Merritt Parkway and its historic significance. I pass daily under the “new” Parkway ramps which span Perry Avenue. From either direction, these ramps appear to sit perfectly atop the original structure that supports the original Parkway. That’s no accident. It is thoughtful design, respectful of the past. Alternate 26 is a step backward that completely fails the stated mission of the project.	Comments acknowledged. Both Built Alternatives result in comparable operational benefits and perform better than the No Build Alternative. However, evaluation of alternatives weighs a more comprehensive view of impacts and benefits than service levels alone. In addition to lower cost, Alternate 26 impacts fewer wetlands. It also has fewer ramps and bridges than Alternate 21D and thus the cumulative visual impact to the Project Site can be considered lower than that of Alternative 21D. Further, Alternative 26’s compact nature provides the greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems, integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities.

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84	Email	Preservation CT Part 1 of 2	On behalf of the Trustees, members, and staff of Preservation Connecticut, I am pleased to offer these comments on the draft Joint Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Evaluation (EZ/EIE) for the Merritt Parkway-Route 7 interchange in Norwalk. As the statewide nonprofit dedicated to the preservation, protection and promotion of Connecticut's historic places, Preservation Connecticut (formerly the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) has been an advocate for the Merritt Parkway for more than three decades, starting with writing the National Register nomination for the Parkway in 1991. Preservation Connecticut has followed the development of this project for many years. While we still are not entirely convinced that all new construction elements of the project are truly necessary, we applaud the care with which the Department of Transportation has carried out the planning for this most recent version of the interchange. The department's preferred alternative, Alternative 26, is a vast improvement over previous schemes for the interchange. It represents a reasonable and realistic plan for improving connections between the Parkway, Route 7, and Main Avenue. It promises needed safety improvements for automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians. And, it offers an opportunity to improve the Parkway landscape in the work area by blending new work into the historic landscape as well as healing the damage done to the Parkway in the construction of Route 7. Preservation Connecticut supports the selection of Alternative 26. The draft EA/EIE document for the most part lays out clearly the reasons for selecting Alternative 26, its probable effects on historic resources, and the Department's plans to minimize or mitigate harmful effects. Its discussion of the Parkway's landscape character—perhaps the most crucial element of its historic character—faithfully follows discussions with knowledgeable participants in the project advisory committee. For instance, the draft document: • recognizes the crucial distinction between the experience of driving through a park-like landscape and that of driving past one (page 3.36); • notes that “Major areas of alteration and past construction, visible today, present opportunities for landscape rehabilitation” (page 3.54); and • rightly concludes that “Alternative 26's compact nature provides the greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems, integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities” (page 3.60).	Comment acknowledged.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
85	Email	Preservation CT Part 2 of 2	The only serious shortcoming of the draft document is a lack of clarity in identifying historic resources in some places. This results from the decision to split the discussion of historic resources among three different categories: • historic and archaeological resources, which deals primarily with built resources such as houses and bridges; • visual impacts, which focuses on overall character and roadway configuration; and • scenic byway, focusing on the Parkway landscape. For instance, the chart that summarizes impacts of the project (Table 1.3.1) lists removal and replacement of historic/scenic roadway elements and reconfiguring of existing roadway geometry under Visual Impact Assessment; similarly, removal and replacement of scenic landscape elements is listed under Merritt Parkway Landscape (Scenic Byway). In both cases, impacts are categorized as visual or scenic, and not historic elements. These omissions are repeated in Table 2.4.2, a summary of potential benefits and impacts of the build and no-build alternatives. Two things get lost, or at least downplayed, in this divided approach: • Discussing elements such as roadway configuration and the designed landscape under visual impact or scenic byway (a designation that can include natural, as well as cultural scenery) downplays their historic, as opposed to merely visual or scenic, significance. • The sense of the Merritt Parkway as a unified design comprising roadways, bridges and other resources within an encompassing designed landscape also is lost. This totality is in fact what accounts for the Parkway's historic significance. Admittedly, the historic character of these features is a bit more explicitly stated in the chapters on visual impacts and scenic byways that follow, but even there it is easily lost. See, for instance, the visual impact chapter, where a single sentence (pages 3.42- 3.43) says that the Parkway's visual character contributes to its listing on the National Register. Unfortunately, the use of abbreviations, the placement of the sentence over a page break and just above an illustration, and the lack of further discussion all minimize the impact of this statement. Preservation Connecticut recommends that the EA/EIE document be revised to clarify the potential impacts and benefits of the project on the Parkway's historic character. This will not be a major revision; rather it requires adding some more explicit and substantive references to the historic nature of roadway and landscape resources to the tables and chapters cited above, and providing an introductory section that forcefully makes the point of the Parkway's significance as a unified historic design. As the draft document notes, the preferred alternative is of course only a schematic plan. The degree to which its goals of protecting and enhancing the historic character of the Merritt Parkway are met will be determined as an actual design for the project is	CTDOT and the design team recognize the historic significance of the Parkway as a composition of landscape, topography, and structures that provides a cohesive, identifiable, and unique sense of place as a highway corridor. As the commenter notes, the EA/EIE describes crucial aspects of the Parkway's historical character as well as the reasons for selecting Alternative 26 with respect to minimizing potential impacts on historic resources. In addition, protection and enhancement of the Parkway will be addressed more comprehensively with specific solutions throughout the Project design phase through the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). While the EA/EIE discussion is necessarily succinct, additional information regarding the Parkway's historical character is provided in the supporting Appendices I (Cultural Resources Assessment) and J (Visual Impact Assessment). In addition, specific commitments for design and opportunities for review by stakeholders throughout the design process are provided in the MOA. Throughout the EA and MOA process, the Department has demonstrated its past, ongoing and future commitment to engagement with stakeholders and consulting parties. The FONSI will include Preservation Connecticut's comments and this response, which will serve as the final update to the EA/EIE.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			worked out. The Department must remain steadfast in its pursuit of the goals and commitments laid out in the EA/EIE document. Preservation Connecticut is proud to play a role in the preservation of the Merritt Parkway and we remain committed to continuing to advocate for and assist in the Parkway's preservation.	
86	Email	SHPO	The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CT SHPO) has reviewed the environmental documentation prepared for the referenced project and titled <i>Environmental Assessment/Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation; CEPA Environmental Impact Evaluation</i> (EA/EIE). We understand that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has integrated its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act with Section 106, the implementing regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act, to streamline the compliance process. The project will be implemented by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) and the completed Environmental Assessment is recognized as meeting the reporting requirements of the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act. CT DOT and FHWA initiated consultation with CT SHPO during late 2017. Since that time, CT SHPO has engaged in multiple consultation meetings with CT DOT, FHWA, its consultants, and other interested parties. CT SHPO understands the purpose and need for improving the linkages, mobility, and safety of the Route 7 and Route 15 interchange, as described in the EA/EIE. Our office also understands that the No Build Alternative cannot meet the purpose and need of the project. During the evaluation of a range of build alternatives, Alternatives 21D and 26 emerged as the best options, with Alternative 26 performing slightly better for meeting the project's purpose and need, but both would impact significant cultural resources. In evaluating the totality of environmental harm, Alternative 26 had fewer impacts to wetlands and wildlife habitats. In addition, the costs of constructing Alternative 26 were substantially less than Alternative 21D. CT SHPO reviewed both the Visual Impact Assessment report and the Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey Report prepared for Stantec by Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. as part of the ongoing consultation process. These reports are summarized in the EA/EIE and SHPO has concurred with their findings. A total of three archaeological sites (Sites 103-57, 103-58/60, and 103-61/62) were identified and evaluated as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion D as a result of the cultural resources survey. These sites date from the Middle Archaic through Woodland periods and contained artifacts typically associated with repeated short-term occupations. All three sites would be preserved in place as part of Alternative 21D, but two sites (Sites 103-57 and 103-58/60) would be at least partially lost as part of Alternative 26. The Merritt Parkway Historic District was listed on the NRHP in 1991 under Criteria A and C. In addition to the roadway and landscape features that contribute to the historic	Comment acknowledged.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
			district, three contributing bridges (Metro-North Railroad Bridge, Norwalk River Bridge, and Main Avenue Bridge) would be impacted by either build alternative. While most of the impacts consist of indirect effects, the Main Avenue Bridge would be replaced. In addition, the Glover Avenue Bridge, determined eligible for listing on the NHRP, also would be replaced as part of Alternatives 21D and 26. The difference between the alternatives is in a magnitude of effect. While both result in the loss of historic resources, Alternative 26 retains a greater integrity of setting and feeling for the Merritt Parkway and provides less of an interruption to the parkway's landscape characteristics. The cornerstone of the Section 106 process is consultation to either avoid, minimize, or mitigate historic loss. For this project, no suitable solutions could be identified to meet the project needs while avoiding an adverse effect to historic properties. Both build alternatives have direct and indirect effects on historic properties listed and eligible for listing in the NHRP. Although Alternative 26 would result in the loss of two archaeological sites, its visual impact on the Merritt Parkway is significantly less and is in keeping with the character of this historic property. While CT SHPO regrets the loss of the two archaeological sites, we offer no objection to identifying Alternative 26 as the Preferred Alternative. Our office is hopeful that as construction plans emerge, portions of these sites may be further avoided by construction. To resolve the adverse effects to historic properties related to the construction of Alternative 26, CT SHPO requested the preparation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with stipulations to compensate for both the direct loss and indirect effects. After several meetings with consulting and interested parties, an acceptable collection of stipulations were codified into a MOA signed by CT SHPO earlier this year titled Memorandum of Agreement Between the Federal Highway Administration, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation Regarding the Route 7/Route 15 (Merritt Parkway) Interchange Project Norwalk, Connecticut. The stipulations include, but are not limited to project design review opportunities, written and photo-documentation, and an archaeological data recovery and treatment plan that would preserve the research potential of the impacted sites. It is SHPO's opinion that this document resolves all adverse effects. This office appreciates the opportunity to review and comment upon this project and we look forward to additional consultation as the stipulations of the MOA are implemented. These comments are provided in accordance with the National Environmental Policy, the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended. For any questions or additional information, please contact me at information, please contact Catherine Labadia, Environmental Reviewer and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, at (860) 500-2329 or catherine.labadia@ct.gov.	

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
87	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 1 of 4	Environmental Justice Section 3.16 and Appendix M of the Environmental Assessment adequately assess the potential environmental justice impacts of the proposed project in accordance with relevant Executive Orders and guidance. Building on CTDOT's commitment to providing timely project updates to neighborhoods and businesses within the study area to help residents and business owners prepare for short and long-term impacts, EPA recommends that CTDOT and FHWA consider the following additional activities and practices: • Strive to create community outreach products are written in plain language that can be understood by all affected community members. Readability should not exceed 7th to 8th grade level, which is considered the lower end of the estimated average reading level of the U.S. population. • Continue to offer technical assistance to help community members better understand the proposed action and its impacts. • Continue to provide appropriate translation and interpretive services to linguistically isolated populations who live and work in the study area to ensure meaningful engagement. Future public meetings should be accessible to all and scheduled at times that accommodate the greatest number of participants. • Provide continuous outreach to residents and businesses impacted by temporary construction activities, potential changes in traffic patterns and access, and short-term nuisance dust and noise. Providing updates through local media, social media, the project website, the City of Norwalk, and neighborhood associations will help ensure that information reaches the greatest number of stakeholders.	The Project will continue to follow the specific Public Involvement Plan developed for the 7/15 Norwalk Project as well as CTDOT's overall Public Involvement Plan (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/dplans/PIPpdf.pdf). In addition, the EA establishes seven commitments related to EJ concerns, including timing, format, and methods of communication; minimizing construction impacts; and mitigation of impacts to cultural resources. In particular, the following will be implemented: • As on all CTDOT projects, use of plain language that can be understood by all affected community members is part of overall approach to communication. • The project website will be maintained through construction with timely updates sent to contacts and posted to appropriate platforms. Additionally, public information meetings will be scheduled at appropriate times during the design and construction process, where the local community can provide comments and questions either in person or remotely. • CTDOT will continue to provide appropriate translation and interpretive services to linguistically isolated populations who live and work in the study area to ensure meaningful engagement. Public meetings will remain accessible to all and scheduled at times that accommodate the greatest number of participants. • As on all CTDOT projects, continuous outreach will be provided to residents and businesses, including updates through local media, social media, the project website, the City of Norwalk, and neighborhood associations will help ensure that information reaches the greatest number of stakeholders. The project website will be maintained through construction with timely updates sent to contacts and posted to appropriate platforms. Additionally, public information meetings will be scheduled at appropriate times during the design and construction process.
88	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 2 of 4	Wetland Impacts We support the identification of Alternative 26 as the preferred alternative due to reduced potential for impacts to wetland resources. In addition, Alternative 26 provides opportunities for further avoidance and minimization of impacts through careful design of infrastructure at the wetland and watercourse crossings. CTDOT should take this opportunity to develop project designs that minimize direct and secondary impacts to aquatic resources, improve hydraulic conditions, reduce stormwater impacts, and provide long-term resiliency in light of projected climate conditions and the potential for more frequent storms and associated stormwater flows. Final project designs will need to satisfy requirements of the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines.	Comment acknowledged. During the design of each alternative, wetland impacts were reviewed, and Best Management Practices and design alterations were implemented to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands and watercourses to the extent practicable while still achieving the project's purpose and need. Final Project design will satisfy CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	Comment	Response
89	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 3 of 4	Wetland Mitigation Development of a suitable compensatory mitigation plan will be required for either of the two build alternatives, but the mitigation obligation will be greatly reduced for Alternative 26. The compensatory mitigation plan will need to satisfy federal mitigation requirements as promulgated in the 2008 Mitigation Rule (40 CFR Part 230). The federal preference for compensatory mitigation begins with credits from mitigation banks, followed by in-lieu fee programs, and finally with permittee responsible mitigation. If permittee responsible mitigation is planned to meet state requirements, activity credits that meet the requirements of the 2008 Mitigation Rule will be recognized in calculation of any remaining federal mitigation obligation.	Comment acknowledged. Mitigation for wetland impacts at the federal level for the US Army Corps of Engineers will consist of payment into the In-Lieu-Fee program, which will result in wetland funded projects within the southwest coast major water basin. In accordance with CTDEEP, the proposed project plans to provide wetland mitigation at the state level at a greater than 1:1 ratio, consisting of a combination of creation, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands. Two locations have been preliminarily identified for this purpose. One site is within the project area, which would result in direct compensation and replacement of lost functions and values at the project site. The second site is located within the southwest coast major water basin and will provide the remaining quantity of mitigation required to achieve a wetland mitigation ratio of greater than 1:1. The proposed mitigation between the sites will replace in kind the principal functions and values initially lost by the project and potentially create and enhance other currently non-existent functions and values within the major water basin.
90	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 4 of 4	Stormwater Both Alternative 26 (the preferred alternative) and 21D include the creation of new impervious surfaces. Increased impervious surfaces lead to increased stormwater discharges and increased discharges of pollutants (total phosphorus, total nitrogen, sediment, bacteria, and others) to wetland areas and waterbodies. CTDOT is subject to the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Department of Transportation Separate Storm Sewer Systems (TS4 General Permit) and the proposed project discharges to waterbodies designated as impaired on the Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Report. Because the project will result in an increased discharge, we note that CTDOT must demonstrate a no net increase in pollutant loading by the DOT MS4 of the pollutant(s) for which the waterbody is impaired, consistent with Section 3(b)(7) of the TS4 General Permit.	The EA acknowledges the potential for impacts to the Norwalk River during construction and operation of the Project and notes that specific stormwater management and monitoring practices would be identified during Project design, including practices to mitigate sedimentation or siltation to the Norwalk River. Project design will be in accordance with the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from CTDOT Separate Stormwater Discharge Systems (MS4) to the maximum extent practicable to mitigate potential increases to current impairments (sedimentation/siltation) identified on the 303(d) list for the segment of the Norwalk River that traverses the Project area (ID CT7300-00_01). Additionally, the project would incorporate the requirements of the Construction Stormwater General Permit due to siltation/sedimentation impairment.

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	First Name	Last Name	Town	State	Zip
1	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Anthony	Costanzo			
2	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Daniela	Posada			
3	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	Jo-Ann	Horvath	Norwalk	CT	
4	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Ben	Hanpeter			
5	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	Tanner	Thompson			
6	Email	General Public	JoAnn	Ciavarelli	Norwalk	CT	
7	Website Form	General Public	Jay	Koolis	Glastonbury	CT	06033
8	Website Form	General Public	Steve	S			
9	Website Form	Non-profit group	Jackie	Light field	Norwalk	CT	06852
10	Website Form	General Public	Nilnjan	Bhowmik		CT	
11	Website Form	General Public	John	Whitaker	Norwalk	CT	06850
12	Website Form	General Public	Manuel	Alvarez	Danbury	CT	06810
13	Website Form	General Public	Cherag Naushad	Bhagwagar	Norwalk	CT	06854
14	Website Form	General Public	Yan	Liu	Norwalk	CT	06851
15	Website Form	General Public	Chris	R	Danbury	CT	06810
16	Website Form	General Public	Ryan	Morrison	Norwalk	CT	06850
17	Website Form	General Public	Guobin	Ou	Westport	CT	06880
18	Website Form	General Public	Edward	McCabe	Norwalk	CT	
19	Website Form	General Public	Nicole	Crimmins	Norwalk	CT	
20	Website Form	General Public	Keith	Fering	Southbury	CT	06488
21	Website Form	General Public	Owen	Parent	Norwalk	CT	06851
22	Website Form	General Public	Philip	Choi		CT	
23	Website Form	General Public	Leo	Orsini	Stamford	CT	06901
24	Website Form	General Public	Martin	Piekarski	Fairfield	CT	06824
25	Website Form	General Public	Samuel	Pond	Norwalk	CT	06855
26	Website Form	General Public	Zafir	Khan	Norwalk	CT	06851
27	Website Form	General Public	Christian	Green	Westport	CT	06880
28	Website Form	General Public	Matthew	Boudreau	Norwalk	CT	06850
29	Website Form	General Public	Sonia	Jacome	Norwalk	CT	06850-2308
30	Website Form	General Public	Garrett	Friedrichsen	Norwalk	CT	06853
31	Website Form	General Public	Phillip	Chiaia	Norwalk	CT	06851
32	Website Form	General Public	Justin	Christian	Plantsville	CT	06479
33	Website Form	General Public	Barbara	Kinn	Norwalk	CT	06851
34	Website Form	General Public	Jackson	Hurst	Kennesaw	GA	30144
35	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 1 of 5					
36	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 2 of 5					
37	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 3 of 5	Frederick	Riese	Hartford	CT	06106
38	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 4 of 5					
39	Website Form	CTDEEP Topic 5 of 5					
40	Website Form	General Public	Charles	Weimer	Norwalk	CT	06850

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	First Name	Last Name	Town	State	Zip
41	Website Form	General Public	Steven	Alquesta	Norwalk	CT	06854
42	Website Form	General Public	Paul	Fox	Norwalk	CT	06850
43	Website Form	General Public	Jack	Meyers	Norwalk	CT	06850
44	Website Form	General Public	Nick	Kantor	Norwalk	CT	
45	Website Form	PAC	Kate	Throckmorton	Georgetown	CT	06829
46	Email	General Public	Mike	Parenteau	Norwalk	CT	06854
47	Email	General Public	Angelo	Bochanis			
48	Written Comment	General Public	Frank	B.			
49	Written Comment	General Public	John	Levin			
50	Written Comment	General Public	Elsa	Peterson Obuchoski			
51	Written Comment	General Public					
52	Email	USFWS	David	Simmons	Concord	NH	03301
53	Email	General Public	Celeste	Burton			
54	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Ben	Hanpeter	Norwalk	CT	
55	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Diane	Keefe			
56	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	Tanner	Thompson			
57	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Eric	Honck			
58	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	Heather	Dunn			
59	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Paul	Cheverd	Norwalk	CT	
60	Public Hearing-Transcript	PAC	Wes	Haynes			
61	Public Hearing-Transcript	CTDEEP	Frederick	Riese			
62	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Phil	Kei	Norwalk	CT	
63	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Paul	Fox	Norwalk	CT	
64	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Frank	Fornaro			
65	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	John	Levin	Norwalk	CT	
66	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Lucia	Molinari	Silvermine	CT	
67	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Diane	Keefe	Norwalk	CT	
68	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	John	Levin			
69	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Jo-Ann	Horvath			
70	Public Hearing-Transcript	General Public	Ben	Hanpeter			
71	Email	General Public	Anthony	Costanzo			
72	Email	General Public	Michael	Stenger	Norwalk	CT	
73	Email	General Public	Murray	Bruckel			
74	Email	General Public	Leigh	Grant	Norwalk	CT	06850
75	Email	CEQ Comment 1 of 4					
76	Email	CEQ Comment 2 of 4					
77	Email	CEQ Comment 3 of 4	Paul	Aresta			
78	Email	CEQ Comment 4 of 4					

Comment No.	Comment Source	Commentor Type	First Name	Last Name	Town	State	Zip
79	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 1 of 3	Louise	Washer			
80	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 2 of 3					
81	Email	NRWA (Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.) Topic 3 of 3					
82	Email	WESTCOG	Todd	Fontanella	Norwalk	CT	
83	Email	PAC	Alan	Kibbe			
84	Email	Preservation CT Part 1 of 2	Chris	Wigren			
85	Email	Preservation CT Part 2 of 2					
86	Email	SHPO	Jonathan	Kinney			
87	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 1 of 4	Timothy	Timmermann	Boston	MA	02109-3912
88	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 2 of 4					
89	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 3 of 4					
90	Email	EPA Region 1 - Topic 4 of 4					



Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, Connecticut 06131

RE: Route 7/15 Interchange Improvements
State Project No. 102-358
Norwalk, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Carifa:

This will present the position of the Friends of the Norwalk River Valley Trail with respect to the proposed Alternative 26 revision of the 7/15 interchange.

It is our view that Alternative 26 as presented fails to provide adequate (any) accommodation for the NRVT through this interchange. As the major regional trail in Fairfield County and as a critical alternative transportation link, this is a major disappointment and a meaningful missed planning opportunity. In particular, Alternative 26 (and all of the alternatives) severs the NRVT and the dense residential and commercial centers that lie on both sides of the interchange in Norwalk along the Route 7/Main Ave. corridor.

We realize the roots of this project reach back 20 or so years to a time when the NRVT was not a reality. But obviously times have changed. Millions of dollars of public and private investment have gone into the NRVT and now about 15 miles of trail are completed along the route from Norwalk to Danbury... and millions more have been committed to continue construction. Obviously times have changed and so should the scope of this project.

We recognize that other important constituencies must also be served by this project. In an effort of collaboration and to live within the proposed Alternative 26, the NRVT has, at our expense, hired a consultant to review the feasibility of a route through the interchange, some of which are more economically feasible than others. While not necessarily an EA/EIE concern, during the design phase we would ask the DOT to consider and fund the most prudent alternative and are willing to assist in the development of that solution. A viable route for the NRVT through this fatal choke point must be found given our State and National goals of environmentally responsible alternative transportation.

The community support for the vital economic and transportation engine that the NRVT represents for this area was reflected in the grassroots showing at the recent public hearing. This was truly reflective of the community at large and was not a product of any NRVT effort.

We, the Friends of the NRVT, have been and continue to look forward to being partners with Stantec and CTDOT in the realization of our trail. Revising 7/15 is a once in a lifetime opportunity, it should be a stimulus for, not an impediment to, safe alternative transportation that drives smart economic growth. We all must work together to realize this vision and suggest that we schedule a meeting with the NRVT, our consultant and DOT to review the options the NRVT has developed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit these comments. Should you have any questions concerning any issues or topics discussed herein, please feel free to contact me at (860) 424-4110 or at kate@elsllc.net.

Respectfully yours,



Kate Throckmorton
Interim President, Board of Directors
Friends of the NRVT, Inc.

cc:

Congressman Jim Himes
CT State Senator Bob Duff
Harry Rilling, Mayor, City of Norwalk,
Jim Travers, City of Norwalk



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Keith Ainsworth
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Matthew Reiser

Denise Rodosevich

Charles Vidich

William Warzecha

Paul Aresta
Executive Director

August 25, 2023

Kevin F. Carifa, Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
Bureau of Policy and Planning
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT, 06131
comments@7-15norwalk.com

Re: State Project No. 102-358, Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange

Dear Mr. Carifa,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) offers the following comments regarding the Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) for the Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange project in Norwalk.

Wetlands

The Department of Transportation's (DOT) EIE notes that alternative 21D could permanently impact approximately 3 acres of wetlands, approximately 120 linear feet (LF) of intermittent streams, and approximately 650 LF of perennial streams, while the preferred alternative 26 could permanently impact approximately 1.4 acres of wetlands, approximately 40 LF of intermittent streams, and approximately 410 LF of perennial streams. As noted in the Council's annual report, [*Environmental Quality in Connecticut*](#),¹ "wetlands serve many functions, one of them being their unique ability to store and sequester carbon", and wetlands "should be recognized as important to greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation strategies and incorporated into inland wetland protection efforts in Connecticut." The Council notes that the potential permanent impacts to wetlands in the proposed project area could impact the values and functions of wetlands identified within the proposed project area. The Council questions whether the EIE should also include a review and analysis of the potential impacts to 1) carbon sequestration and storage for the potential permanent impacts to wetlands, and 2) values and functions for the remaining nearby wetlands resulting from the potential permanent impacts to wetlands within the proposed project area.

The EIE notes that "impacts to wetlands would be mitigated per state and federal requirements" and that "any mitigation needs following those avoidance measures would be identified and agreed upon in conjunction with the appropriate regulatory agencies". The Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, Section 22a-1a-8 (f)(6)(E) states that a discussion of the potential environmental impact of the action should include "mitigation measures to the action including: limiting the degree or magnitude of the action; rectifying the effects of such action by repairing, rehabilitating or restoring the impacted environment; reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations; and compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments." Consequently, the Council recommends that the DOT prioritize avoidance during the project design for reducing potential permanent impacts to wetlands. If permanent impacts to wetlands are unavoidable, the Council recommends that the DOT explore restoration and enhancement of impaired wetlands within the proposed project area or along the Route 7 and Route 15 corridor as mitigation before exploring compensatory creation

of wetlands. In all circumstances, the Council recommends that the permanent loss of wetlands be addressed by restorative or compensatory measures at a ratio greater than 1:1 for the proposed mitigation to have a net benefit to the wetland system. Additionally, the Council questions if the potential permanent impacts to wetlands within the project area should be included in the review and analysis of “Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources”.

Noise

The Council received a complaint from a resident of Westport in May 2022 regarding noise generated by traffic travelling along Route 15 over bridge expansion joints in the Westport area. The EIE notes that because the noise level would exceed the noise abatement criteria (NAC) within the project area, evaluation of abatement strategies is required. In sections 3.4.3 and 7 it states that “CTDOT’s final recommendation regarding noise abatement would be made during the project’s final design and public involvement process”. However, in Tables 2.4.2 and E1.1.1, for both alternative 21D and the preferred alternative 26, the EIE states that “although the NAC is approached/exceeded in 1 location, initial analysis shows noise abatement is not considered reasonable.” Consequently, the Council questions how noise generated by traffic within the project area, including noise potentially generated by vehicles travelling over the expansion joints for the four new bridges and two existing historic bridges for the preferred alternative 26², would be mitigated in the final design for nearby receptors.

Stormwater

The EIE states in sections 3.8.3 and 7 that “the Project design would be in accordance with the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from CTDOT Separate Stormwater Discharge Systems (TS4) to the maximum extent practicable to mitigate any potential increases to current impairments (sedimentation/siltation) identified on the 303(d) list for the segment of the Norwalk River that traverses the Project area (ID CT7300-00_01)”. The EIE also states that the DOT will “identify specific stormwater management and monitoring practices during Project design, including practices to mitigate sedimentation or siltation to the Norwalk River”. The Council questions under what circumstances the DOT would not be able to meet the requirements of the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater, what potential impacts could result from failing to meet the General Permit requirements, and how could the project design eliminate and not just mitigate sedimentation or siltation of the Norwalk River, potentially resulting from the proposed project.

Thank you for your consideration of the Council’s comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Aresta", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Aresta
Executive Director

¹ Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality, Environmental Quality in Connecticut, May 4, 2023; <https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/AR-22-Gold/2022-CEQ-Annual-Report-eBook/Land---Preserved-Land/Wetlands>

² The same question would apply for alternative 21D that would require the construction of eleven new bridges and the reconstruction of three existing bridges.



PO Box 7114
Wilton, CT 06897
norwalkriver.org

August 27, 2023

Re: Routes 7/15 Interchange Improvement Norwalk, Connecticut State Project No. 102-358
Federal Project No. 0015(133) Environmental Assessment/Draft Section 4(F) Evaluation and
Environmental Impact Evaluation

Dear Mr. Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director at CTDOT:

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA) and its over 2500 members and participants in Norwalk, Wilton, Ridgefield, New Canaan, Redding, and Weston. NRWA works to protect and restore water quality and fish and wildlife habitats in the Norwalk River Watershed.

Thank you for the presentation at the public hearing. I write today to say that we disagree with the statement from the EA/EIE that “Permanent impacts to the Norwalk River are not expected” for the build alternatives for this project.

Permanent impacts to approximately 1.4 AC of wetlands, approximately 40 LF of intermittent streams, and approximately 410 LF of perennial streams, increased runoff and concentrated flows from additional impervious surfaces, and diminished riparian buffers as outlined in the EA/EIE **without question will result in permanent impacts to the water quality in the Norwalk River, Silvermine River, and Long Island Sound and to the wildlife habitat in the area.** Added to those permanent impacts will be increased sediment and potentially harmful chemicals during construction.

As a result, we ask that DOT plans include mitigation for these effects. This community requests a system be put in place to collect stormwater runoff from the ramps and bridges, like the system in place on Yankee Doodle bridge over the Norwalk River, for filtration. In addition, we ask that there be replacement of the destroyed wetlands with reconstructed wetlands like the ones the DOT put in along Route 7 in Wilton. Those reconstructed wetlands have been shown to support wildlife. Reconstructed wetlands would also likely help filter runoff and improve flood resilience. We request that the fill and grading placed into wetlands be certified

to be clean and without invasive plant seeds. In addition, on-going removal of invasives after the project should be included in the plan.

We also expect replacement of all trees removed and would like to see plans for that included as a mitigation measure. Since the replacement trees will be small, they will not meet the carbon reduction and stormwater filtration services provided by the older trees that would be removed, so we request replacement of trees **at a greater than one-for-one ratio.**

The EA/EIE states, essentially, that because development has already harmed wildlife habitat, more harming of wildlife habitat should be allowed without mitigation.

Both Alternatives 26 and 21D include work within developed areas north of Route 15 and within fragments of undeveloped forests south of the Parkway, including riparian areas associated with the Norwalk River. Some tree cutting and land disturbance is anticipated under either Build Alternative. The natural communities and habitats have been degraded and fragmented as a result of adjacent land uses including roadways, railways, and commercial developments as well as the continued spread of non-native invasive species. Therefore, minimal impacts on RTE species are anticipated for either alternative as a result of the Project.

The impairment of our river and urban forests is the result of death by a thousand cuts. Arguing that the landscape, wetlands, streams, and rivers are already ruined, so DOT should be able to ruin them further without mitigation perpetuates the problem and is not acceptable.

We have also have a few specific questions about language in the EA/EIE as follows:

The EA/EIE reads: *If in-water work is required during construction, temporary protections **may be installed** around resource areas during new ramp/bridge construction for both Alternatives 26 and 21D. Time of year restrictions (no unconfined in-stream work between April 1 and June 30) **may be required** as part of the permitting process for activities during construction to avoid and minimize impacts to anadromous fish runs in the Norwalk River.*

We request a language change to: *would be installed and would be required.* Decades of work by NRWA, Trout Unlimited, Harbor Watch, City of Norwalk, Save the Sound and others have gone into improving water quality and opening the Norwalk River to anadromous fish. It is imperative that every precaution be taken to protect the returning fish, including blueback herring (a Species of Special Concern in Connecticut), lamprey eel, and others known to be present in this part of the river since the removal of the Flock Process dam in 2018.

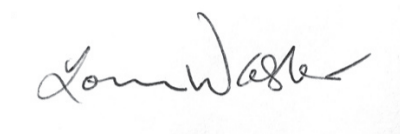
We appreciate that, “CTDOT would avoid and minimize wetland and watercourse impacts during design. **Any mitigation needs** following those avoidance measures would be identified and agreed upon in conjunction with the appropriate regulatory agencies, including the ACOE and CTDEEP.” But we request that since at least 1.4 acres of wetlands will be destroyed and filled and there will known new sources of runoff and concentrated flows to streams, wetlands

and watercourses, that the need for mitigation be recognized now and included in plans for the construction.

Without a commitment to significant mitigations that help restore tree canopy and protect water quality, NRWA is of the position that our community is better off with a no-build option. We also feel strongly that the plans should include off-road bike trails as part of the Norwalk River Valley Trail as it passes through this area.

Thank you for the chance to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louise Washer", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Louise Washer, President
Norwalk River Watershed Association

August 30, 2023

Mr. Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131
Submitted via comments@7-15norwalk.com

**RE: Environmental Assessment / Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE)
for the Routes US-7 & CT-15 Interchange Project in Norwalk, CT**

Dear Mr. Carifa:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment upon the EA/EIE for this long-awaited project.

As the EA/EIE is an extensive document, we have reproduced certain sections of the EA/EIE (in italics) to call attention to specific concerns that we have, and to follow up with comments or questions as detailed (in regular type) below:

1. *Page 1.14, 1.4 OTHER ACTIONS AT THE PROJECT LOCATION There are two CTDOT actions (i.e. current projects) at the project location which are summarized below. CTDOT would look to incorporate improvements related to these actions during design.*
 - a) *Investigation and Identification of Methods to Improve Notification of Height Restrictions on the Merritt Parkway: Under direction of the Connecticut General Assembly under Section 13a-26a of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), CTDOT performed a study to investigate and identify methods to improve notification of height restrictions on Route 15. This study, completed in 2019, recommended several types of improvements aimed at keeping overheight vehicles off of Route 15.*
 - b) *Merritt Parkway (Route 15) Safety Improvements, Resurfacing, Enhancements and Bridge Improvements: This project involves roadway improvements, safety improvements, and aesthetic enhancements for a 6.5-mile segment of Route 15 in both directions from Route 124 in New Canaan to Newtown Turnpike in Westport. The northern section of this project (Project 0102-0368; Main Avenue in Norwalk to Newtown Turnpike in Westport) is in construction and is scheduled for completion in 2022. The southern section of this project (Project 0102- 0296; Main Avenue in Norwalk to Route 124 in New Canaan) is in design and construction is scheduled to begin in 2023. There are no other CTDOT actions (i.e., completed studies, pending projects) outside the scope of this EA/EIE that would reasonably be anticipated to affect the Project within the Project Site.*

WestCOG has reviewed the analysis of transportation operations and recommends that the Project provide for the incorporation of active traffic management technologies such as adaptive signal coordination, dynamically variable on- and/or off-ramp metering, and

variable messaging. Note that WestCOG intends to pursue the feasibility of a networked, dynamically variable flow control system on Route 15 through the USDOT SMART program. Part of what we propose includes potential detection of overheight/commercial vehicles and use of the adaptive management technology (whether at dedicated ramp meters or existing signals) to control flow on/off the Parkway. WestCOG suggests that the Preferred Alternative, at a minimum, include coordination of all signals off Parkway and, preferably, provide for current or future coordination with traffic flow on the Parkway itself. Should it not be feasible to deploy such technology at present, the provision of electric service, fiber, and/or conduit should be considered to allow for its future implementation.

- c) *Build Alternatives: Both Build Alternatives are projected to provide comparable improvements to traffic operations through reductions in deficient locations in the design year when compared to the No Build Alternative. With both Build Alternatives, a total of ten locations are projected to be deficient during the weekday morning peak hour. During the weekday evening peak hour, a total of eight locations are projected to be deficient with Alternative 26 and nine locations are projected to be deficient under Alternative 21D. Alternative 26 proposes to complete the missing movements using new signalized intersections (with turn lanes for some of the high-volume turning movements), in comparison to Alternative 21D which proposes to complete the missing movements at the Routes 7/15 interchange using free-flow connections. As such, Alternative 21D is projected to generally provide faster travel times for the missing interchange movements when compared to the No Build Alternative. In most cases, Alternative 26 is also projected to provide faster travel times for the missing interchange movements when compared to the No Build Alternative, albeit to a lesser extent. Both Build Alternatives propose to address safety concerns by reconfiguring the Main Avenue interchange by removing and redesigning the existing stop-controlled on-ramps from Main Avenue onto Route 15 which would provide standard acceleration and deceleration lanes, and by providing full access between Routes 7 and 15 at Interchange 39. Furthermore, the Main Avenue corridor would provide additional accommodation for pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- d) *Mitigation Measures: no significant adverse impacts have been identified for either Build Alternative. Both Build Alternatives provide comparable improvements to traffic operations and safety in the traffic study area. Therefore, no mitigation is required.*

Regarding the addition of traffic signals to US-7: WestCOG is concerned this could produce an outcome similar to Connecticut Route 9 in Middletown, where the design of the highway is inconsistent with traffic signals, confounding driver expectations, and produces backups that regularly stretch for miles. (Note that, while the addition of traffic signals is being proposed here, the reverse is being proposed for Route 9 in Middletown.)

From a regional traffic movement perspective, free-flowing connections in all directions between US-7 and Route 15 (Alternative 21D) are preferable. Given concerns about intersection capacity, congestion, and back-ups, should Alternative 26 advance, WestCOG suggests maintaining as many movements as free-flow as is possible, especially movements from Route 15 to US-7. The illustrations for Alternative 26 appear to redirect certain movements that currently are made by freeway-to-freeway ramps through

intersections (whether directly through a light or via a slip lane). Given more favorable volume-to-capacity ratios on Route 7 than Route 15, designs that maintain throughput of vehicles from Route 15 onto US-7 may be important in preventing/reducing back-ups onto Route 15.

2. *p. 3-37: Metro-North Bridge: The Metro-North Bridge, a rigid-frame concrete bridge that carries the Merritt Parkway over the Danbury Branch, is a contributing resource to the Merritt Parkway NRHP historic district. At present, the bridge is readily visible from Glover Avenue. As currently planned, both Build Alternatives would retain the bridge but would result in an indirect adverse effect as construction of a new ramp would obscure the bridge from view from Glover Avenue, diminishing its integrity of setting.*

CTDOT should ensure in the EA/EIE (and in the design process to follow) that the new bridges and other structures to be constructed as part Project will not impact the current operations of, or future use of, the MNCW operations on the Danbury Branch, particularly for the restoration of electric and second track service. This should apply to any new structures above or adjacent to the Branch and to the Merritt 7 station, which is being upgraded now. In addition, the Project should not contribute to any loss of capacity at the Merritt 7 station. Bear in mind that the improvement of the Danbury Branch and upgrading of passenger rail service on the Branch is an integral part of the South Western Region MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

We have two additional questions and one comment:

3. Adequacy of design: Does the analysis account for changes in larger-scale traffic patterns? Improved connections between US-7 and Route 15 may result in a) substantial traffic diversion from I-95 and b) an overall increase in vehicle trips. The difficulty associated with connecting between Route 15 and US-7 may limit the number of drivers that make these movements; drivers instead may use I-95. It is WestCOG's expectation that driver behavior (in part guided by GPS systems that minimize total travel time and route complexity) will change substantially following the opening of a better connection between US-7 and Route 15. While this may ease congestion somewhat on I-95, it may result in greater-than-anticipated vehicle volumes in the Project Area, if the analysis did not account for this eventuality.

Furthermore, insofar as the project improves the ability to drive through the Project Area, it may stimulate more drivers to make such a trip at peak hour or to make such a trip at all. Transportation demand is generally elastic with respect to price, especially over the long-term, so that when the cost of traveling falls, the quantity of traveling rises. While this is not a negative – people generally do not travel for the sake of traveling, but rather to improve their socioeconomic opportunities – it is not clear that the analysis accounts for the potential for the Project to enable additional trips and the impact of those trips on the infrastructure in question. WestCOG suggests that the analysis, if it has not already done so, model diversions from I-95 and any additional “induced demand.”

4. Extensibility: will the Preferred Alternative be designed to allow for future modification in the event that traffic conditions warrant it? WestCOG has concerns regarding the performance of

the traffic signals proposed. The only freeway with traffic signals in Connecticut, Route 9, regularly experiences multi-mile back-ups. WestCOG suggests that, in addition to directly incorporating or providing for the future use of active traffic management technologies and maintaining existing free-flow movements, Alternative 26, where possible, avoid design choices that could increase the cost or decrease the feasibility of making additional improvements, such as grade separation, should it become necessary.

5. Multimodal transportation: WestCOG underscores the importance of pedestrian and bicycle connections in the Project Area, particularly for the continued development of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT). At the public hearing on 8/16/23, several of the commenters advocated for an NRVT design through the Project Area that encourages safe walking and bicycling in equal measure to the effort being focused on motor vehicle travel through the area. In design, the NRVT should not only be safe, but should connect well with the adjacent land uses and have sufficient design capacity to function as a regional facility.

We look forward to consideration of these points in the finalization of the EA/EIE.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Francis Pickering". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "F" and a long, horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Francis R. Pickering
Executive Director



31 August 2023

Kevin Carifa
Transportation Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, Connecticut 06131
Via email, comments@7-15norwalk.com

Subject: Joint Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation, Merritt Parkway/Route 7 interchange, Norwalk, Connecticut

Dear Mr Carifa:

On behalf of the Trustees, members, and staff of Preservation Connecticut, I am pleased to offer these comments on the draft Joint Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Evaluation (EZ/EIE) for the Merritt Parkway-Route 7 interchange in Norwalk.

As the statewide nonprofit dedicated to the preservation, protection and promotion of Connecticut's historic places, Preservation Connecticut (formerly the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) has been an advocate for the Merritt Parkway for more than three decades, starting with writing the National Register nomination for the Parkway in 1991.

Preservation Connecticut has followed the development of this project for many years. While we still are not entirely convinced that all new construction elements of the project are truly necessary, we applaud the care with which the Department of Transportation has carried out the planning for this most recent version of the interchange.

The department's preferred alternative, Alternative 26, is a vast improvement over previous schemes for the interchange. It represents a reasonable and realistic plan for improving connections between the Parkway, Route 7, and Main Avenue. It promises needed safety improvements for automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians. And, it offers an opportunity to improve the Parkway landscape in the work area by blending new work into the historic landscape as well as healing the damage done to the Parkway in the construction of Route 7. **Preservation Connecticut supports the selection of Alternative 26.**

The draft EA/EIE document for the most part lays out clearly the reasons for selecting Alternative 26, its probable effects on historic resources, and the Department's plans to minimize or mitigate harmful effects. Its discussion of the Parkway's landscape character—perhaps the most crucial element of its historic character—faithfully follows discussions with knowledgeable participants in the project advisory committee. For instance, the draft document:

- recognizes the crucial distinction between the experience of driving *through* a park-like landscape and that of driving *past* one (page 3.36);
- notes that “Major areas of alteration and past construction, visible today, present opportunities for landscape rehabilitation” (page 3.54); and
- rightly concludes that “Alternative 26’s compact nature provides the greatest opportunity to preserve and enhance natural features and systems, integrate the roadway into a park-like setting with appropriate topography and planting clusters, reduce maintenance, and design access and egress ramps as Parkway amenities” (page 3.60).

The only serious shortcoming of the draft document is a lack of clarity in identifying historic resources in some places. This results from the decision to split the discussion of historic resources among three different categories:

- historic and archaeological resources, which deals primarily with built resources such as houses and bridges;
- visual impacts, which focuses on overall character and roadway configuration; and
- scenic byway, focusing on the Parkway landscape.

For instance, the chart that summarizes impacts of the project (Table 1.3.1) lists removal and replacement of historic/scenic roadway elements and reconfiguring of existing roadway geometry under Visual Impact Assessment; similarly, removal and replacement of scenic landscape elements is listed under Merritt Parkway Landscape (Scenic Byway). In both cases, impacts are categorized as visual or scenic, and not *historic* elements. These omissions are repeated in Table 2.4.2, a summary of potential benefits and impacts of the build and no-build alternatives.

Two things get lost, or at least downplayed, in this divided approach:

- Discussing elements such as roadway configuration and the designed landscape under visual impact or scenic byway (a designation that can include natural, as well as cultural scenery) downplays their historic, as opposed to merely visual or scenic, significance.
- The sense of the Merritt Parkway as a unified design comprising roadways, bridges and other resources within an encompassing designed landscape also is lost. This totality is in fact what accounts for the Parkway’s historic significance.

Admittedly, the historic character of these features is a bit more explicitly stated in the chapters on visual impacts and scenic byways that follow, but even there it is easily lost. See, for instance, the visual impact chapter, where a single sentence (pages 3.42-3.43) says that the Parkway’s visual character contributes to its listing on the National Register. Unfortunately, the use of abbreviations, the placement of the sentence over a page break and just above an illustration, and the lack of further discussion all minimize the impact of this statement.

Preservation Connecticut recommends that the EA/EIE document be revised to clarify the potential impacts and benefits of the project on the Parkway’s historic character. This will not be a major revision; rather it requires adding some more explicit and substantive references to the historic nature of roadway and landscape resources to the tables and chapters cited above, and providing an introductory section that forcefully makes the point of the Parkway’s significance as a unified historic design.

As the draft document notes, the preferred alternative is of course only a schematic plan. The degree to which its goals of protecting and enhancing the historic character of the Merritt Parkway are met will be determined as an actual design for the project is worked out. The Department must remain steadfast in its pursuit of the goals and commitments laid out in the EA/EIE document.

Preservation Connecticut is proud to play a role in the preservation of the Merritt Parkway and we remain committed to continuing to advocate for and assist in the Parkway's preservation.

Very truly yours,



Christopher Wigren
Deputy Director

cc:
Jonathan Kinney, State Historic Preservation Officer
Wes Haynes, Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Peter Viteretto, Connecticut ASLA

September 18, 2023

Mr. Kevin Carifa
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131
(via email only to Kevin.Carifa@ct.gov)

Subject: Route 7/15 Interchange Improvement Project Environmental Documentation
Norwalk, Connecticut
State Project No. 102-358, Federal Project No. 0015(133)

Dear Mr. Carifa,

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CT SHPO) has reviewed the environmental documentation prepared for the referenced project and titled *Environmental Assessment/Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation; CEPA Environmental Impact Evaluation* (EA/EIE). We understand that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has integrated its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act with Section 106, the implementing regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act, to streamline the compliance process. The project will be implemented by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) and the completed Environmental Assessment is recognized as meeting the reporting requirements of the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act. CT DOT and FHWA initiated consultation with CT SHPO during late 2017. Since that time, CT SHPO has engaged in multiple consultation meetings with CT DOT, FHWA, its consultants, and other interested parties.

CT SHPO understands the purpose and need for improving the linkages, mobility, and safety of the Route 7 and Route 15 interchange, as described in the EA/EIE. Our office also understands that the No Build Alternative cannot meet the purpose and need of the project. During the evaluation of a range of build alternatives, Alternatives 21D and 26 emerged as the best options, with Alternative 26 performing slightly better for meeting the project's purpose and need, but both would impact significant cultural resources. In evaluating the totality of environmental harm, Alternative 26 had fewer impacts to wetlands and wildlife habitats. In addition, the costs of constructing Alternative 26 were substantially less than Alternative 21D.

CT SHPO reviewed both the Visual Impact Assessment report and the Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey Report prepared for Stantec by Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. as part of the ongoing consultation process. These reports are summarized in the EA/EIE and SHPO has concurred with their findings.

A total of three archaeological sites (Sites 103-57, 103-58/60, and 103-61/62) were identified and evaluated as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion D as a result of the cultural resources survey. These sites date from the Middle Archaic through Woodland periods and contained artifacts typically associated with repeated short-term occupations. All three sites would be preserved in place as part of Alternative 21D, but two sites (Sites 103-57 and 103-58/60) would be at least partially lost as part of Alternative 26.

The Merritt Parkway Historic District was listed on the NRHP in 1991 under Criteria A and C. In addition to the roadway and landscape features that contribute to the historic district, three contributing bridges (Metro-North Railroad Bridge, Norwalk River Bridge, and Main Avenue Bridge) would be impacted by

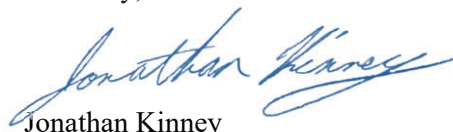
either build alternative. While most of the impacts consist of indirect effects, the Main Avenue Bridge would be replaced. In addition, the Glover Avenue Bridge, determined eligible for listing on the NRHP, also would be replaced as part of Alternatives 21D and 26. The difference between the alternatives is in a magnitude of effect. While both result in the loss of historic resources, Alternative 26 retains a greater integrity of setting and feeling for the Merritt Parkway and provides less of an interruption to the parkway's landscape characteristics.

The cornerstone of the Section 106 process is consultation to either avoid, minimize, or mitigate historic loss. For this project, no suitable solutions could be identified to meet the project needs while avoiding an adverse effect to historic properties. Both build alternatives have direct and indirect effects on historic properties listed and eligible for listing in the NRHP. Although Alternative 26 would result in the loss of two archaeological sites, its visual impact on the Merritt Parkway is significantly less and is in keeping with the character of this historic property. While CT SHPO regrets the loss of the two archaeological sites, we offer no objection to identifying Alternative 26 as the Preferred Alternative. Our office is hopeful that as construction plans emerge, portions of these sites may be further avoided by construction.

To resolve the adverse effects to historic properties related to the construction of Alternative 26, CT SHPO requested the preparation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with stipulations to compensate for both the direct loss and indirect effects. After several meetings with consulting and interested parties, an acceptable collection of stipulations were codified into a MOA signed by CT SHPO earlier this year titled *Memorandum of Agreement Between the Federal Highway Administration, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation Regarding the Route 7/Route 15 (Merritt Parkway) Interchange Project Norwalk, Connecticut*. The stipulations include, but are not limited to project design review opportunities, written and photo-documentation, and an archaeological data recovery and treatment plan that would preserve the research potential of the impacted sites. It is SHPO's opinion that this document resolves all adverse effects.

This office appreciates the opportunity to review and comment upon this project and we look forward to additional consultation as the stipulations of the MOA are implemented. These comments are provided in accordance with the National Environmental Policy, the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended. For any questions or additional information, please contact me at information, please contact Catherine Labadia, Environmental Reviewer and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, at (860) 500-2329 or catherine.labadia@ct.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan Kinney".

Jonathan Kinney
State Historic Preservation Officer



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION I
5 POST OFFICE SQUARE SUITE 100
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02109-3912

August 31, 2023

Kevin Carifa
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

RE: Environmental Assessment for the Route 7/15 Interchange Project in Norwalk, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Carifa:

We are writing in response to the July 18, 2023 Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) publication of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Route 7/15 Interchange Project in Norwalk, Connecticut. We submit the following response to the EA in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The project includes proposed improvements at the Route 7 and Merritt Parkway (Route 15) interchange and improvements to connections with local roads in Norwalk, Connecticut. According to the EA, “[t]he principal elements of the Project are designed to provide a full directional interchange with direct access between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway and to improve traffic operations and safety at the Merritt Parkway and Main Avenue interchange as well as along Main Avenue and Glover Avenue in the vicinity of the interchange.”

We reviewed the EA and provide the following comments related to environmental justice, wetland impacts, and stormwater management.

Environmental Justice

Section 3.16 and Appendix M of the Environmental Assessment adequately assess the potential environmental justice impacts of the proposed project in accordance with relevant Executive Orders and guidance.

Building on CTDOT’s commitment to providing timely project updates to neighborhoods and businesses within the study area to help residents and business owners prepare for short and long-term impacts, EPA recommends that CTDOT and FHWA consider the following additional activities and practices:

- Strive to create community outreach products are written in plain language that can be understood by all affected community members. Readability should not exceed 7th to 8th grade level, which is considered the lower end of the estimated average reading level of the U.S. population.
- Continue to offer technical assistance to help community members better understand the proposed action and its impacts.
- Continue to provide appropriate translation and interpretive services to linguistically isolated populations who live and work in the study area to ensure meaningful engagement. Future public meetings should be accessible to all and scheduled at times that accommodate the greatest number of participants.
- Provide continuous outreach to residents and businesses impacted by temporary construction activities, potential changes in traffic patterns and access, and short-term nuisance dust and noise. Providing updates through local media, social media, the project website, the City of Norwalk, and neighborhood associations will help ensure that information reaches the greatest number of stakeholders.

Wetland Impacts

We support the identification of Alternative 26 as the preferred alternative due to reduced potential for impacts to wetland resources. In addition, Alternative 26 provides opportunities for further avoidance and minimization of impacts through careful design of infrastructure at the wetland and watercourse crossings. CTDOT should take this opportunity to develop project designs that minimize direct and secondary impacts to aquatic resources, improve hydraulic conditions, reduce stormwater impacts, and provide long-term resiliency in light of projected climate conditions and the potential for more frequent storms and associated stormwater flows. Final project designs will need to satisfy requirements of the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

Wetland Mitigation

Development of a suitable compensatory mitigation plan will be required for either of the two build alternatives, but the mitigation obligation will be greatly reduced for Alternative 26. The compensatory mitigation plan will need to satisfy federal mitigation requirements as promulgated in the 2008 Mitigation Rule (40 CFR Part 230). The federal preference for compensatory mitigation begins with credits from mitigation banks, followed by in-lieu fee programs, and finally with permittee responsible mitigation. If permittee responsible mitigation is planned to meet state requirements, activity credits that meet the requirements of the 2008 Mitigation Rule will be recognized in calculation of any remaining federal mitigation obligation.

Stormwater

Both Alternative 26 (the preferred alternative) and 21D include the creation of new impervious surfaces. Increased impervious surfaces lead to increased stormwater discharges and increased discharges of pollutants (total phosphorus, total nitrogen, sediment, bacteria, and others) to wetland areas and waterbodies. CTDOT is subject to the General Permit for the Discharge of

Stormwater from Department of Transportation Separate Storm Sewer Systems (TS4 General Permit) and the proposed project discharges to waterbodies designated as impaired on the Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Report. Because the project will result in an increased discharge, we note that CTDOT must demonstrate a no net increase in pollutant loading by the DOT MS4 of the pollutant(s) for which the waterbody is impaired, consistent with Section 3(b)(7) of the TS4 General Permit.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the EA for the proposed interchange improvements. We look forward to the opportunity to review responses to our comments in the final EA. Please contact me if you have any questions at 617-918-1025 or timmermann.timothy@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Timothy Timmermann
Director, Office of Environmental Review

APPENDIX E

PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPT

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT

CERTIFIED
COPY

In The Matter Of:
The Route 7/15 Project

Hearing

August 16, 2023

*A Plus Reporting Service LLC
55 Whiting Street, Suite 1A
Plainville, CT 06062
203.269.9976*

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7 PUBLIC HEARING
8 IN RE: ROUTE 7/15 PROJECT
9

10 AUGUST 16, 2023

11 7:00 P.M.

12 NORWALK CITY HALL
13 125 EAST AVENUE
14 NORWALK, CT
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24 COURT REPORTER: DEBRA A. CHASSE
25 LICENSE NO. 00055

1 MR. PATEL: Good evening. My name
2 is Neil Patel. I'm with the Department of
3 Transportation's highway design, major highways unit.
4 Welcome to the public hearing for state project
5 102-358, the Route 7 and 15 interchange improvement.
6 This hearing is being held as a result of the document
7 that was recently published by the Department and
8 Federal Highway Administration. That document is the
9 environmental assessment, environmental impact
10 evaluation and draft Section 4F evaluation. The
11 wording, we'll get into exactly what that means in a
12 little bit.

13 Before I get started, I just want to
14 kind of recognize some of the folks on our team here
15 and, I'll just kind of do a very quick general
16 overview. From the department, we've got folks from
17 our highway design unit over here. Our division chief
18 is also here in the back. From the Bureau of Policy
19 and Planning, our bureau chief is here. And we've got
20 Kevin and Mike McMillan also here from environmental
21 planning. Like I said, I'm going to keep it general
22 here. We also have from FHWA Connecticut division
23 folks from that office over here also. Our consultant
24 is -- our primary consultant is Stantec, and they'll be
25 doing the presentation today. FHI Studios is also here

1 and is responsible for some of the public outreach and
2 public involvement.

3 I do want to just welcome and thank
4 some of the PAC members that we see here. They've been
5 pretty key in the response for the process, so thank
6 you for coming and thank you for all the help
7 throughout the years and up to this point.

8 So just a little bit on the agenda.
9 I'm going to turn it over here to Amy Stula. She's
10 going to be the moderator for the hearing. She'll go
11 through the format and then we'll get into a little bit
12 of the overview of the document in terms of what the
13 document is, why are we here and why did we do it.
14 We'll talk about the project overview, a little bit
15 about the purpose and need of the project and get into
16 how we screened the alternatives and then really get
17 into the meat of what was that environmental review in
18 terms of what resources did we look at to come to the
19 conclusions that we did in the document. And then
20 we'll open it up for formal commentary. I just want to
21 remind everyone that we'll also be here afterwards to
22 answer any questions. With that, I'm going to turn it
23 over to Amy.

24 MS. STULA: Thank you. Good
25 evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Amy Stula.

1 I'm the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and I
2 will serve as the moderator for tonight's public
3 hearing. We are meeting with you this evening in order
4 to discuss the environmental assessment, environmental
5 impact evaluation for project 102-358, the Route 7/15
6 Norwalk project.

7 Our goal tonight for this public
8 hearing is for sole opportunity for public
9 participation in the environmental impact evaluation
10 that was prepared for this project. The environmental
11 assessment, environmental impact evaluation is part of
12 the environmental documentation process required by the
13 National Environmental Policy Act, which is also known
14 NEPA, and Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, CEPA.

15 We encourage open discussions of any
16 views and comments you, the community, may have with
17 regards to this project.

18 I'd like to introduce the various
19 individuals who are here this evening and will be
20 presenting; Mr. John Erbele and Mr. Gary Sorge.

21 This public hearing is being held in
22 accordance with the Connecticut Department of
23 Transportations policy on public involvement, public
24 hearings and in accordance to the latest version of the
25 Public Environmental Guidance Manual. Documents

1 related to this project are available for public
2 inspection and copying at the Connecticut Department of
3 Transportation, Norwalk Public Library, the Connecticut
4 State Library, Norwalk City Hall, FHWA Connecticut
5 office, and the Westcott offices.

6 I will now discuss the format for
7 tonight's hearing, and then I will turn the podium over
8 to our presenters. I will then moderate the hearing as
9 we listen to your comments and questions. For your
10 information, our presentation should take approximately
11 30 to 40 minutes to complete. My intent is to conduct
12 a fair and orderly hearing tonight by following a
13 particular format. We would appreciate your patience
14 during my remarks, as well as the presentation to
15 follow. Sorry. They have slides for me. Thank you.

16 I'll jump right back in. We would
17 appreciate your patience during my remarks, as well as
18 the presentation to follow by holding your remarks and
19 comments until this portion of the hearing has been
20 completed. We will be happy to remain here this
21 evening until everyone has had a reasonable opportunity
22 to speak. Experience has shown that audible recordings
23 can only be made if the person making the statement
24 uses the microphone connected to the recording
25 equipment. The microphone has been set up, and if you

1 wish to make a statement, please come to the microphone
2 after I read your name from the signup sheet that was
3 at the table when you all walked in. Please introduce
4 yourself, and if you're representing an organization,
5 please give its name as well. If you didn't sign up to
6 speak, but a question comes to mind, feel free to raise
7 your hand and I'll be happy to recognize you after I go
8 through the speaker signup sheet. For those
9 individuals who have prepared a statement, you may read
10 it into the recording if you so desire. However, if
11 the statement is lengthy, you are asked to offer a
12 written copy of the statement for the record and give a
13 brief summary of its contents. Such attachments to the
14 record can carry as much weight as a transcribed verbal
15 testimony we receive here tonight when the transcript
16 is reviewed. If you wish to speak this evening, we
17 have a signup sheet at the entrance to the room. There
18 is a 3-minute limit on all first time speakers. There
19 will be no yielding your time to other speakers. Your
20 time is for your comments. If after all the first time
21 speakers have finished, anyone who would like the
22 opportunity to speak again, a reasonable amount of time
23 will be allotted for this purpose. Anyone who wishes
24 to present written comments for the public hearing
25 records should give them to me before the end of

1 tonight's meeting. As a result of information that you
2 might learn at tonight's hearing, you may wish to make
3 additional comments on the project. Written statements
4 or exhibits may be mailed or delivered to the attention
5 of Mr. Kevin Carifa. I believe it was also in your
6 handouts. The deadline for receipt of comments on this
7 proposal is August 31st. Written statements or
8 exhibits must be postmarked by this date and must be
9 reproducible in black and white and not larger than 8
10 and a half by 11-inch paper. This information will be
11 made part of the public hearing record and will be
12 considered in the same regard as oral statements.

13 Your civil rights. No person shall
14 on the basis of race, color, or national origin be
15 excluded from participation or subject to
16 discrimination in the development of this project. The
17 notice to public is presented here in front of you in
18 English and in Spanish. For more information, you may
19 reach out to the e-mail addresses, the phone numbers,
20 and addresses listed for the Connecticut DOT civil
21 rights program, Federal Transit Authority, and the
22 Federal Highway Administration. There is also a QR
23 link to our surveyor.

24 At this point, I will now turn the
25 podium over to Mr. John Eberle, project manager.

1 MR. EBERLE: Good evening. Good
2 turnout. It looks good to me. So, as Amy indicated,
3 I'm going to talk a little bit about the core of this
4 project, the EA/EIE, and I'll go through those in a
5 minute but, before I do, I want to kind of step back
6 and talk a little bit about what Neil said, why we're
7 here. I think you have to understand the process that
8 we fall under.

9 So this project falls under actually
10 two acts, the NEPA, the National Environmental Policy
11 Act, and the CEPA, Connecticut Environmental Policy
12 Act, and you'll hear NEPA and CEPA used a lot tonight,
13 so this kind of gives you the definition.

14 NEPA is used where projects require
15 a federal action. Okay? We fall under that. We
16 absolutely need federal action on this, and that is the
17 environmental assessment portion of what the document
18 is. Okay? For Connecticut and for state projects,
19 it's an environmental impact evaluation. So this
20 actually falls under both and so it's a joint document;
21 EA/EIE, so that's what you're seeing here. It's one
22 document that addresses both requirements; okay?

23 So that kind of steps back to why
24 we're here. So what is the environmental assessment,
25 what is an EA/EIE have to show, have to look at? Well,

1 the first thing is to find purpose and need. Okay?
2 You'll see that in the documents if you go on-line or
3 take a look at the hard copy. Description of affected
4 area is in the document. Existing proposed conditions
5 and analysis of alternatives. I'm going to talk a
6 little bit about those coming up in a few minutes.
7 Ultimately, it leads to the preferred alternative,
8 recommendation for the preferred alternative. We
9 assess the impacts of both alternatives on
10 environmental resources, and I'm going to talk a little
11 bit about that. Mitigation is important because there
12 are impacts that have to be mitigates as part of this
13 project, so we discuss those in the document, and last,
14 but not least, Section 4F of the Department of
15 Transportation 1966, which is a wonky way of talking
16 about that. So because we have historic properties, 4F
17 comes into play if you have public parks, recreational
18 areas, wildlife refuges, and historic properties. We
19 don't have the first three, so we don't have to worry
20 about that, but we do have historic property, and I'm
21 going to show you and talk to you about what those are
22 and what is going to be done with those and then,
23 obviously, there will be mitigation.

24 Now, an action is only allowed if no
25 feasible and prudent alternative exists, and this

1 includes all possible means to minimize impact. That's
2 the mitigation that I'll reference a little bit later,
3 or the use will have a de minimis impact on the
4 resource.

5 So I'll talk a little bit about
6 that. We have identified the Section 4F impacts, and
7 that is in the document as well. So everyone should be
8 looking at that. And I already said kind of mitigation
9 and minimization of impact is an important part of the
10 document itself.

11 Project Advisory Committee, and we
12 have a few here and we thank them, again, for their
13 long, long service. But I thought it was important
14 before I go on to have you understand what the PAC is
15 and what their role is. We did not just do the
16 environmental reviews and alternative screening in a
17 vacuum. We had a PAC. That PAC, Project Advisory
18 Committee is made up, and I'll show you the makeup in a
19 minute. They basically help the project team go
20 through the project development phase. They serve as
21 advisory to us. We don't know the local roadways like
22 local people do, so that is invaluable to us to
23 understand. They provide that local insight, they talk
24 to their neighbors, they get other input from folks in
25 the neighborhood. They serve us at length to the

1 community. That's very important for a project like
2 this. They provide input and they have provided input
3 on the key issues. Public need statement, they did a
4 great job with that; the alternative screening -- and
5 the alternative screening, and I'll talk about that, as
6 well. This PAC has been meeting since 2016, so it's
7 been a long time. They've stayed with us all the way.
8 Unfortunately, we did have something called Covid, so a
9 little pandemic kind of interrupted some of the flow,
10 but they stood with us, and they did a great job in
11 helping us get to the point where we are today. Don't
12 worry, I'm not going to go through every member here.

13 Suffice it to say that the
14 membership of the PAC is made up of a really diverse
15 group; business owners, environmentalists, bike and
16 folks like that, so we really go a wealth of different
17 opinions as we kind of marched on. Again, a very
18 diverse group.

19 So the NEPA CEPA process, and I
20 promise I'm going to get to a point where I'm actually
21 talking about the project. We think it's also
22 important to know where we've been. This may have been
23 one of the first slides we ever showed the PAC, just so
24 they could try to understand what the process was.

25 So six years ago, five years ago, we

1 started the NEPA CEPA reviews and process. That
2 started with developing the purpose and need, and the
3 project initiation went into a project scoping meeting,
4 which, hopefully, many of you have attended and that
5 was, again, years ago. That kind of set the sail of
6 where we were heading. We refined the project purpose
7 and need.

8 Ultimately, we went through
9 alternatives, and I'll show you a number of those, and
10 we find ourselves here after developing those
11 alternatives and starting the impact analysis of
12 preparing the document that we published and on-line
13 and at the library.

14 So tonight is actually the public
15 hearing. And that really is really specifically on the
16 environmental documentation that has been published,
17 and that's what you'll hear a lot tonight and the
18 questions that we get.

19 So someone asked me earlier where do
20 we go from here. Where we go from here is we get
21 comments. That's really the most important thing about
22 tonight, the commentary. I think it ends on the 31st.
23 It's going to be really important that we get all your
24 comments, and then we look at them. We look at the
25 documents and we try to understand what your insights

1 are, what your questions are and look at that.

2 Ultimately, we hope this year that we'll go toward the
3 record of a decision so we have the findings and we
4 know whether we can go forward with what we've got here
5 for an alternative. Once that is done, then we
6 actually turn our attention to final design and,
7 ultimately, construction and that's out a few years.
8 It's going to take a couple of years of design and
9 things like that.

10 The one thing that I want people to
11 leave this with, because I had some conversations on
12 this. Tonight is not the last time you'll have a
13 chance to comment on this project. This project
14 doesn't go underground and then it pops up when it's
15 being constructed. There's a lot of design work that
16 has to happen, there's a lot of input that we still
17 need from stakeholders. Even the PAC, although I'd
18 like to dismiss you and tell you you're all done, but
19 you're not all done. There's still years to go. But
20 at various stages, as the design progresses, we're
21 going to be looking for input to the actual design. So
22 keep that in mind, this is not your final bite at the
23 apple, as it were.

24 Project overview. You saw the
25 purpose and need is in the back, it's in the document.

1 I just want to run through it so everyone understands,
2 again, what the projects purpose need is. No. 1, it's
3 improving the roadway system linkage between Route 7
4 and Route 15 at interchange 39. That's a key element.
5 Improving mobility for vehicles at both Route 15
6 intersections and the Main Avenue intersection, so both
7 39 and 40.

8 This next one is very important.
9 This is where the PAC is very helpful to us, because
10 there was the consensus in the PAC that mobility for
11 all users had to be part of the purpose and need. And
12 that's where we came up with No. 3, improving the
13 mobility for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists along
14 the immediate adjacent local roadway network; Main
15 Avenue, Creeping Hemlock, Glover Avenue, and you'll
16 see, we'll talk a little bit about that, and then,
17 obviously, improving safety at the interchanges is one
18 of the key purposes of the project.

19 So the needs of the project
20 basically broke down into three main categories; the
21 roadway system linkage that I talked about, safety,
22 addressing the substandard acceleration deceleration,
23 the sight lines, the geometry of those interchanges.
24 That's one of the -- and, again, the mobility,
25 providing local roadway improvements and bicycle path

1 improvements in the area. Obviously, as we go forward
2 in the design, we'll be addressing the ADA issues that
3 are currently out there.

4 So this is kind of it in a nutshell.
5 This is a graphic that we've shared for a long time,
6 many times. Some of the PAC members are probably tired
7 of seeing it. This kind of gets to the connections and
8 that need very clearly. What you're seeing in green
9 are the current connections between the Merritt
10 Parkway, and the Merritt Parkway runs this way, Route 7
11 here, Main Avenue here. 40 and 39.

12 So what you see in green are the
13 current connections that you can make today. So if
14 you're on Main Avenue, you can make the connection to
15 Main Avenue, Main Avenue can make the full connection
16 going northbound, southbound on the Merritt Parkway.

17 The issue comes in on what you see
18 in red because those are the connections that you do
19 not -- you cannot make today. So if you're going
20 southbound on the Merritt Parkway and you try to get
21 onto Route 7, you're not getting that direct
22 connections. You're getting off at Main Avenue, you're
23 taking local roads to make your way over to Route 7.
24 So that's really kind of the critical thing that we're
25 trying to resolve with this project.

1 The other thing, and I had a number
2 of conversations with folks, crashes. This should not
3 come as a surprise to a lot of folks who know this
4 area. The sheer volume of crash history in these two
5 interchanges is pretty startling. What you see in
6 purple, that's our area. Over 300 crashes in a half
7 mile segment. Nothing else is maybe a little over 200,
8 240. So this speaks volumes about why we're trying to
9 do this project.

10 Project alternatives. So this is,
11 again, the very key aspect of this project. We know
12 why we're here, we know what the purpose and needs of
13 the project is. Well, how are we going to try to fix
14 it, what are the alternatives that we're going to come
15 up with. This is a big view of how we proceeded with
16 alternatives, and I'm going to talk a little more about
17 the number of alternatives.

18 So at the beginning we have a lot of
19 alternatives; maybe some of them work, maybe some of
20 them don't. We don't know. But we develop them with
21 the hope that it will fix certain aspects of purpose
22 and need. Ultimately, over time, and this is where the
23 PAC came in. We actually had two levels of screening,
24 as it were, so we screened the first number down to a
25 reasonable number. Ultimately, we ended up with the

1 final alternatives that you see now in the back and in
2 the document itself. So we went from -- I'll steal my
3 own thunder. We started with 20 plus, and that 20 plus
4 is actually 28, so I think we gipped ourselves on this
5 a little bit. Of those 28 -- it's important to note
6 that this project has been around for a long time. You
7 know, it's decades. So we're just the new kids on the
8 block trying to do this. When this phase of the
9 project in 2016 started up, there was thought that we
10 could just go forward with the consensus pick
11 alternatives that we developed years ago, maybe come up
12 some with other alternatives and go forward, but the
13 Department made the decision that we really wanted to
14 be transparent here. So what our charge was was to go
15 back, go back to 2000, late 1990s when there were
16 alternates on maps. We took everything and we put it
17 into the mix and screened it so that we didn't --
18 heaven forbid we left an alternative off the table that
19 would have worked, and we just didn't look at it.

20 So we started at 28. That became
21 21D and 26. The other important part of this is that
22 the two alternatives there are build alternatives. We
23 are required to look at no build and no actions
24 alternatives. We have to compare it against that at a
25 benchmark to measure the environmental impact of the

1 build alternative. So when you look at the document,
2 when you read the document, I may talk about two
3 alternatives. Any time I say two alternatives just put
4 in build there. There's really three. We're looking
5 at what happens if we don't do anything. You'll see
6 some of the ramifications of that.

7 So just real quickly wanted to kind
8 of look at this. In the back, we have these up there.
9 I want to quickly go through what are the alternatives
10 that we're actually looking at. So this is the no
11 build alternative. I'll define the no build
12 alternative a little bit more in a minute. You have
13 Route 7 here, Merritt Parkway, Main Avenue, this way
14 there's a Stop & Shop, there's the railroad station
15 there.

16 So the no build is basically doing
17 no major improvements to this and just letting it go.
18 Sure, maintenance, and things like that, but no basic
19 improvements.

20 Alternate 21D. I'm going to show
21 you a movement on each of these so that you can kind of
22 get a sense. I'm not going to go through every
23 movement, because we'd be here for an awful long time.
24 What the takeaway on this is it's a fairly normal
25 interchange, normal free flow ramp interchange, that

1 you see on a lot of interchanges up through America.
2 I'm just going to, just to orientate you, same thing,
3 Route 7, Merritt Parkway, Main Avenue. Okay? So you
4 have that. Now, so I talked earlier about
5 southbound -- a vehicle traveling southbound on the
6 Merritt Parkway cannot get onto Route 7 directly
7 without going off road. In this alternative, what
8 would happen is, everything you see here is new
9 construction. The southbound vehicles would get off
10 the new interchange, be on this ramp, cross over Route
11 7, continue on, cross under the Merritt Parkway, and
12 then would join up heading south to downtown Norwalk.
13 That's that one movement. There's other movements that
14 also make these connections. The takeaway from this
15 free flow lanes, because the next alternative does the
16 exact same connections, so it makes those connections,
17 but it does it in an extremely -- a very different way.
18 And what we do here is we're adding signals -- we're
19 proposing signals on Route 7 just north of the Merritt
20 Parkway and just south of the Merritt Parkway. I'll do
21 the same movements, the same persons in the vehicle
22 heading southbound, they want to get to Route 7.
23 They'll still, essentially, get off the new interchange
24 that will be developed. So travel this roadway, now
25 they'll come to a light. Okay? Travel signal. At

1 this point, they can turn right and head north, they
2 can turn left to head south. So that's the connection.
3 Same connection, gets them to Route 7, just does it in
4 a very different way. Okay?

5 Two things I want to point out on
6 there that it's important that folks take away. The
7 area of the Main Avenue in here, what you'll notice, is
8 the same. So there really is no difference between 21D
9 and 26 when it comes to what would be proposed in this
10 area. There will be new signals. Glover Avenue and
11 Creeping Hemlock would be realigned. Right now they
12 have that ugly offset and the nice police officer
13 that's out there doing traffic. There will no longer
14 be need for the nice police officer directing traffic.
15 We'll realign that and -- so with both alternatives
16 treat this the same way. It doesn't matter which
17 alternative we select.

18 The other takeaway that's important
19 to understand, because, you know, I talked to a bunch
20 of people out here, and Route 7 -- you know,
21 essentially we're putting signals here, which in a way
22 is kind of moving the turn now from Grist Mill down to
23 a mile. But what's going to have to happen is in
24 design we have to re-characterize this roadway here.
25 It can't be a an expressway coming into a signal at 60

1 miles an hour. That's going to be one of the key
2 things that we have to look at in design. How do we do
3 that. How do we calm traffic, how do we reduce
4 footprints, whether it's road side plantings, signage,
5 it's all going to be a part of the answer, and you're
6 going to see a lot of graphics once we get into the
7 design. This is very much a key point of this. So
8 those are the alternatives.

9 We're now to the environmental
10 review. What we wanted to do is this is the basic
11 resource analysis that you'll see in the document.
12 There may be a few others that are here. What you see
13 in green -- the purpose of tonight is not necessarily
14 to go through every resource and impact and compare.
15 That would be a 3-hour meeting. What you see in green,
16 though, are the topics that, working with stakeholders,
17 working with the PAC, seem to rise to the top as far as
18 sensitivity. So it's not that people didn't care out
19 wetlands, but they wanted to make sure that bike and
20 ped -- Merritt Parkway landscape is -- Gary is going to
21 talk to you about that.

22 We're going to go through these
23 basic things, we're going to give you a high level, did
24 we find in EA/EIE. So we'll start with traffic. The
25 traffic analysis summary and, again, when you look at

1 the document, I think there's 13,000 pages on traffic
2 alone in the appendix. Good luck if you want to get in
3 there and look at it. There's a lot of different ways
4 you can look at traffic. What we try to do, and this
5 is just to kind of pull it out, is look at the number
6 of intersections that failed. We have a number today.
7 So what you're seeing is existing conditions. We have
8 ten locations throughout the project area that failed.
9 They're not acceptable.

10 The no build alternative, not doing
11 anything out there, creates -- traffic operations
12 worsen, obviously. More traffic, but you haven't made
13 any improvement. Safety is not addressed. Those ramps
14 stay the way they are with the sight line issues and
15 geometry and the connections and mobility we're talking
16 about are not addressed. No improvement is made.

17 Both build alternatives improve
18 traffic operation and address safety issues at the
19 Route 15/Main Avenue interchange. Traffic, turns out,
20 is not a differentiator, and we kind of see that here.
21 This is existing conditions. I'm just going to use the
22 morning peak hour traffic. So it's morning, we have
23 ten locations that fail. If we don't do anything, the
24 no build, that rises up to, I think it's 23, don't
25 quote me on that, but I think it's 23 locations. So

1 you see a doubling of locations that fail.

2 The one thing that I want to define
3 in the no build for you is, the no build is not just
4 simply looking at today's traffic on an interchange, or
5 whatever, that progresses in 30 years. We're actually
6 looking at 2045 he. We projected the traffic, we've
7 looked at development, we've looked at the road, and we
8 projected the traffic, so we're looking at 2045. So
9 whenever I say no build, that's the year that we're
10 actually looking at, so it's out there.

11 What you see here build alternative
12 21D, build alternative 26. That's no real difference
13 between the two. We'd like to say 26 or 21D is the
14 answer if you want to fix the traffic. It doesn't
15 really matter. They both do the same job out there, so
16 there's not -- again, it's not a differentiator on this
17 project.

18 Bike and ped. We have a bunch of --
19 we have a number of bike and ped. I can see folks
20 here. They were on the PAC. What we found is that
21 both alternatives have the same benefits to biking and
22 pedestrian movements through this area, and you can
23 imagine that, not only because, as I indicated, Main
24 Avenue is the same, regardless of what you do, and
25 that's where we're focusing a lot of the bike ped

1 improvements. It doesn't matter, 21D or 26, they're
2 both going to get improvements to bike ped facilities
3 out there. And those are improvements you can see from
4 here. Signal improvement for pedestrians, which you
5 don't have now. Wider sidewalks, you'll have that.
6 Enhanced ADA sidewalks, so that will be fixed. Right
7 now, I think when you walk on Main Avenue, you take
8 your life in your hands. That won't be the case with
9 either alternative that was selected. You'll have
10 buffered bike lanes, bicycle treatments, various things
11 that will come out in design.

12 The other point in this that I want
13 to -- I'm trying to get you to visualize what these
14 bike improvements are. You don't have to necessarily
15 visualize it now. As we proceed into the design, this
16 is going to be one of the key things that we have to
17 come out to you with, and you're going to see an awful
18 lot of graphic rendering of what this will look like.
19 But for the sake of environmental review it's what
20 we're addressing and what it impacts, so keep that in
21 mind.

22 Noise assessment. So noise
23 assessment, again, was highlighted as a possible
24 concern for the folks, not knowing which alternative
25 would do what to the noise, ambient noise out there.

1 We had our specialist look at the various land uses,
2 residential, obviously, places of worship and office
3 buildings out there. What they found is that both
4 build alternatives decreased noise one to two decibels
5 at any given -- they remained the same, or they
6 increase no more than 1 decibel. And to put that in
7 context, the CONN DOT noise program guidelines
8 essentially say that anything less than a 3 decibel
9 increase is not detectable by the human ear. So the
10 takeaway on this again is that noise is not a
11 differentiator. It's just not an issue out there.

12 What you see there on the right,
13 this is the project area, every blue dot is a receptor
14 area, so that's a point where we took the existing
15 conditions, modeled future traffic, and came up with
16 the analysis that you'll see in the document. So it
17 ended up, while it was raised as a potential concern,
18 it was not ultimately a big differentiator between the
19 two alternatives.

20 Historic and cultural. I mentioned
21 4F as a resource. So here's where you'll see the 4F
22 resources. What you see, and we have a number out
23 here, Perry Avenue Bridge, Verneur Pratt Historic
24 District. What you see in highlights in red, those are
25 the 4F -- the bridges that will be impacted in this

1 project. In the case of Main Avenue Bridge and Glover
2 Avenue Bridge, those will actually be replaced. Again,
3 it doesn't matter which alternative is selected. They
4 both will be replaced. And, obviously, part of
5 mitigation is to understand what's going back, and
6 that's going to be a key part of design in the
7 mitigation process.

8 So you basically have four of the 4F
9 properties that get impacted, thus triggering the 4F.
10 The other thing to keep in mind is the Merritt Parkway
11 itself, we're operating on that, that is a historic
12 district itself. So that is a 4F property.

13 Just real quickly, the MetroNorth
14 Bridge and the Norwalk River Bridge that you see there,
15 those are not replacements, but they are historic
16 bridges and will have some impact to them, so keep that
17 in mind as we move forward.

18 I'm going to show you, this kind of
19 supports what I just said, so it's a good slide. So
20 you see the historic properties that we're dealing
21 with. Alternate 21D and Alternate 26 have the adverse
22 impact, so it does not matter which alternative is
23 chosen. And, again, you're comparing it against the no
24 build, the no build has no impact, we're not doing
25 anything. That makes logical sense.

1 So those were the aboveground
2 resources that we're dealing with. There are also
3 below ground, the archeological sites, and you'll see
4 that depicted in the document itself. And in this case
5 alternate 26 would actually have impact to two of the
6 sites; maybe not the huge impact, but they definitely
7 will have an impact. Alternate 21D does not have any
8 impact to any archeological site and no build, again,
9 no impact to the sites.

10 What we take away from this is that
11 we recognize that there are impacts, and we've been
12 working with the PAC, the Section 106 subcommittee
13 consulting parties to understand what the mitigation
14 is, what it should be, and how we go forward with it,
15 whether it be archeological logical treatment plans.
16 That is a continuing process. So that doesn't end
17 tonight either or the 31st when our comments are
18 closed. That will be an ongoing process that we have
19 to deal with, because there may be things out there
20 that we just don't know, so as we go forward we have to
21 have a plan to be ready to go if we do hit something.
22 Keep that in mind. It's important to recognize what
23 the impacts are.

24 So with that, I'm going to turn it
25 over to Gary Sorge who is going to talk a little bit

1 about the landscape assessment because that's really
2 key.

3 MR. SORGE: Good evening, everyone.
4 It's good to see everyone again. I maybe should have
5 just let John keep going because he was on such a roll
6 in covering the topics so well.

7 We can't talk about the Merritt
8 Parkway without talking about it's landscape and how
9 this project could impact it's footprint. So the
10 landscape of the Merritt Parkway is very significant.
11 It's historically documented, and there are a number of
12 criteria that we have here. The geometry of the
13 roadway, cuts and hills were designed to open up view
14 sheds, views out to pastures and farmlands in the days
15 when the parkway was constructed. Trees and plantings
16 were maintained and added to blend in and enhance the
17 natural surroundings. So when the parkway was
18 constructed the landscape was designed to transition
19 into its surroundings, so you had a natural transition.
20 It gave it a very nice pastoral sort of experience.

21 Over the years, as you've seen,
22 development has encroached on its right of way, so
23 today you see much more buildings and larger buildings
24 than you would have when the parkway was first
25 constructed, so we take that into account as we're

1 moving forward. The landscape, when the parkway was
2 originally constructed, was incorporated to heal the
3 man-made intrusions, the excavations to actually
4 created the roadway, the bridges that were constructed,
5 but it was done masterfully with a rolling landscape
6 with nodes and such that accentuate the bridges and
7 provide these views off into the distance.

8 And then there were associate
9 elements with the landscape design. There was a unique
10 vocabulary, whether it was signage or guide rails and
11 even the plant materials that were selected. That
12 vocabulary was a signature of the parkway. The project
13 that John explained to you, and it's visible on the
14 boards behind you, much of the project reaches the
15 Route 7 corridor. So as we're approaching the Merritt
16 Parkway, on the approach to the views of the Merritt
17 Parkway, the bridges, we like to consider that
18 landscape. So it's not only the view from the parkway
19 but the view of the parkway and the experience you have
20 on the ramps and the connections to the parkway, so
21 that there is a sense of place that you consider that
22 was historic and was always recognized within the Route
23 15 Merritt Parkway corridor.

24 So the landscape assessment drivers
25 and purpose of the assessment in the documents that you

1 will see on-line, as John has pointed out the Section
2 106 of the National Preservation Historic Act of 1966.
3 "Assess the effects of project undertakings on
4 properties listed and eligible for listing on the
5 National Register of Historic Places" and -- such as
6 the Merritt Parkway. It's a historic amenity that we
7 need to consider in every aspect of the design and then
8 defining and providing mitigation for indirect effects
9 arising from project activities that could impact the
10 integrity of the setting. So that's not only what you
11 experience while you're on the parkway but what you
12 might see from the neighboring road, be it Main Avenue
13 or Perry Avenue or the interchange with Route 7.

14 So we'll have mitigation through
15 landscape design. Much of this will be worked out in
16 subsequent phases of design well after this evening --
17 the impacts to the scenic landscape were being
18 addressed in a draft Memorandum of Agreement, MOA,
19 between DOT, Federal Highway Administration, and the
20 Connecticut State Historic Preservation office in
21 consultation with concurring parties who have been
22 participating, some during the public outreach process
23 dating back to, as John pointed out, 2016. Those
24 groups include the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, the
25 Connecticut chapter of the American Society of

1 Landscape Architects -- advocates so they've been
2 consulted and these concurrent parties are consulted as
3 part of that agreement.

4 So as we're moving forward, we need
5 to consider the enhancement of view corridors and the
6 landscapes surrounds both potentially disturbed areas
7 of the right of way. So being consistent and sensitive
8 to the original design where new ramps and roadways and
9 the main line or the connections to Route 7 are being
10 constructed, what is the experience along those
11 corridors and how was the landscape then transitioning
12 into the areas that will remain, whether they're wooded
13 areas or rock outcroppings or water courses or other
14 elements that are historic or have some archeological
15 significance, how are they all connecting.

16 So, as John had mentioned, as we
17 look at the alternative assessment, alternative 26 is
18 more advantageous and why. We have a few points here.
19 It has a more compact footprint, as you see in the
20 comparative between the top, alternative 26, and in the
21 lower illustration, which is alternative 21D. You can
22 actually see those illustrations on the back, you might
23 have seen then prior, or you can actually walk up to
24 them after the meeting and ask some questions, if you'd
25 like. But looking at the footprint, the amount of

1 pavement, the number of bridges is dramatically greater
2 in alternative 21D, as opposed to alternative 26.

3 You have enhanced natural features
4 in alternative 26. Much of the woodland if you look at
5 the southeast quadrant in the upper image, look at the
6 extent of the woodlands that are preserved and some of
7 which will be restored when some of the existing ramps
8 are removed, so you can argue that there would be added
9 buffer and woodlands around the roadway corridor to the
10 surrounding neighborhoods, advantageous in alternative
11 26, as opposed to 21D.

12 26 is creating a more park like
13 setting. There's reduced maintenance because you'll
14 have reduced roadways and bridges and you'll have fewer
15 structures. That is clear on the illustrations that
16 you'll see in the back and the illustrations that John
17 shared with you earlier.

18 Again, a comparative between the
19 two. Closest to us in the lower portion, lower right
20 portion of the image, you can see the existing ramps on
21 the existing parkway and super 7 interchange, but you
22 can also see the proposed ramps that are shown on 21D
23 that complete the complete intersection. On the
24 illustration on the right, immediately looking, again,
25 to our immediate foreground, you can see the ramps that

1 are no longer needed creating a direct connection
2 between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway, which allows
3 more woodlands to be restored, more pastoral areas to
4 be created and allow for greater buffers between the
5 roadway and cars in the surrounding community.

6 I'm going to pass it back to John.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. SORGE: So Gary mentioned fewer
9 structures, more compact, less infrastructure as part
10 of the visuals. Well, logic dictates that that smaller
11 footprint and less infrastructure leads to cost
12 differences between the two. In the document itself,
13 you're going to see a very robust section on cost
14 benefit analysis, fairly detailed. Tonight we're just
15 really talking about the cost analysis. I think at a
16 gut level, this states a story in itself.

17 As Gary indicated, 21D has double
18 the amount of bridges than 26 does, 14 to 7. If you
19 look at a total ramp length, about double, between 26
20 and 21D. Ultimately all of the lesser in
21 infrastructures that have to be constructed, the
22 initial construction costs and, keep in mind, this is
23 order of magnitude. We don't have a design. Our first
24 real construction costs will come in during early
25 design when we really have gotten in there. But for an

1 order of magnitude, you're seeing 21D on the order of
2 240 to \$260 million to construct as compared to 26, 140
3 to 160. So it's significant savings going with
4 alternate 26. Keep in mind, there is an order of
5 magnitude, but it's reasonable, based on what we're
6 kind of talking about tonight. So we're almost there,
7 so hang in.

8 EA/EIE conclusions. If you haven't
9 guessed at this point, the document is recommending
10 that alternate 26 move forward into design as the
11 preferred alternate, and for all the reasons that we
12 kind of already talked about, the less impacts to
13 natural resources, and if you look at the document, and
14 I'm not going to discuss wetlands but, again, wetlands
15 is one where alternate 21D is doubled the amount of
16 impacts to wetlands. Less visual impacts, as Gary
17 talked about. Very important for what we're going.

18 The lower capital and ongoing
19 maintenance. I'm glad we put ongoing maintenance on
20 here because what I just talked about was the initial
21 cost. That's not talking about less maintenance for 7
22 bridges versus 14, for all that roadway land. So
23 that's an important part to understand.

24 And the ease of construction. If
25 you just look at the complexity of the two

1 alternatives, it's going to be easier to construct 26.
2 I won't say it's painless. Construction is
3 construction. But it will be easier moving forward.
4 With that, I'm going to turn it back to Amy.

5 MS. STULA: We will now be starting
6 the public states and comment portion of the hearing,
7 so that all attending have the opportunity to
8 participate. We ask that you please limit your
9 statements to the allotted 3 minutes. I will interrupt
10 you after 3 minutes. If you still have additional
11 questions, we will be happy to remain here tonight to
12 speak with you one-on-one regarding any other
13 individual questions you might have. You may also use
14 the comment sheet to submit your comments and I do have
15 them, if you want. Just raise your hand and I will
16 bring you one.

17 Since the City of Norwalk is the
18 host town this evening, I would like to extend the
19 courtesy of allowing the mayor to speak, if they are
20 here. And, if not, any elected public officials who
21 would like to speak. All right. Let's start with the
22 speaker list that people signed up. Anthony Costanzo.

23 MR. COSTANZO: Hello. Okay. So
24 good evening, everyone. I am Anthony Costanzo from
25 Stamford here representing myself as a member of the

1 public. I am glad that we have the crash specific
2 slide here, because this really supports my point.
3 Currently, Exit 40 has over 300 crashes in the 2015 to
4 2018 timeframe. It is statistically the most dangerous
5 interchange on the parkway. Right next door, Exit 39,
6 only had 65 in the same time period, which is rather
7 impressive considering the volume of traffic that moves
8 through that interchange, so it's really one of the
9 safest interchanges on the parkway. But that's not as
10 in jeopardy with the preferred alternative, because
11 there is a proposal to add two traffic signals which
12 means conflict points where vehicles will be crossing
13 each other's paths which creates opportunities for more
14 crashes. Now, in the statement of purposes and need
15 talks about improving safety, so why are we doing this
16 change to Exit 39 that going to make it less safe.
17 Yes, it will create connections, but it's not worth it.
18 You're going -- you're playing with peoples' lives
19 here. So I would say that the alternative that I
20 haven't seen considered, but I really think should be
21 considered is that Exit 40 should be fixed, it needs to
22 be fixed, it's old and dangerous, but if we can't come
23 up with an alternative to do something to Exit 39 to
24 create the missing connections in a free flowing manner
25 that preserves the safety that's already there, just

1 leave it alone. Fix 40, leave 39 alone. Thank you.

2 MS. STULA: The next speaker is Ben
3 Hanpeter.

4 MR. HANPETER: Hi everyone. Thank
5 you offering us the option to speak tonight. My name
6 is Ben Hanpeter. I live at 14 Haviland Street in South
7 Norwalk, Connecticut, and I work in Wilton and I ride
8 my bike to work every day. I'm well-acquainted with
9 how the current state of the project area is an
10 impediment to people trying to walk or bike between
11 Norwalk and Wilton. My main feedback for the project
12 team tonight is I think that there's a need for
13 additional planning for a fully separated route through
14 the NRVV project area. I think that, as probably most
15 people in this room know, the NRVV will one day make up
16 the whole backbone of the whole region's bike network.
17 But a change is only as strong as it's weakest link.
18 The current proposed route on Perry Ave will put trail
19 users in with mixed traffic, and I think that will make
20 it a much less attractive option for a lot of people
21 who don't feel comfortable riding in mixed traffic and
22 you'll see a lot less usage of the trail if that is the
23 route that is ultimately chosen.

24 I think this project provides a once
25 in a generation opportunity to provide a safe, great

1 separated route through the project area that all users
2 will feel comfortable using. I think this is better
3 for regional connectivity, reducing congestion and
4 putting in air quality, all of which are stated project
5 goals. So I think that a separated path is really key
6 for making sure that the project, in its entirety, all
7 users can meet its goals. Looking through the EIE, I
8 haven't seen a lot of evidence that the project is
9 considering this. It does show the baseline routing on
10 Perry, but it doesn't really give much priority to
11 alternative routings, especially ones that are fully
12 separated. I think that this is the best change that
13 we have to do this and planning for the NRVt needs to
14 be fully integrated with planning for the project as a
15 whole. I hope that you're working closely with the
16 NRVt organization, and whatever other relevant
17 stakeholders are involved, to make sure that we do this
18 right, because this is our best chance and it also
19 would be really cheap. You know, as the cost was just
20 shown, over \$100 million for the cheap option. No
21 matter how crazy you want to get with bridges or
22 tunnels for bikes, it's going to be on the order of a
23 few percent of the total project cost. So I think it's
24 very feasible to do, and I think we should do this the
25 right way because the region deserves a quality bike

1 path in this area. Thank you.

2 MS. STULA: Thank you. Tanner
3 Thompson.

4 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. I have
5 notes on my phone, and my phone just died. So do you
6 mind if I go after the next person?

7 MS. STULA: Sure. Diane Keefe.

8 MR. KEEFE: I'm Diane Keefe, and I
9 fully agree with the previous speaker on every element.
10 Norwalk River Valley Trail is what he was talking
11 about, and I think it's vital that, given even with 365
12 crashes, we're talking about something like, if I'm
13 doing the math right, 300,000 per crash, the cost of
14 this project. So I really think we need to give more
15 attention to cyclists and pedestrians in what is
16 becoming a very dense urban area and will be even more
17 dense by 2045, and I hope that there's more density in
18 Norwalk near the Metro-North and that there's more
19 investment in the Metro-North, and this doesn't really
20 contemplate that, except in a very small way. And the
21 other piece I note from the super highway that was
22 created only up until Grist Mill Road is that it went
23 right through a big body of water and that there's
24 development right encroaching on the other side of that
25 body of water, and there are birds are in there and

1 everything, and I just want to be careful before doing
2 a whole bunch more.

3 And the other piece is that I happen
4 to live really close to the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk,
5 and I never realized that all of the trees were going
6 to be denuded. There is an member of our planning and
7 zoning department, who is a good friend, and he
8 explained to me that they were native trees that are
9 going to be replanted and that a lot of the trees that
10 were cut were diseased. All of that is well and good,
11 but it has really taken a way a large carbon sink for
12 us for the next 20 years before those replanted trees
13 get mature, and also the views have changed for,
14 especially a lot of my neighbors who live really right
15 on the Merritt, and they didn't get compensated for
16 that. That super highway part is a lot wider, so the
17 risk to cars, which was the whole justification of
18 cutting down all the trees, from increased climate
19 changes is much lower from the midsize, so I hope that
20 the plans in response to this public hearing will
21 consider that more seriously. We need more urban
22 reforestation, and that goes throughout the state. So
23 thank very much, and I live on Chestnut Hill Road in
24 Norwalk.

25 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.

1 Tanner.

2 MR. THOMPSON: I really appreciate
3 the flexibility. I know there weren't any elected
4 officials. I'm an appointed official. I'm the chair
5 of the Bike/Walk Commission here in Norwalk and I'm
6 also speaking as a resident and representative of an
7 advocacy group called Sustainable Streets, which is
8 somewhat new. Some of our members are here.

9 I do want to put the request for the
10 NRVt in context, first by acknowledging all the things
11 that the project is doing well. The lower cost of the
12 preferred alternative over 21 is great. The fact that
13 connection are being made is going to make peoples'
14 lives easier. I think that re-characterizing Route 7
15 is the right move. It will enable traffic calming and
16 opening the door for maybe re-imagining all that land
17 that's north of the interchange. I think the point
18 that was made about stoplights is a valid one, and I
19 would love to see whether, in the past or in the
20 future, roundabouts have been or could be considered in
21 place of those stoplights because they have a much
22 better safety record, but still move a comparable
23 amount of traffic in a lot of cases. The fact that the
24 project is going to alleviate some of the traffic and
25 the pressure on Main Avenue is a huge win for

1 pedestrian and bike safety, because that's a very
2 unsafe corridor right now. I have biked it and I have
3 walked it, and I know firsthand. I really appreciate
4 the stated commitment to mobility for all users,
5 especially on the Main Avenue corridor, especially
6 going under the Merritt bridge. I don't want that to
7 be lost in all the requests for accommodations for
8 NRVT, because that's going to be a game changer for that
9 area, but the requests for that sort of mobility
10 accommodation and the request for the accommodations
11 for the actual route of the NRVT serve two different
12 purposes; one's local, one's regional. One serves more
13 commuters and adults, frankly, and the other serves
14 people of all abilities and all ages.

15 But I want to provide a little
16 context for why we should care about the NRVT. The
17 interest in the NRVT and walking and biking generally
18 has grown dramatically since this project started.
19 During the pandemic, the usage of the trail has spiked
20 like three times and it has stayed stable like over two
21 times the baseline right before the pandemic.

22 Norwalk just opened a new section of
23 trail, the Federal Department of Transportation just
24 awarded a one half a million dollar grant for planning
25 and design for the entire rest of the trail, so it's a

1 much bigger deal than it was in 2016 when I understand
2 this project started and it started before that even;
3 right?

4 Additionally, Norwalk is investing
5 in a citywide complete streets project; a plan, a
6 commitment. There's ambitious goals in our
7 transportation master plan about access for walking and
8 biking. There's a transit oriented focus of our draft
9 zoning code that's being reviewed right now. There's a
10 new train station at Merritt 7, which is right next to
11 the project area, and then we've got this increasing
12 job density along Route 7 in Wilton, which is outside
13 the project scope, but the fact that we're putting more
14 jobs on a road that is pretty narrow and is already
15 pretty congested, it just speaks to the need for a
16 greater vision for non-car and for structure for
17 walking and biking and public transportation. That's
18 why we're all talking about the NRVt today.

19 The NRVt board has done a lot of
20 work and they've spent a lot money of that they had to
21 fundraise for to look for alternatives as to how to get
22 the main route of the NRVt through the project area and
23 what they found is that, by their standards, they have
24 to spend a ton of money to do it. This is a group,
25 again, that is fundraising their own money and they're

1 getting money from grants to do their stuff.

2 Like Ben mentioned, in the context
3 of this project, we're talking like peanuts. So we
4 could get like a top quality connection for the NRV
5 through the project area on the order of 1 percent or
6 maybe 2 percent of the total project cost. So that's
7 what I'm asking for. I understand that the official
8 scope of the project doesn't include the NRV, but I
9 guess I'm asking for the to be officially expanded to
10 include that, because it is critical regional
11 connectivity and will make the project more holistic
12 and not just about moving more cars. Thank you.

13 MS. STULA: Thank you so much. Our
14 next speaker is Eric Honck.

15 MR. HONCK: My name is Eric Honck.
16 I'm a resident of Haviland Street in South Norwalk. I
17 just want to thank everyone for the work they've done
18 on this project. I'm also in favor of alternative 26,
19 the cheaper one. I think I would like to see some of
20 the money that the state of Connecticut and the federal
21 government was willing to fork over for alternative 21D
22 potentially be repurposed into adding the NRV, as a
23 couple of people already mentioned, through the project
24 area. Yeah. That's it.

25 MS. STULA: Thank you so much.

1 Daniela Posada.

2 MS. POSADA: Hi everyone. I just
3 want to say the alternative that will had additional
4 traffic lights if it's being considers like to make
5 them kind of like smart lights not add additional
6 driving time for the people in the project. So I
7 didn't really see how much information on how much
8 travel time would be impacted, so it's important to be
9 included maybe for future. That's all.

10 MS. STULA: Thank you so much.
11 Harrison Knowles. We'll come back if he comes back.
12 Jo-Anne Horvath.

13 MS. HORVATH: I'm going to read my
14 speech. My name is Jo-Ann Horvath, and I live at 1
15 Commerce Lane in Norwalk near Exit 40B of the Merritt
16 Parkway. Also, I am a member of the Merritt Parkway
17 Advisory Committee for the 7/15 project. I have been
18 working on this project since 1990 and have had many
19 conversations with numerous DOT engineers about this.
20 Currently, the state DOT has put forward alternate 26
21 as a preferred choice for the 7/15 project. This
22 alternate would convert Route 7 to a full -- currently
23 the state DOT has put forward alternate 26 as a
24 preferred choice for this project. This alternate
25 would convert Route 7 to a 4-lane boulevard by changing

1 the character of the roadway using intersections and
2 introducing traffic signals on Route 7. It may be the
3 state's preferred plan, but it is not mine. The
4 following is my opinion on alternate 26:

5 A, by adding traffic signals on the
6 Route 7 expressway, I think that too many rear-end
7 collisions would results since motorists are extremely
8 inpatient, especially in densely populated Fairfield
9 county.

10 B, if you add traffic signals, the
11 road becomes like the existing Main Avenue, state road
12 719. The purpose of the expressway is to avoid the
13 traffic signals. Traffic signals will create further
14 backups, which already exist at the a.m. and p.m. rush
15 hours.

16 C, there are many Norwalk projects
17 in the pipeline that will impact the Main Avenue
18 corridor, mainly new apartments and a hotel on the I
19 part property on Main Avenue, BJs or another big box
20 store being proposed on a 5-acre property on Main
21 Avenue. In Wilton, on Danbury Road, there is a huge
22 apartment building under construction right now. When
23 the Walmart closes on Connecticut Avenue in Norwalk
24 soon, the existing Walmart on Main Avenue will
25 definitely have more shoppers using this store, which

1 is across the street from Hyde Park. Consequently,
2 there will be much more traffic in this area. Is
3 alternate 26 really the answer to this increased
4 traffic?

5 Some questions that I have
6 concerning the alternate 26 are:

7 1. How will CONN DOT prevent
8 drivers from blocking the box at the traffic signal.

9 2. Will CONN DOT install lighting
10 at the traffic light.

11 3. How will traffic lights be timed
12 to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the expressway.

13 4. Does CONN DOT plan to implement
14 methods to slow traffic on the busy expressway heading
15 up to the traffic lights.

16 MS. STULA: Excuse me. Time is up.
17 Did you want a comment form and submit the rest of that
18 for the record?

19 MS. HORVATH: Well, I have submitted
20 it, but I only have this much more to go. It's not a
21 lot.

22 MS. STULA: Go ahead.

23 MS. HORVATH: It took me two days to
24 put this together.

25 MS. STULA: I can come back to you.

1 MS. HORVATH: It will break up
2 the -- I'm going to keep going.

3 MS. STULA: That's fine. Keep
4 going.

5 MS. HORVATH: No. 5. Has this type
6 of boulevard plan been instituted in other parts of
7 Connecticut.

8 6. What about a power outage during
9 an Nor-easter or hurricane or emergency evacuation,
10 what will happen then.

11 Think about the future.
12 Implementing alternate 21D is very shortsighted since
13 the expressway should be completed all the way to Route
14 33 near Orem's Diner in Wilton as proposed many years
15 ago. I support alternate 21D with free flow traffic
16 with direct on and off-ramps. In my opinion 21 --
17 alternate 26 is going to be a traffic nightmare with
18 its traffics lights resulting in heavy congestion and
19 long delays. Lets do it right the first time. Thank
20 you.

21 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.
22 Our next speaker is Heather Dunn.

23 MS. DUNN: Hi. My name is Heather
24 Dunn. I'm the president of the Norwalk Association of
25 Silvermine Homeowners. That you very much. You guys

1 have been great, very transparent and collaborative
2 with us as part of the PAC. Thank you very much. It's
3 great to see.

4 My biggest concern is that we're
5 getting slammed in Norwalk and, you know, we talk about
6 timing and stuff like that, and I just want to make
7 sure that, as much as it can be, 95 is done being
8 constructed, I know there's another project for Grist
9 Mill to be continued on, which is a separate DOT
10 project group, and it doesn't seem like there's a lot
11 of coordination in timing. We have the Rock Bridge
12 being constructed. Norwalk really needs help with
13 coordinating so that it's not happening all at once for
14 us.

15 And my second comment is on a
16 personal level as someone -- I do ride my bike to work
17 across town down Main Avenue, and the lights are almost
18 never really coordinated really well, so as part of the
19 project if we can make sure that if there are lights
20 added to the expressway, that there is a real look at
21 how lights are coordinated for safety. Thank you.

22 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.
23 The next is Paul Cheverd.

24 MR. CHEVERD: My name is Paul
25 Cheverd, I live 36 Windsor, Norwalk, and I'm here to

1 speak about the lack of connectivity incorporated in
2 the project for NRV. The NRV is originally -- it's a
3 regional spine in regards to the bicycle network. I
4 ride it quite often and, as we all know, it's
5 disjoined because it's going -- it's being built in
6 piecemeal fashion, but it really lends itself to being
7 a good corridor that people can go to jobs and
8 businesses on the north side. It's great for
9 recreation, not just for cycles, but for pedestrians
10 and all walkers. It provides a lot of economic
11 activity. By not having it fully connect through this
12 project could possibly jeopardize that economic
13 activity it provides, because we all know that
14 businesses and property values go up when there's an
15 off road bike path of this sort there including in NRV
16 in it and have a really robust right of way
17 incorporated in the project. I would also like to see
18 if we go with the alternative 26, those signals be
19 turned into roundabouts. With more traffic they've
20 been shown to be better for safety and also reduce some
21 articulate matter and ozone gasses. So thank you.

22 MS. STULA: Thank you. Wes Haynes.

23 MR. HAYNES: My name is Wes Haynes.

24 I'm the executive director of the Merritt Parkway
25 Conservancy. I have a longer statement, but I'll kind

1 of condense it right now. The Conservancy, as many of
2 you probably know, is a private nonprofit organization
3 that was established by the governor about 20 years
4 ago. We have a 3-prong mission. Our first is to --
5 we're committed to ensure the Merritt Parkway's beauty
6 is kept and revitalized in construction and maintenance
7 projects and changes necessitated to upgrade safety are
8 done with the spirit of it's delightful original
9 design, and we also strive to keep the public informed
10 about the history and value of this really unusual
11 resource.

12 Our mission was stress tested by
13 this interchange soon after we were organized 20 years
14 ago when demolition of the historic Main Avenue bridge
15 began for the interchange designed with a large network
16 or flyover bridges and ramps that was not parklike by
17 any means. We successfully litigated to stop the
18 construction, and we're here tonight and very pleased
19 to say that for the first time, out of all the
20 alternatives that have been discussed, we strongly
21 support alternative 26.

22 The compact interchange between
23 Route 7 and the Merritt is clearly preferable to the
24 much larger one in 21D in terms of conserving natural
25 features, wetlands, wildlife habitat and minimizing

1 impervious cover with the watershed.

2 At least half the size of all
3 previous proposals with significant cost saving to the
4 taxpayers are an important benefit. We do represent
5 the public aspect of the Merritt Parkway. It
6 substantially reduces both construction costs, as well
7 as ongoing maintenance costs in the future.

8 So, in closing, I just want to say
9 that I really appreciate on behalf of the Conservancy,
10 and I speak for the board, Stantec and CONN DOT and
11 NHWA for their thoroughness in this alternative
12 analysis and in hearing our concerns over the scale
13 compatibility and costs and incorporating them all in
14 alternative 26. Thank you.

15 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.
16 Are there any other first time speakers? Please come
17 up and give your name and address for the record.

18 MR. REESE: Thank you for this
19 opportunity to make a few comments. I'm Fred Reese.
20 I'm with the Department of Energy and Environmental
21 Protection, and I will be submitting comments in that
22 capacity later on.

23 Two or three short things. One, I
24 had a note in the EIE/EA, page 31, it talks about
25 looking at traffic volumes for the low impact and for

1 the no build and the two builds for the year 2045,
2 which would be 20 years after the completion of the
3 project in 2025. I don't think anybody here really
4 believes that the project is completed in 2025, so I
5 think that number may be left over from some previous
6 iteration of this project.

7 Second comment, I appreciated
8 Anthony's opening remarks and some of the other remarks
9 about changing the character of Route 7 from the
10 expressway to signalized, I'm just wondering if,
11 looking at the traffic, the accident rates for Route 9
12 going through Middletown, which has signalized
13 intersections with full expressways through north and
14 south, if that might provide any guidance as to how to
15 successfully bring about what you're trying to bring
16 about.

17 The other comment that I had -- I
18 spent this afternoon, it was a much warmer day than I
19 anticipated, walking much of the alignments and the
20 neighborhoods and side streets and working up with
21 pretty good sweat. The point I wanted to bring up is
22 both of the build alternative show a new 2-lane on the
23 northern side or westbound side of Route 15 between
24 Main Avenue and Route 7 and going between the existing
25 highway and the 1 Glover apartment building and having

1 walked behind the 1 Glover apartment building, there is
2 a very, very small width between the bottom of the
3 embankment of the highway and the back of the apartment
4 building. So I'm hoping the EA -- the final EA can
5 maybe address that, and a couple of things I would
6 think might be helpful. One is if the new lane can
7 encroach into the existing embankment, maybe with
8 retaining walls, or something, to give you a little
9 more width to work with, and the other would be some
10 kind of noise barrier/light barrier could be
11 incorporated those new lanes and the 1 Glover apartment
12 building, because it really seems like additional lanes
13 there are going to be almost like in the windows of
14 those apartments. It's a really narrow corridor, so I
15 wanted make those comments. Thank you very much.

16 MS. STULA: Thank you so much.
17 There was another hand up.

18 MR. KEI: Phil Kei (phonetic), here
19 in Norwalk. I like the alternative 26. It has less
20 permeable services, less of that water runoff coming
21 from all those vehicles contaminating the soil,
22 contaminating the water, ultimately going back into our
23 drinking water, which we're having a problem with now,
24 and I also concur with a lot of NRVT. I mean, that
25 should be a priority. Everything should be built

1 around that, to be totally honest with you, in my
2 perspective. I was actually hit by a car on Main
3 Avenue right after that bridge, because it's really
4 that unsafe for your bicycle. Crossed over two lanes,
5 a lady I hit me head on. Luckily, I'm fine, but still
6 I'm glad that it's being taken into consideration how
7 important that is, not just for recreational cyclists
8 but other micro mobility. That's it.

9 MS. STULA: Thank you so much.

10 MR. FOX: Hello. My name is Paul
11 Fox. I live at 26 Belden Avenue in central Norwalk. I
12 want to echo earlier comments about the importance of
13 the NRV. I really think that if we're looking at
14 providing better connections, we need to not just
15 consider cars, we need to consider pedestrians and
16 bicyclists and right now the Merritt Parkway kind of
17 cuts off pedestrian and bicyclists, and the proposal to
18 run through Perry Avenue, that's a very narrow bridge.
19 It's probably not sage for a protected bike path on
20 that, so it would be mixed traffic. I don't think that
21 would be very safe. It's not a pedestrian friendly
22 road. So finding a path for the NRV where it can be
23 fully protected, I think is crucial.

24 The other comment that I had was
25 just also to echo concerns about putting traffic lights

1 on Route 7. There's obviously a lot of risk there.
2 I'd like to ask that alternatives, like roundabouts, be
3 studied for that as well. That's all.

4 MS. STULA: Thank you so much. Sir?

5 MR. FORNARO: Hi folks. My name is
6 Frank Fornaro (phonetic). I live in the southwest
7 quadrant of that intersection we've been talking about.
8 I appreciate the transparency of this process. I think
9 this is my first meeting in Norwalk with the people in
10 the city, so I'd like to take the opportunity to make
11 some noise about the noise. I notice that the noise is
12 one of the very top things people are concerned about.
13 But paraphrase what I've heard, noise is really
14 important, but our alternative doesn't change or abate
15 the noise in any way. I have no expertise on how you
16 do this, but I want to tell you that, as I sit on my
17 back deck amongst the lovely trees around the
18 Riverside, River View Drive, I occasionally end up with
19 lemonade on my lap because a motorcycle has gone racing
20 by, and this is a real impact on the quality of life.
21 I don't know how many of the rest of you feel this, but
22 for me to hear bird songs punctuated by people racing
23 in cars that are made to be as loud as they can
24 possibly be or to have motorcycles racing to show off
25 their gear shifting skills while I'm trying to enjoy

1 myself is a problem for me and I wonder if it is for
2 you. So physical solutions to that, I don't know.
3 Maybe let's talk about roundabouts. I'm trying to
4 picture a motorcycle trying to show off on a roundabout
5 a flipping up in the air and ending somewhere on the
6 curbing, which would probably please me. In any event,
7 there may and must be some ways to abate sound. Thank
8 you.

9 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.

10 MR. LEVIN: Hi. My name is John
11 Levin. I live at 249 Chestnut Hill Road in Norwalk.
12 I'm really quite impressed with this process, and I do
13 want to share my thoughts on this project and
14 transportation in Connecticut, in general.

15 I would like to draw our attention
16 to the future. I think that much of this project is
17 focused on solving the problems that we had in the past
18 with that intersection and accessibility. But this is
19 an exciting time for transportation. Technology is
20 changing. Things are going to be different in the
21 future, and I think we should look forward to some of
22 these important changes.

23 Cars, in particular, in the future,
24 actually the present, but certainly more in the future,
25 cars are going to be electric. Cars will be shared,

1 cars will also be autonomous, and they will be smart,
2 and they're actually going to be much, much safer than
3 they are now.

4 Besides cars, roads are going to be
5 different. Roads are actually going to be smarter and
6 things like traffic enforcement and safety and traffic
7 monitoring is all going to be more accessible, cheaper,
8 and better.

9 Besides roads and cars, I actually
10 think people are going to be different. I think that
11 the residents are going to be much less interested in
12 spending much time commuting, and we will see job and
13 lifestyle choices by people that live in Connecticut
14 that will cause them to be commuting much, much less.

15 I think also the residents of the
16 future, actually the present but certainly more so in
17 the future, resident are going to crave lifestyle
18 oriented recreational resources, which will enhance
19 things like bike ability and walkability.

20 Also, I think that public
21 transportation will finally and, rightly, enjoy a much
22 greater share of public transportation funding relative
23 to private transportation. That's long overdue, and I
24 think we'll be getting that.

25 So this all circles back to an

1 extraordinary resource that's just been developed over
2 the last couple of years, although long planned, and
3 that's the NRVV trail. It is an amazing resource, not
4 just for the people that live in Norwalk and
5 surrounding communities now but especially for the ones
6 that are moving to this area, who are going to look at
7 this resource as being a transportation network for
8 them for things like recreation and commuting and work.
9 It is already, but certainly for more in the future.
10 Further in the future, that amazing resource, the NRVV,
11 is going to be enhanced even further because
12 eventually, I'm quite confident, we'll have a green way
13 along the length of the Merritt Parkway, as we should
14 have. And that's going to even further enhance the
15 value of the Norwalk River Valley Trail as a recreation
16 and transportation resource.

17 So I just want to say, please make
18 sure that you look to the future and recognize that the
19 NRVV is an absolute gem of a resource that will be
20 growing in value for the residents of the future.

21 MS. STULA: Thank you. Are there
22 any other first time speakers? Come on up.

23 MS. MOLINARI: Hi, I'm Lucia
24 Molinari (phonetic), and I live on Grey Hollow Road in
25 Silvermine and thank you for having us, you know,

1 having this presentation, I really appreciate it, to
2 become more aware of what has been going on. Given
3 these different alternatives, one, I've been watching
4 this go on for -- since 1972. So I've seen the changes
5 when this road was going to start and nothing happened.
6 Then we got it started and then they tore down all the
7 trees and made a mess and the road was stopped. It
8 only goes to Grist Mill Road. I go on those roads
9 every other day or so. It's horrendous. No one knows
10 how to stop at the traffic light, they don't know which
11 lane to be in. We're very unintelligent on using all
12 these facilities and we -- you know, the alternative
13 may be a good thing, but I don't know with putting more
14 traffic lights. I mean, I see all the people stopping
15 and I worry about the pollution, and I don't know who's
16 measuring that, and now we're going to put in a couple
17 more traffic lights. What are we doing? This is all
18 happening to Norwalk, and I don't think it's right. I
19 mean, it's almost leave it alone, unless you can come
20 up with something better. Fix the roads the way they
21 are.

22 We talk about the number of
23 accidents, and I don't know number wise. I go on the
24 Merritt Parkway a great deal. I'm really surprised
25 that there's been that many in that area versus a lot

1 further south more towards Stamford. It's very
2 surprising to me. Because I move in that traffic, I'm
3 always aware of it. My children have grown up here,
4 one of them lives in Trumbull. We're always worried
5 about the traffic coming the other way, so I'm very
6 aware of what goes on. I don't know if they're that
7 dangerous or how bad the accidents have been or if
8 they've been minor, but I haven't seen that much of it
9 here.

10 I mean, I appreciate it all, but I
11 don't -- you know, maybe doing something without the
12 traffic lights, doing a roundabout may be a way of
13 going. But I think before we do anything, this road
14 should have gone -- I never wanted the road, but if it
15 was going, then it should have gone through Wilton,
16 through Ridgefield and finished the road. I have a
17 husband who leaves at 6 o'clock in the morning just to
18 go to Danbury, because the traffic is so horrendous,
19 and the pollution, and I don't know who's studying
20 that, because I haven heard anything, going up Belden
21 Hill Road, there are stoplights. There's only a
22 stoplight because the road goes for a mile, then
23 there's a stoplight and then the next one, until you
24 get all the way up about five miles into Wilton.
25 Anyway, that's what I had to say. Thank you.

1 MS. STULA: Are there any other
2 first time speakers that would like to come up? How
3 about any second time speakers that wanted another
4 chance to speak?

5 MS. KEEFE: So I'm Diane from
6 Norwalk again, and I didn't say which one of the
7 alternatives, because I clearly wanted the cheaper one
8 of the two we were given, but the -- I was an air
9 quality transportation planner in Middletown for the
10 state regional planning earlier in my career, and so I
11 studied the air pollution that comes from traffic
12 signals, and it's not good. Carbon monoxide is
13 generated every time a car is idling, and that is bad
14 for people with lung conditions and heart conditions
15 and for children and for pregnant women. So it's
16 really not a great idea. And there was a great article
17 in the New York Times about traffic circles, and I
18 happened to have traveled to Sedona, Arizona where
19 there's a million traffic circles and it actually
20 cultivates courtesy among people and it slows traffic
21 down. So I think that that would be a much preferable
22 design, so I'm wondering whether DOT actually
23 considered that in the 20-plus original ideas and, if
24 not, can we go back to the drawing board and look at
25 that. Thank you. And I do appreciate the whole

1 process. It's been delightful.

2 MS. STULA: Thank you very much. Do
3 we have any other second time speakers? I'll advise
4 when you've reached a reasonable amount of time.

5 MR. LEVIN: Just like that previous
6 lady, I also forgot to say which of the alternatives I
7 thought was the one that I liked. Also 26. You know,
8 I say people are like, I guess, quite concerned that
9 there would be traffic lights on Route 7. It's not
10 going to be a concern. I'm telling you, in the future
11 cars are going to be safe and they're not going to be
12 jumping into each other and not going to be running
13 over kids and bicycles. Traffic lights will be fine.
14 The lights are going to be so much more efficient and
15 wait time there is going to be so reduced at all of
16 these intersections, just because it's going to be a
17 smarter transportation device. So -- and also the cars
18 are going to be electric. So the Norwalk problems are
19 going to go away, which is a good thing, and the cars
20 are going to be electric so the air pollution problems
21 are going to be -- not entirely go away, they're just
22 going to be moved to the location where the electricity
23 is produced and, hopefully, that will be green
24 electricity in Connecticut.

25 I think it's going to be -- is going

1 to work out just fine and there's really good
2 technological solutions coming down the pike. People
3 are going to look back and say traffic lights are no
4 big deal.

5 MS. STULA: Thank you.

6 MS. HORVATH: It's Joanne again. I
7 totally agree with Mrs. Molinari, the person that spoke
8 before this gentleman. She told it like it was and
9 she's absolutely correct on every count, as far as I'm
10 concerned. She knows Norwalk, she's lived here, she's
11 seen what has happened. Nothing really has happened to
12 Norwalk in a long, long time, in my estimation. The
13 marker dates back to 1992. We in Fairfield county,
14 especially in Norwalk, it's a growing city day by day
15 and traffic is going to get worse. Believe me. I live
16 right next to the Merritt Parkway. I see it morning
17 and night. I hear the sirens. I hear the sirens on
18 Route 7, so good luck. If you try 26, you're going to
19 have a lot of honking horns. Thank you.

20 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.

21 Any other second time speakers?

22 MR. HANPETER: Yeah, I just had a up
23 couple of other followup questions about something that
24 I read in EIE. The first one is about projected
25 traffic. I did read over the numbers and I was pretty

1 interested to find that the projected traffic over the
2 no build alternate is about negligible and actually
3 went down a little bit. I'd be curious to hear some
4 more followups from the parties about how those numbers
5 were generated because I think that the typical line of
6 thought is if you build -- I'm sure you're all very
7 familiar with the concept. So I didn't know how that
8 was generated. I saw that there was like a framework
9 provided, I'm not an expert in this field, by any
10 means, so I'm not like familiar with exactly how those
11 numbers are come up with, but I didn't know if maybe
12 the analysis looked at changes in land use spurred by
13 additional highway development, and I know you see this
14 a lot, especially in the sunbelt, a build out, a new
15 highway, and then you start seeing a bunch of
16 developments cropping up where you wouldn't have seen
17 them previously, and with this added productivity in
18 the project, you can say that it's now easier maybe to
19 live in some areas and commute to others because you're
20 not needing to take this detour off the highway anymore
21 and will that generate any difference in land use over
22 the following decades after the project is completed.

23 Am I going to completely forget my
24 second question? It's possible. I'll give someone
25 else a second chance to speak, because I lost my train

1 of thought. Thank you, though.

2 MS. STULA: Any other second time
3 speakers or first time if something has come to mind
4 that you want to say?

5 MR. THOMPSON: So following up on
6 Ben's point about the VMT numbers. I actually read
7 them with Ben, and we took a look at the travel times
8 and the average speed through there, as well. I want
9 to call attention to them, not because I suspect that
10 they're wrong, I think actually that they're probably
11 right, and that is the travel times through the
12 intersection projected into 2045. I don't have them in
13 front of me, but if my memory serves me right, in 2045
14 the travel time through the interchange, I want to say
15 it was on the Merritt, currently -- I'm sorry, it's not
16 the travel time, but the current average speed. The
17 current average speed is something that we would all
18 expect like around the speed limit, it was right on the
19 order of 45 to 50 miles an hour, but in 2045, with the
20 know build option, it's like a 20 mile an hour figure,
21 and with either of the alternatives, the number was
22 even lower than it. It was 17 or 18 in one case and
23 like 13 in other case. We're talking average speed in
24 miles per hour through the corridor. I think that it
25 is interesting, in this particular case, that the

1 building of the interchange makes the traffic move even
2 slower, but what I also want to call attention to is
3 the fact that in the next 20 years the traffic is,
4 regardless of whether we do it or not or which
5 alternative we pick, is going to get a lot slower, and
6 I think that really speaks to the need for us to invest
7 in other forms of transportation. We could continue
8 widening the Merritt, but we would have to keep doing
9 it every few years, because that how it works. That's
10 what the data bears out. Right? If you widen it,
11 you've got to widen it again five years later. That's
12 the only way to keep the traffic flowing, whereas there
13 are a lot of other forms of transportation that are
14 much more space efficient. Right? We could be
15 investing, like John mentioned, in more robust public
16 transportation. On the east/west corridor that
17 probably looks like investing in MetroNorth; right?
18 Which if we're going something, we can do more of that.
19 Right? And \$100 million, which is a difference between
20 the two alternatives, that goes a long way and it goes
21 an even longer way when it comes to walking and biking
22 transportation, as I've already pointed out, but I
23 wanted to bring up that data point, because I think it
24 speaks volumes. Thank you.

25 MS. STULA: Thank you very much.

1 Any other second time speakers or first time speakers?

2 MR. HANPETER: My other question. I
3 know a lot of speakers have talked about the potential
4 safety issues of the traffic lights and the potential
5 for roundabouts. For people who haven't spent an
6 entire evening gazing through the appendices of the
7 EIE, EIE there was actually an alternative looked,
8 which is alternative 7A, which is a high speed
9 roundabout, and I know that the reason that was axed is
10 because it introduced weaving into the traffic pattern
11 and traffic design, but I'm curious if the, if it's
12 better practice to have traffic lights on a high speed
13 road, such as Route 7, versus introducing weaving, if
14 weaving is worse. You know, anecdotally, I find
15 weaving to be kind of annoying but, you know, I guess I
16 don't know, in industry standards, how bad that really
17 is. So, yeah, I would just be curious to hear a little
18 bit more justification for why that's considered to be
19 a deal breaker on this project. Thanks.

20 MS. STULA: Thank you so much. Any
21 other firsts or second time speakers or third time
22 speakers? If there are no further comments, I will now
23 close tonight's hearing. On behalf of the commissioner
24 I would like to thank you for coming and expressing
25 your thoughts tonight. You have until August 31st to

1 submit your comments to the Connecticut Department of
2 Transportation. Thank you for coming and have a good
3 evening, and if you have any comments to submit, please
4 bring them to me.

5 (Whereupon, the public hearing
6 concluded at 8:42 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

I, DEBRA A. CHASSE, Court Reporter and Notary Public within and for the State of Connecticut, duly commissioned and qualified, do hereby certify that pursuant to Notice, the foregoing 69 pages were reduced to writing by me and are a fair and accurate transcription of the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal this 7th day of September, 2023.



Debra A. Chasse, CSR
Notary Public
State of Connecticut

My Commission Expires:
June 30, 2026
CSR No. 00055

APPENDIX F

SECTION 4(F) DOCUMENTATION

State Project 102-358

Route 7/ Route 15 Interchange

Norwalk, CT

SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

Pursuant to 40 U.S.C. 303

**Route 7/Route 15 Interchange Project
Norwalk, Connecticut**

**State Project 102-358
Federal Aid Project 0015(133)**

**Prepared By:
Connecticut Department of Transportation**

Christine Xenelis

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4/22/2024

**Christine A. Xenelis
Transportation Assistant Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation**

Date

**Approved By:
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**

DAVID W NARDONE

Digitally signed by DAVID W NARDONE
Date: 2024.07.31 11:55:03 -04'00'

**David Nardone
Acting Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration**

Date

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- APPENDIX A: Map of Project Area and Alternatives**
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INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) proposes to construct improvements at the Routes 7 and 15 (Merritt Parkway) interchange in Norwalk, Connecticut, with federal funds provided by FHWA (see Location Map, Appendix A). The proposed project requires the use of Section 4(f) resources.

This Section 4(f) Evaluation has been prepared pursuant to Section 4(f) of the *United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966*, codified at 49 U.S.C. §303 with implementing regulations at 23 CFR Part 774, and in accordance with FHWA policies and guidance. Section 4(f) protects publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife/waterfowl refuges. Historic resources, both publicly and privately owned, are protected under Section 4(f) if they are listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). FHWA may not approve the use, as defined in 23 CFR Part 774, of Section 4(f) property unless a determination is made that:

1. There is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of the property; and
2. The proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm, as defined in 23 CFR §774.17, to the property resulting from that use; or
3. The use, including any measures to minimize harm (such as avoidance, minimization, or enhancement measures), will have a *de minimis* impact on the property. In the case of historic resources, a *de minimis* impact may be made when the Section 106 process results in a determination of “no adverse effect” with the written concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Officer.

This Section 4(f) Evaluation includes a description of the existing Routes 7 and 15 (Merritt Parkway) interchange, a summary of the project purpose and need, a description of the Proposed Action (based upon Design Parameters for the project), a list of Section 4(f) resources to be used by the Proposed Action, a discussion of the alternatives considered, identification of measures to minimize harm, description of mitigation measures, a least overall harm analysis including a determination of the alternative with the least overall harm, a summary of project coordination with the officials with jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) properties, and a summary of public outreach activities.

Part 1 of this Section 4(f) Evaluation focuses on the NRHP-listed Merritt Parkway Historic District, including a contributing structure, the Main Avenue Bridge (Bridge Nos. 00560A and 00560B). Part 2 focuses on an adjacent NRHP-eligible structure, the Glover Avenue Bridge (Bridge No. 04155), using the Nationwide Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges. Part 3 presents the Section 4(f) determinations.

No publicly owned parks, recreation areas, or wildlife or waterfowl refuges are found within or adjacent to the project area.

PART 1: MERRITT PARKWAY HISTORIC DISTRICT

A. Existing Conditions

The Merritt Parkway (Route 15), a scenic parkway built in the late 1930s, extends from Greenwich, Connecticut, on the New York state line eastward to the Housatonic River, which separates the towns of Stratford and Milford, Connecticut. The project includes that portion of the Parkway from a point about 1,200 feet west of Perry Avenue eastward a distance of 1.2 miles to West Rocks Road, all within the town of Norwalk, Connecticut. The Parkway generally has two travel lanes in each direction and is characterized by architecturally embellished bridges at intersecting roads and naturalistic plantings in the median and along the Parkway's edges.

At Interchange 39, the Parkway intersects Route 7, a limited-access four-lane ca. 1990 highway that runs for about three miles between Route 95 in South Norwalk and Grist Mill Road, a short distance north of the Parkway. About 1,500 feet east of Route 7, the Parkway intersects Main Avenue, which formerly was designated Route 7 (and still forms the continuation of Route 7 north of Grist Mill Road). Main Avenue is a four-lane undivided road, with limited provisions for pedestrians, running through a densely built area of retail plazas, suburban-type residential neighborhoods, and multistory office and apartment complexes.

Currently, there is only partial connectivity among Route 15, Route 7, and Main Avenue. Interchange 39 provides the following connections between Route 15 and Route 7:

- Route 7 northbound to the Merritt Parkway southbound¹
- Route 7 southbound to the Merritt Parkway southbound
- Merritt Parkway northbound to Route 7 northbound
- Merritt Parkway northbound to Route 7 southbound

Connections between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway to and from the north are not provided. Due to the missing connections:

- Merritt Parkway southbound motorists must use the Merritt Parkway/Main Avenue interchange (Exit 40B) to access Route 7 northbound, north of Grist Mill Road.
- Merritt Parkway southbound motorists must use the Merritt Parkway/Main Avenue interchange (Exit 40A) and Route 123/New Canaan Avenue to access Route 7 southbound.
- Route 7 northbound motorists have no direct access to the Merritt Parkway northbound and must use the New Canaan Avenue/Route 123 interchange (Exit 2) and Main Avenue to access the Parkway.

¹ Although the Merritt Parkway in the project area runs generally east-west, the westward travel direction is designated southbound and the eastward travel direction is designated northbound.

- Route 7 southbound motorists have no direct access to the Merritt Parkway northbound and must use Main Avenue to access the Parkway.

Interchange No. 40 provides connections in all directions between the Merritt Parkway and Main Avenue, but the Main Avenue/Parkway ramps, part of the Parkway's original design, are narrow, lacking in adequate acceleration/deceleration lanes, and configured with an unacceptably tight radius. The existing loop ramps to and from the Parkway have radii ranging from 50 feet to 120 feet, substantially tighter than the CTDOT Highway Design Manual (HDM) standard of 145 feet. In addition, two of the entrance ramps are stop controlled before entering the Parkway, which does not comply with HDM and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recommendations based on the 65 mph design speed of the Parkway.

All three highways carry high volumes of traffic. Main Avenue has two signalized intersections immediately adjacent to the project: the Merritt View office complex and the Stop & Shop shopping plaza south of the Parkway, and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive to the north of the Parkway. The Metro-North Commuter Railroad's Merritt 7 station is located a short distance north on Glover Avenue.

A brief history of prior assessments of the Route 7/Route 15 interchange is provided within Chapter 1.1.1 of the project's Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) document.

B. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to:

- improve roadway system linkage between Route 7 and Route 15 at Interchange 39;
- improve the mobility for vehicles at both the Route 15 interchanges at Route 7 and at Main Avenue (No. 39 & No. 40), and to improve the mobility for all users (motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists) along the immediate adjacent local roadway network (Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive, and;
- improve safety in the vicinity of these interchanges.

The specific needs that would be addressed are as follows:

Roadway System Linkage

Currently, there are approximately 250 vehicles during the weekday morning peak hour and approximately 125 vehicles during the weekday evening peak hour that use the Main Avenue corridor to connect between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway. This is approximately 5 to 15 percent of the traffic currently using the Main Avenue corridor between Route 123 and the Merritt Parkway during either peak hour. These additional vehicles contribute to current peak hour

congestion along the Main Avenue corridor (Level of Service² (LOS D/E)). Further information on current traffic operations is provided within Chapter 3.1 and Appendix B of the project's EA/EIE document.

Mobility - Vehicular

As previously described, Interchange 39 currently provides partial connections between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway (connections between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway to and from the north are not provided). Interchange 40, a second nearby interchange, provides connections in all directions between the Merritt Parkway and Main Avenue. However, connections between Route 7 and Main Avenue do not exist in the vicinity of Interchange 39 or Interchange 40.

Because of the missing connections at Interchange 39, motorists must use local roadways to connect between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway. Southbound Merritt Parkway motorists must use the Main Avenue interchange (40) to access Route 7 northbound (north of Grist Mill Road) and Route 7 southbound (south of Route 123/New Canaan Avenue). Similarly, motorists on Route 7 have no direct access to the northbound Merritt Parkway. Southbound Route 7 motorists must continue on Main Avenue and use Interchange 40 to access the northbound Merritt Parkway. Northbound Route 7 motorists must exit at the Route 123/New Canaan Avenue interchange and travel via Main Avenue to access the northbound Merritt Parkway.

Mobility – Other Users (Bicycles/Pedestrians/Transit)

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the project vicinity are limited, despite substantial pedestrian activity during the weekday mid-day time period in the vicinity of the office buildings on the west side of Main Avenue. There are no bicycle facilities at the project location, and shoulder widths are less than one foot wide on Main Avenue. Several segments of the roadway, particularly in the area around the Main Avenue and Creeping Hemlock intersection, have no sidewalks on one or both sides. Only one small roadway segment, along with Glover Avenue, is fully in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks within this area are missing and/or lacking safety features for visually or hearing-impaired pedestrians, reducing access and mobility for users with disabilities.

Safety

The existing Main Avenue and Merritt Parkway interchange ramps have substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes, steep changes in grades, sharp curves, and limited sight distances. These are all conditions that contribute to a high number of crashes. With more than 300 crashes within a 0.5-mile segment, the Main Avenue interchange has the highest density of crashes along the 37-mile Merritt Parkway corridor (more than 50 percent higher than any other interchange; see Figure 1, page 7).³

² Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure used to describe the quality of traffic operations of a roadway. Varying levels of congestion and delay are translated into a letter rating that ranges from A (free flow conditions; no delays) to F (breakdown in traffic flow; substantial delays).

³Based on a review of crash records for a four-year period (2015-2018) from the Connecticut Crash Data Repository. This interchange can only be compared to other Parkway interchanges because there is no other Connecticut facility that is comparable to the Merritt Parkway, that is, a high-volume four-lane highway serving a densely populated portion of the New York City metropolitan area.

The configuration of these ramps is original to the Parkway's late 1930s construction, a time when the Parkway was expected to accommodate vehicles traveling at 45 mph.

C. Proposed Action

As a result of an extensive, multi-level Alternatives Analysis (discussed further within Chapter 2 of this project's EA/EIE), two build alternatives, designated Alternative 21D and Alternative 26, were brought forward for inclusion in the project's Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation document. Conceptual designs for the two alternatives are shown as aerial plans in Appendix B. Both alternatives would result in full connectivity between the Merritt Parkway and Route 7; both would replace the existing Main Avenue/Merritt Parkway interchange with a new interchange that corrects the deficiencies of the present ramps; both would reconstruct the intersection of Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive; and both would widen Main Avenue to improve traffic flow and allow for pedestrian/bicycle/bus amenities.

Alternative 26 requires two fewer new ramps, and the acceleration/deceleration lanes associated with the ramps under Alternative 26 are not as long as those that would be built under Alternative 21D. These differences arise from two new signalized intersections that would be installed on Route 7 under Alternative 26.

Taking into account the project's purpose and need, public input, agency consultation, engineering, constructability, estimated construction and maintenance costs, and potential environmental impacts, FHWA and CTDOT have identified Alternative 26 as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative best addresses the project's purpose and need while minimizing the environmental impacts.

The Preferred Alternative will proceed to the design phase. The design development will be guided by the following parameters:

- Minimize vehicular congestion associated with the interchange of the Merritt Parkway and Main Avenue and the intersection of Main Avenue and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive.
- Create opportunities for improved connections to existing and reasonably foreseeable alternate modes of transportation, such as surface transit, commuter rail, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Coordinate with City of Norwalk toward a workable solution that is compatible with City and regional initiatives.
- Utilize cost-effective solutions that maximize capital investment over the lifespan of the project.
- Reduce maintenance costs of affected bridges and roadways.

SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

- Minimize the impact of construction on the traveling public and local communities to the extent practicable.
- Implement sustainable practices.
- Create a design that is consistent with the Merritt Parkway's historic and scenic character and design.
- Preserve, enhance and/or rehabilitate surviving historic landscape features where practical or, where the landscape has been significantly altered, creating new landscape designs that are consistent with the Parkway's original design intent.

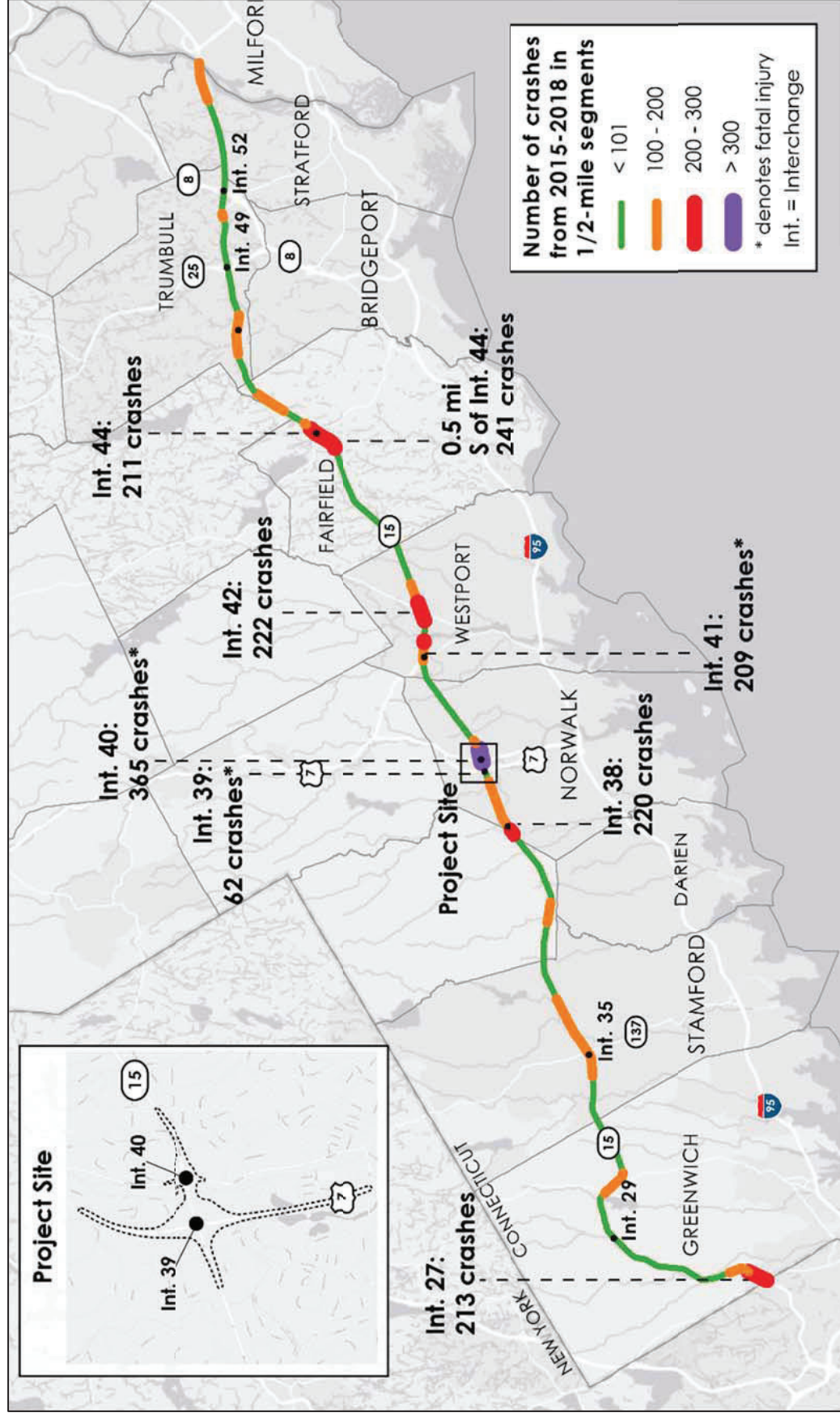


Figure 1: Number of crashes at Merritt Parkway interchanges, 2015-2018.

D. SECTION 4(F) RESOURCES

Under Section 4(f), parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites are afforded protection. Historic sites are properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the NRHP. Historic properties, which may be either publicly or private owned, include buildings, structures, objects, sites (including archaeological sites), and historic districts. Historic Section 4(f) resources were identified by staff at CTDOT in consultation with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO) under the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act. This Section 4(f) Evaluation only concerns historic properties; no publicly owned parks, recreation areas, or wildlife or waterfowl refuges are found within the project area.

1. Merritt Parkway Historic District

The Merritt Parkway Historic District (Photographs 1-4, Appendix C) was listed in the NRHP in 1991 at the national level of significance in the areas of transportation, landscape architecture, and architecture. It was named a State Scenic Road in 1993 and a National Scenic Byway in 1996. The significance of the Merritt Parkway in the area of transportation history is derived from its successful incorporation of the ideals of the parkway concept. Despite a series of changes, the Parkway retains many of its original qualities and remains an example of a largely intact early 20th-century planned landscape. Construction of the Parkway provided a major transportation link between New York City and Fairfield, which contributed to the rapid development and suburbanization of southwestern Connecticut in the mid-20th-century period. In terms of landscape architecture, the Parkway is significant as an early example of naturalistic landscape design. In the area of architecture, the Parkway's bridges are significant for their expression of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and Classical Revival styles.

The character-defining features of the Merritt Parkway include the following:

- **Roadway width.** The fundamental historic character of the Merritt Parkway is that it provided the motorist with the experience of driving through a park-like setting. The two-lane width of the original Parkway allowed close-up views of the landscaping; widening it with additional lanes necessarily makes the landscaping look further off, resulting in the motorist driving past a park-like setting rather than through one. The abrupt exits and entrances of the original Parkway (with lower travel speeds) also contributed to the overall experience by minimizing interruptions to the park-like setting. Roadway width and roadside character influence the motorist's experience of the Parkway. Vegetation setbacks vary, creating visual interest as views open and/or are terminated at focal points. In some instances, the roadside is clear of vegetation, expanding views beyond the right-of-way and increasing the perception of increased roadway width.
- **Median and verges.** Implicit in the mission of creating a park-like setting for the motorist to drive through was provision for a generous, attractively planted median between travel directions; otherwise, the roadway would be too open and the view to the left no longer

park-like. Early views show grassy areas, shrubs, and widely spaced trees in the median, thereby contributing to the overall variety in landscaping. The width of the median varied, furthering the goal of creating a constantly changing experience. As originally built, the Parkway's verges were narrow, usually consisting of grassy areas separated from the roadway by a low mountable curb. Narrowing the median, widening and paving the verges, and eliminating appropriate vegetation would result in a diminishment of the character of the Parkway.

- **Alignment.** The vertical and horizontal alignment of the Parkway originally followed the general topography, with rock cuts and fill as needed to avoid excessive grades and to elevate the Parkway above surrounding roads. The result was a continuous progression of moderate grades and curves, a circumstance that promoted the Parkway's aesthetic of ever-changing views. Except for the relatively small changes needed to accomplish the crossing of Route 7, the vertical and horizontal alignment of the Parkway has not changed within the project area.
- **Vegetation.** In order to create a park-like setting and "heal the scars of construction," the plantings along the Parkway were intended to be naturalistic, varied in size, texture and flower, and well-maintained. A mixture of evergreen and deciduous species ensured that the Parkway would undergo seasonal change but never be without some greenery. Flowering plants, shrubs, grassy areas, and full-sized trees created variety so that there was no monotony as the motorist proceeded along. The Parkway landscaping never was intended to become densely overgrown nor dominated by any one species.
- **Bridges.** The bridges on the Parkway were intended to complement the landscape by providing a succession of attractive, interestingly detailed structures in a variety of styles, just as one might see when walking along the pathways of a public park. Although the effect is most pronounced in the case of the Parkway's many overhead bridges, most of the undergrade bridges also include parapets with obvious aesthetic intent. Today some of the parapets that project above the roadway have been faced with concrete and some are wholly or partially obscured by added guiderails, but many have stone, metal, or concrete ornamentation still visible to passing Parkway motorists.
- **Signage.** The original Parkway signage consisted of relatively small roadside wooden signs in a rustic style with graphic perforated edges, and the overall density of signage was low. Today, signage is more extensive and includes standard metal roadside signs, roadside signs of a different shade of green that are metal but echo the original rustic style, and large-scale overhead signs on large-diameter cantilevered arms. The rustic signs are intended to be less visually intrusive than standard roadside signs. The overhead signs, however, interrupt the visual experience of the Parkway by introducing large-scale, blatantly modern elements into the field of view; the effect is especially egregious from the opposite travel lane, where the view is blocked without the benefit of providing information.
- **Guiderails.** The roadway-protection system that appears in the earliest photographs of the Parkway consisted of fencing of stout timber posts and rails. Later this was supplemented by post-and-cable and post-and-chain systems, but large portions of the Parkway were

without any form of guiderail. Today, the Parkway has a mixture of post-and-cable restraints, modern metal guiderail, scored concrete barriers, and timber-faced metal guiderail. The latter two types are intended to be more visually compatible with the Parkway than ordinary concrete barriers and metal guiderails. It is CTDOT's policy to install these two types of guiderail throughout the length of the Merritt Parkway.

- **Views.** As originally conceived, the Parkway was not just a self-contained landscape experience but also a way to appreciate longer views of the Connecticut countryside. The rolling farmland that may have originally been visible is now much less characteristic of lower Fairfield County bordering the Parkway. As a result, views from the Parkway that are not screened by vegetation mostly show something much different: modern commercial and office development and neighborhoods of post-World War II suburban housing. At the same time, it must be recognized that not all was bucolic even at the time of the Parkway's construction: for example, the factories along the Norwalk River in the Winnipauk section would have been clearly visible to Parkway motorists.

In terms of integrity of materials and design, the portion of the Parkway within the project area is not the most intact part of the 37-mile-long Merritt Parkway Historic District. Added lanes, inconsistent signage and guiderail treatments, reduction of the median, development proximity to the right-of-way, and inappropriate, lost, or overgrown vegetation have affected its historic character. The western portion of the Parkway within the project area today mostly resembles a modern expressway rather than a scenic parkway (Photograph 2). It features typical modern entrances, exits, and signage and lacks historic elements found throughout the rest of the Parkway, such as a wide landscaped median. The easternmost portion of the project area, east of the Main Avenue interchange, retains more of the Parkway's historic character, derived from the planted median strip, narrow verges, and close-to-the-road landscaping (Photograph 1). At a closer level of detail, however, exceptions can be found within these generalizations. For example, in the more highly altered western portion of the project area, there is a typical Parkway rock outcropping close to the roadway, at the southbound on-ramp from Route 7 North (Photograph 3), and there is a small group of trees in the median as the roadway ascends toward the Perry Avenue undergrade bridge that is not unlike the original Parkway treatment. The overall geometry of the eastern portion of the project is more intact, but details such as modern signage, condition of the vegetation, and modern guiderails reduce the experience of the original Parkway concept. Views in the eastern portion reveal the dense modern commercial, office, and residential development that surrounds this portion of the Parkway (Photograph 4).

Both Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 would use the Merritt Parkway Historic District; see Section E, Alternatives Analysis, for more detail and a comparison of the two alternatives' effects.

2. Merritt Parkway Main Avenue Bridge (Bridge Nos. 530A and 530B)

The Main Avenue Bridge (Photograph 5-7), a contributing resource within the Merritt Parkway Historic District, is a Classical Revival/Rustic-style concrete structure consisting of twin spans, each carrying two lanes of traffic over Main Avenue. Except for the Parkway itself, the bridge's historic setting has largely disappeared due to the surrounding modern commercial development.

However, the bridge serves the important function of preserving a typical view of the Parkway from the surrounding streets, an important part of the Parkway's historic intent.

Structurally, the bridge's parallel arches are rigid-concrete frames with shallow segmental arched openings for the roadway. The spans are faced with random rubble with rock-faced granite voussoirs, quoins, and coping. The northern parapet and northeast wing wall of Bridge 530B were replaced in kind during a repair project in 2015 and 2016. Because the repairs had little effect on the structure's historic appearance, the bridge continues to be regarded as a contributing resource.

Both Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 require the replacement of the Main Avenue Bridge; see Section E, Alternatives Analysis, for more detail.

Other NRHP-Eligible Properties

In addition to these Section 4(f) resources, the technical studies undertaken for the project identified several other historic properties within the project's Section 106 Area of Potential Effects. These are not included in the Section 4(f) evaluation because there will be no Section 4(f) use of the properties. The technical studies found that in the case of the Perry Avenue Bridge and the West Rocks Road Bridge, both of which are contributing components of the Merritt Parkway Historic District, there would be no adverse effect from the project. The Metro-North Bridge (Photograph 8) and the Norwalk River Bridge (Photograph 9) would not be directly affected but would have their public visibility somewhat reduced, a diminution of those two bridges' integrity of setting and therefore an indirect adverse effect under Section 106. However, under Section 4(f), there is no use of the Metro-North and Norwalk River bridges. The following considerations lead to this conclusion:

- Neither of the bridges will be physically impacted by any project construction activity.
- The visual impacts of ramp construction would not rise to the level of a Section 4(f) constructive use (according to Section 4(f) regulations, a constructive use occurs "when the proximity impacts of a proposed project adjacent to, or nearby, a Section 4(f) property result in **substantial impairment** [emphasis added] to the property's activities, features, or attributes that qualify the property for protection under Section 4(f)").
- Currently and historically, public visibility of the bridges has been minimal, limited to a view in the distance from Glover Avenue.
- Although considered contributing structures within the Merritt Parkway Historic District, the two bridges are not visible from the Parkway itself.
- Stylistically, the bridges are utilitarian in appearance compared with the Merritt Parkway's elaborately detailed overhead and undergrade bridges that carry public highways.
- The project will in no way preempt future actions that could enhance the public visibility of the two bridges, such as the creation of multi-purpose trails along the river.

As a result of the archaeological studies conducted for the project, three archaeological sites that lie within the footprint of construction activities were recommended as NRHP-eligible (Connecticut Archeological Sites 103-57, 103-58/103-60, and 103-61/103-62). However, because the sites are important chiefly because of what can be learned by data recovery, they have minimal value for preservation in place and therefore are not Section 4(f) resources.

E. ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

CTDOT and FHWA undertook a lengthy, multi-level Alternatives Analysis that is more fully described in Chapter 2 of the project's EA/EIE document. A total of 26 build alternatives were identified and then evaluated according to the extent to which they fulfilled the project's goals of interconnectivity, safety, and mobility; the design parameters listed in the previous section were also taken into account. As a result of the Level 1 screening, the number of alternatives was reduced to four; none of the rejected alternatives sufficiently addressed the project's Purpose and Need. In the Level 2 screening, of the remaining four, one was rejected because of its use of ramps higher in elevation than the existing Parkway travel lanes, a major adverse effect on the Parkway's historic character. Another alternative was dropped because it did not sufficiently meet the criteria of compatibility with regional initiatives and proximity of new ramps to existing residential neighborhoods. The two remaining build alternatives, Alternative 21D and Alternative 26, were brought forward for inclusion in the project's EA/EIE document. These two alternatives are illustrated in the aerial plans included as Appendix B.

Identification of Avoidance Alternatives

An Alternatives Analysis for a Section 4(f) Evaluation must consider whether there is a feasible and prudent avoidance alternative that would avoid the use of Section 4(f) resources. A feasible and prudent avoidance alternative avoids using Section 4(f) property and does not cause other severe problems of a magnitude that substantially outweighs the importance of protecting the Section 4(f) property. In assessing the importance of protecting the Section 4(f) property, it is appropriate to consider the relative value of the resource to the preservation purpose of the statute. As defined in 23 CFR §774.17:

- An alternative is not feasible if it cannot be built as a matter of sound engineering judgment.
- An alternative is not prudent if:
 - It compromises the project to a degree that it is unreasonable to proceed with the project in light of its stated purpose and need;
 - It results in unacceptable safety or operational problems;
 - After reasonable mitigation, it still causes:
 - Severe social, economic, or environmental impacts;
 - Severe disruption to established communities;
 - Severe disproportionate impacts to minority or low income populations; or
 - Severe impacts to environmental resources protected under other Federal statutes;

- It results in additional construction, maintenance, or operational cost of an extraordinary magnitude;
- It causes other unique problems or unusual factors; or
- It involves multiple factors listed above, that while individually minor, cumulatively cause unique problems or impacts of extraordinary magnitude.

Given the narrow existing cross sections of local roadway networks, the tight radii of loop ramps and substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes that currently exist within the ROW, extensive development adjacent to existing ROW, topography, and an inability to reduce required proposed cross sections, there are no feasible and prudent avoidance alternatives that would avoid the use of Section 4(f) resources while still addressing the project's purpose and need. All of the build alternatives that were considered would have some impact on the Merritt Parkway Historic District's historic character because of the need for additional ramps and acceleration/deceleration lanes and because of the effects on three of the historic district's contributing bridges.

The only alternative that would completely avoid the use of Section 4(f) resources is the No-Build Alternative. Not undertaking the project would avoid the use of Section 4(f) properties. However, the No-Build Alternative would not be feasible and prudent because it would leave the project's purpose and need unfulfilled. There would be no reduction in congestion on Main Avenue, the substandard interchange between Main Avenue and the Parkway would remain in place, and motorists would continue to have to use indirect methods of making many of the connections between the Parkway and Route 7. Opportunities for enhancing alternate modes of transportation would be substantially reduced. Finally, the opportunities to enhance the Parkway's historic character by addressing the current state of inconsistent signage and guiderail treatment, inappropriate, overgrown, and missing vegetation, and inconsistent treatment of the median would be lost.

Alternatives Carried Forward for Least Overall Harm Analysis

Once it has been concluded that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, then the FHWA may approve, from the remaining alternatives that use Section 4(f) property, only the Alternative that causes the least overall harm. Several factors must be balanced in determining the least overall harm:

(i) Ability to mitigate adverse impacts to each Section 4(f) property. The mitigation measures for Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 are the same: implementation of the "Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines" (March 2020; Appendix I3 of the project's EA/EIE document) and design considerations for the replacement Main Avenue bridge.

(ii) Relative severity of the remaining harm to the protected activities, attributes, or features that qualify each Section 4(f) property for protection. Because the ramps and associated added lanes are shorter, the magnitude of the effect of Alternative 26 on the Parkway's historic design would be somewhat less than Alternative 21D.

(iii) *Relative significance of each Section 4(f) property.* The Section 4(f) properties are the same for both alternatives.

(iv) *Views of official(s) with jurisdiction over each Section 4(f) property.* CTSHPO concurred with CTDOT's recommendations of Adverse Effect in a letter dated November 20, 2020. Refer to Part 1, Section G of this 4(f) Evaluation for additional information.

(v) *Degree to which the purpose and need for the project are met.* Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 both fulfill the project's Purpose and Need.

(vi) *Magnitude of adverse impacts to resources not protected by Section 4(f).* Alternative 26 meets the goals with substantial advantages compared to Alternative 21D (Refer to Table 2.4.2 of the project's EA/EIE document)

(vii) *Substantial differences in cost.* At this time, the preliminary capital construction cost estimate of constructing Alternative 21D (207 million) is approximately 90% higher than the preliminary capital construction cost estimate of Alternative 26 (109 million).

Alternative 21D

Alternative 21D would complete the partial interchanges (Interchange 39, 40) with traffic movements between Route 7, the Merritt Parkway, and Main Avenue (see Project Plans, Appendix B). The existing Route 7/Merritt Parkway loop ramps would be retained in the easterly quadrants as would the direct connections in the westerly quadrants. The four remaining Route 7/Merritt Parkway interchange movements would be achieved with semi-direct connections. Several towers of a power line may require relocation.

The dual historic Merritt Parkway bridges over Main Avenue would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the project's purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrian/bikers/transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four existing tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant of the Main Avenue interchange would allow for a long eastbound weave lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop ramp in the southeast quadrant of the Route 7 interchange.

In the westbound direction, the tight Merritt Parkway exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant (to southbound Main Avenue) would be eliminated. Longer Merritt Parkway ramp acceleration and deceleration lanes would also be provided. The westbound entrance ramp would be built between

a recently constructed residential apartment building and the Merritt Parkway. As currently conceived, the new ramps would be at or below the elevation of the Merritt Parkway.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, this alternative would require the construction of eleven (11) new bridges and modifications or replacements to three (3) existing bridges for expanded roadways and/or ramps. This includes replacement of two (2) historic bridges (Merritt Parkway over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River).

Alternative 26

Alternative 26 would complete the partial interchange (Interchanges 39, 40) with traffic movements between Route 7, the Merritt Parkway, and Main Avenue (see Project Plans, Appendix B). This alternative would introduce two signalized intersections along Route 7 to complete the partial interchange. A modified diamond interchange with the Merritt Parkway would retain the existing loop ramp in the northeast quadrant and the existing direct connector ramp in the southwest quadrant to optimize traffic operations at the two signalized intersections.

The loop ramp in the northeast quadrant would be reduced in size from the larger existing one, a change made possible by slower speeds on the reclassified Route 7 from a freeway to a signalized arterial. Three northbound and three southbound lanes would be necessary at the signalized Route 7/ramp intersections, with turn lanes at each Route 7 intersection approach. No powerline tower relocations are required for Alternative 26.

The dual historic Merritt Parkway bridges over Main Avenue would be replaced and the bridge spans extended to allow for a widened roadway section. The increased span would provide space below for a wider Main Avenue and allow for the construction of additional left turn lanes to provide for left-turn movements and provide wider sidewalks and incorporation of bike facilities. This would facilitate the project's purpose related to improved mobility of both vehicles and other users (pedestrian/bikers/transit users). In addition to the existing signal at Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, two new signalized intersections would be provided along Main Avenue for a total of three-closely spaced signalized intersections. Glover Avenue would be widened and a replacement bridge would be constructed over the Norwalk River. Creeping Hemlock Drive would be realigned to the north and widened. A new signalized intersection would be provided along Creeping Hemlock Drive at the existing westbound Merritt Parkway off-ramp.

The four tight-loop ramps at Interchange 40 would be eliminated. Elimination of the existing ramps in the southwest quadrant would allow for a long eastbound weave lane between an eastbound Route 7 entry ramp and an improved exit loop in the southeast quadrant.

In the westbound direction, the tight Merritt Parkway exit loop ramp in the northwest quadrant would be eliminated. To avoid further weaving on the westbound Merritt Parkway for the southbound Main Avenue movement, an independent ramp would be located between the westbound weaving lane and the new residential building to the north.

In addition to the new ramps and roadways noted above, Alternative 26 would require the construction of four (4) new bridges and the replacement of two (2) existing historic bridges (Merritt Parkway over Main Avenue and Glover Avenue over Norwalk River) to incorporate new or widened roadways or ramps.

Least Overall Harm Analysis

Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 both entail the replacement of the Main Avenue Bridge to improve traffic flow on Main Avenue and to allow for multimodal amenities. Alternative 21D also requires replacement of the bridge in order to accommodate an additional lane associated with the connection between Route 7 northbound and the Merritt Parkway northbound.

A widened Main Avenue, including left-turn lanes and wider sidewalks, is essential to fulfill the project's roadway system linkage, safety, and mobility purposes. All but one of the 26 alternatives under consideration in the Level 1 screening require replacement of the bridge; that alternative was eliminated because it failed to meet the safety and mobility elements in the project's Purpose and Need⁴. Because of the density of commercial, office, and residential development in the area, other strategies for preserving the bridge (realigning Main Avenue to avoid the use of the historic bridge, retaining the historic bridge with a second bridge immediately adjacent to it on one side or the other) would result in numerous right-of-way takings, impacts to environmental resources (e.g., wetlands), and displacement of residents in two (2) multi-story apartment buildings.

Both Alternative 21D and Alternative 26 would replace the inadequate Main Avenue/Merritt Parkway interchange (an original feature from the late 1930s) with safer ramps; this change would represent an unavoidable adverse effect on the Merritt Parkway Historic District's integrity of design and materials. Lanes would also be added at the Merritt Parkway/Route 7 interchange to accomplish complete connectivity between the two highways. Because the ramps and associated added lanes are shorter, the magnitude of the effect of Alternative 26 on the Parkway's historic design would be somewhat less than Alternative 21D. In the case of both alternatives, the effects on the Parkway's historic character can be substantially minimized by implementation of the "Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines" (March 2020; Appendix I3 of the project's EA/EIE document).

⁴ Alternative 9 would provide all connections at the Merritt Parkway/Route 7 interchange and eliminate all ramps at the Merritt Parkway/Main Avenue interchange (Appendix A2 of the project's EA/EIE document).

Summary of Least Overall Harm Analysis

The following table summarizes the results of the Least Overall Harm analysis:

Factor	Alternative 21D	Alternative 26
Ability to mitigate adverse impacts	Same	Same
Relative severity of remaining harm	Slightly greater	Slightly less
Relative significance of Section 4(f) properties	Same	Same
Views of official(s) with jurisdiction	TBD	TBD
Degree to which Purpose and Need are met	Same	Same
Impacts to resources not protected by Section 4(f)	Higher	Lower
Substantial difference in cost	Higher	Lower

F. MINIMIZATION MEASURES

The project's Purpose and Need cannot be fulfilled without adding ramps and lanes to the Merritt Parkway, including the reconfiguration of the existing interchange between the Parkway and Main Avenue. In order to minimize harm to the Merritt Parkway Historic District, CTDOT, with substantial input from the public, developed a set of landscape guidelines that would be implemented in the final design ("Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines," March 2020, included in the EA/EIE document as Appendix I3). The guidelines include the following design principles:

- View corridors created through horizontal and vertical roadway geometry;
- Visibility of bridge structures with varied width and length of view corridors;
- Plant material that effectively frames views, complements bridge structures, screens unsightly views, provides focal points, and creates landscape groupings of varied scale;
- Built landscape transitioning seamlessly into naturalized landscape;
- Median treatments and highway design vocabulary (guardrails, signs, lighting standards and off-site over-spill, barrier fences, etc.) are consistent and recognizable, conform to overall Parkway appearance, and are selected from a compact and well-defined palette of materials;
- Landscape reveals natural/naturalized resources such as watercourses, slopes, ledge outcrops, and sky; and
- Overhead canopy within the Merritt Parkway right-of-way that modulates along the corridor and complies with CTDOT roadway safety guidelines.

Implementation of these guidelines would in effect restore the historic character of the Parkway within the project limits. Currently, that character is impaired by inconsistent signage and guiderail treatments and inappropriate, lost, or overgrown plantings. Overall, the historic character of the Merritt Parkway will be more apparent after the project than currently is the case.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among FHWA, CTSHPO, CTDOT, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) has been executed. Consultation with Tribal entities is also ongoing and may result in participation in the creation of the MOA. As of this date, possible MOA stipulations for mitigating the adverse effects on the Merritt Parkway Historic District, and the Main Avenue Bridge include:

1. In preparing the final design for the Preferred Alternative, CTDOT shall, to the degree possible, follow the guidelines in “Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines” (March 2020). On behalf of FHWA, CTDOT shall distribute thirty (30), sixty (60), ninety (90) percent and final design plans with CTSHPO, the Tribes, and the concurring parties, each of whom will have a thirty (30) day comment period in which to submit their comments to CTDOT. CTDOT and FHWA will consider these comments as design further progresses.
2. Within the 30-day comment period for each of the milestone design plan submissions listed in Stipulation 1, FHWA and CTDOT will meet with the PAC Landscape Subcommittee to review comments on the landscape design components and design of the Parkway. CTDOT and FHWA will consider their input as design progresses.
3. CTDOT shall design the replacement for the Main Avenue Bridge and Glover Avenue Bridge in consideration of the form, scale, and materials of the existing structure so as to complement the established aesthetic of the Merritt Parkway Historic District. On behalf of FHWA, CTDOT shall share the 30, 60, and 90 percent and final design plans with CTSHPO, the Tribes, and the concurring parties, each of whom will have a thirty (30) day review period in which to submit their comments to CTDOT. FHWA and CTDOT shall consider these comments as design further progresses.
4. Throughout construction of the undertaking, CTDOT’s cultural resource qualified staff shall coordinate with design and construction team to review changes to the construction documents resulting from value engineering, change orders, site conditions, or other factors which affect the design character of the parkway. CTDOT qualified staff shall consult with CTSHPO regarding these changes, should they occur. CTDOT shall provide regular updates on the construction of the undertaking to the concurring parties.
5. Prior to construction-related activities, CTDOT shall prepare supplementary written and photographic documentation of the Glover Avenue Bridge according to HAER Level II standards. CTDOT shall submit a draft of the supplementary documentation to CTSHPO and FHWA for review and shall revise the documentation according to comments received. CTDOT shall submit the final, approved documentation to HAER and provide CTSHPO with electronic copies of the documentation upon completion.

6. CTDOT shall incorporate the existing stone tablet in the design of the Glover Avenue Bridge replacement, identifying it as the dedicatory plaque of the previous 1912 bridge on the site.
7. Prior to finalizing Plans, Specification, and Estimates, CTDOT shall, in consultation with FHWA, CTSHPO, TPHOs, and Concurring Parties, develop an Archaeological Treatment Plan that provides guidance on minimizing impacts to archaeological sites. The Archaeological Treatment Plan will be consistent with the CTSHPO's Environmental Review Primer for Connecticut's Archaeological Resources and the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. It shall, to the extent practicable and offered by the THPOs, incorporate guidance based on indigenous knowledge.
8. Within 3 years of the execution of this MOA, CTDOT shall create, or cause to be created through the engagement of a qualified consultant, a web-based "story map" highlighting the history, development, and important architectural and design elements of the Merritt Parkway. The story map shall include photographs, narratives, and mapping details digitally tied to an overall GIS-based map of the National Register listed corridor. Draft materials for the story map shall be submitted to CTSHPO, and other Consulting Parties, for review and comment, as appropriate.

G. AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

CTDOT, on behalf of FHWA, has coordinated planning for the project with CTSHPO, providing that agency with descriptions of the project, design plans, and archaeological and historical technical reports. The CTDOT Office of Environmental Planning recommended findings of Adverse Effect on the Merritt Parkway Historic District and one of the district's contributing components, the Main Avenue Bridge (Bridges Nos. 00560A and 00560B). After independently reviewing the project, CTSHPO concurred with CTDOT's recommendations of Adverse Effect in a letter dated November 20, 2020. Agency consultation is documented by the correspondence included in Appendix N3 of the EA/EIE. Section 106 consultation is documented by the correspondence included in Appendix N6 of the EA/EIE and the execution of an MOA has taken place as indicated in Section F.

The Route 7/Route 15 Interchange Project has been presented for public comment at a series of meetings. The meetings, all held in Norwalk, received the required public notice; in addition, several interested local organizations were invited by mail or email. Oral comments at the meetings and subsequent written comments were received. Representatives of the following organizations attended one or more of these public meetings: the City of Norwalk Historical Commission, the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, the Norwalk Historical Society, and the Norwalk

Preservation Trust. The project's public information and outreach included the following (partial list):

- September 15, 2017, 328 Flax Hill Road, Norwalk, public focus groups
- September 19, 2017, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
- October 17, 2017, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, general public
- May 7, 2019, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, PAC Section 106 Subcommittee
- July 11, 2019, 301 Merritt 7, Norwalk, PAC
- October 23, 2019, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, general public
- November 21, 2019, 328 Flax Hill Road, Norwalk, PAC Landscape Subcommittee
- December 16, 2020, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), PAC Landscape Subcommittee
- November 30, 2021, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), general public
- December 1, 2021, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), general public
- August 16, 2023, EA/EIE Public Hearing, Norwalk City Hall, general public

CTDOT also formed a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) in March 2017, which was composed of approximately 25 individuals representing a variety of local stakeholders including local neighborhood groups, interest groups, economic development groups, municipalities, transit providers, and major landowners / developers. The PAC has met throughout the course of the project, providing key local knowledge as the study team progressed with the development of this document along with input on screening the alternatives.

A Notice of Availability (Appendix E) of the EA/EIE/Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation was sent to the Department of Interior on July 18, 2023, however, no comments were received during the comment period that followed.

In addition to the public meetings, the project maintains a frequently updated website with copies of technical reports, announcement of public meetings, agendas, and minutes of past meetings.

PART 2: GLOVER AVENUE BRIDGE (PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION)

Glover Avenue lies immediately north of the Merritt Parkway, with its intersection with Main Avenue directly adjacent to existing Parkway on and off-ramps. In order to create safe and efficient traffic flow at this intersection, the Project proposes widening Glover Avenue, including providing a wider bridge over the Norwalk River (see Location Map, Appendix A). The existing bridge, a 1912 two-span stone arch structure that is considered to be an NRHP-eligible property, will be replaced with a new bridge.

The 4(f) evaluation for this project action is made under the 1983 *Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges*. The Programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation for projects involving historic bridges provides a streamlined format consisting of a cover sheet and check list, followed by concise text sections that describe the project action, relevant analysis of alternatives, measures to minimize harm, and coordination with the public and other governmental agencies.

The Programmatic 4(f) Evaluation for the Glover Avenue Bridge appears on the next five pages, followed by Part 3, the determination statements for both the Merritt Parkway Historic District (including its contributing components) and the Glover Avenue Bridge.

CONNECTICUT DIVISION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
PROGRAMMATIC SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION
AND APPROVAL UNDER THE
NATIONWIDE SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION
AND APPROVAL FOR FHWA PROJECTS THAT NECESSITATE
THE USE OF HISTORIC BRIDGES

Description of the Historic Bridge(s) Bridge No. 04155 (the Glover Avenue Bridge) is a two-span stone-arch structure originally built in 1912C; the bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The bridge has an overall length of 84' and a width of 34' 6", including two vehicle lanes and sidewalks on both sides. The bridge carries Glover Avenue over the Norwalk River in the town of Norwalk, Connecticut (see Location Map, Appendix A).

Federal Project No. 0015(133), State Project No. 102-358.

Consult the Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation as it relates to the following items. Complete all items. **Any response on a box ([]) requires additional information prior to approval.**

Applicability		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1.	Will the bridge be replaced or rehabilitated with Federal funds?	<u> X </u>	[]
2.	Will the project require the "use" of a historic structure, which is on or is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?	<u> X </u>	[]
3.	Will the project impair the historic integrity of the bridge either by demolition or rehabilitation?	<u> X </u>	[]
4.	Has the bridge been determined to be a National Historic Landmark?	<u> </u>	[X]

Alternatives Considered:

Consult the Nationwide Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for the generic reasons that might be addressed. The evaluation of alternatives for the subject project, however, must quantify those reasons as applicable and be supported by the circumstances of the project.

1.	All of the following alternatives to avoid any use of the historic bridge have been evaluated?	<u> X </u>	[]
----	--	--------------	-------

SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------|-------|
| 2. | The “Do Nothing” alternative has been studied and it has been determined for reasons of maintenance and safety not to be feasible and prudent? | <u> X </u> | [] |
| 3. | The build on new location without using the old bridge alternate has been studied and it has been determined for reasons of terrain, and/or adverse social, economic or environmental effects, and/or engineering and economy, and/or preservation of the old bridge, not to be feasible or prudent? | <u> X </u> | [] |
| 4. | Rehabilitation of the existing bridge without affecting the historic integrity of the bridge has been studied and it has been determined, for reasons of structural deficiency, and/or geometrics that rehabilitation is not feasible and prudent? | <u> X </u> | [] |

Measures to Minimize Harm:

(When an item does not apply, indicate NA in the Yes column)

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1. | The project includes all possible planning to minimize Harm as the following apply? | <u> X </u> | [] |
| 2. | For bridges that are to be rehabilitated, the historic integrity of the bridge is preserved, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with unavoidable transportation needs, safety, and load requirements?* | <u> NA </u> | [] |
| 3. | For bridges that are to be rehabilitated to the point that the historic integrity is affected or that are to be moved or demolished, the FHWA has ensured that full adequate records are made of the bridge in accordance with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)? | <u> X </u> | [] |
| 4. | For bridges that are to be replaced, the existing bridge is made available for an alternative use, provided a responsible party agrees to maintain and preserve the bridge? | <u> </u> | [X] |
| 5. | For bridges that are adversely affected, the FHWA, CTSHPO and ACHP have reached agreement through the Section 106 process on the Measures to Minimize Harm and those measures are incorporated in the project? | <u> X </u> | [] |

*Note: These criteria and the provisions of Section 4(f) apply when it has been determined by FHWA in consultation with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO) and the

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) through the Section 106 process that the rehabilitation work will result in an “adverse effect” on the historic integrity of the structure. When through the above consultation it is determined the rehabilitation work will result in “no adverse effect” on the historic integrity of the structure, the provisions of Section 4(f) and the above Nationwide Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation do not apply.

Project Description

State Project No. 102-358 proposes to construct improvements to the Route 7 and Route 15 interchange and improve interconnections with local roads in the City of Norwalk, Connecticut. The purpose of the project is to:

- improve roadway system linkage between Route 7 and Route 15 at Interchange 39;
- improve the mobility for vehicles at both the Route 15 interchanges at Route 7 and at Main Avenue (No. 39 & No. 40), and to improve the mobility for all users (motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists) along the immediate adjacent local roadway network (Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive, and;
- improve safety in the vicinity of these interchanges.

The replacement of the Glover Avenue Bridge (Bridge 04155) is part of this project. Bridge 04155, built in 1912, is a two-span masonry arch bridge. The structure measures 84 feet in length and 34.5 feet in width. The intersection of Glover Avenue and Main Avenue is directly adjacent to two of the current on/off ramps between Main Avenue and the Merritt Parkway; as a consequence, Glover Avenue is directly involved in circulation at the interchange. Deployment of a police officer is routinely required during the evening peak period to manage traffic at this intersection and to assure that the Glover Avenue railroad crossing to the west is cleared. This intersection does not have railroad pre-emption. Recent bridge inspections have rated the structure as structurally adequate but functionally obsolete due to the volume of traffic carried.

The replacement bridge would have four travel lanes instead of the two lanes provided by the current bridge, as well as sidewalks on both sides, approximately doubling the width. Widening Glover Avenue would result in a reduction in backed-up traffic on both Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, thereby improving mobility at the Parkway interchange (this is documented in Appendix B of the project’s EA/EIE). The widening of Glover Avenue would also address safety concerns at the Glover Avenue railroad crossing west of the Main Avenue intersection.

Built in 1912, the Glover Avenue bridge (originally called the Belden Avenue Bridge) features two shallow elliptical arches of 40’ span (Photograph 10). The spandrels are a random ashlar of locally quarried granitic gneiss, while the parapet coping and ring stones are formed from Portland brownstone blocks. The current pipe railings, while modern, are similar to the bridge’s original railings. A dedicatory inscription on the south parapet’s coping lists the date of construction, the names of the town selectmen, and the name of the bridge’s engineer (Photograph 11).

The bridge has local historical significance as an example of the movement in the early 20th century to provide bridges that were not only functional but also aesthetic improvements for the community. In that period, Norwalk, like other Fairfield County towns, was beginning to develop a middle-class, suburban identity; bridges like this, with their rustic stone masonry, were seen as helping to create a park-like ambience appropriate to that identity. Charles N. Wood (1847-1913), Norwalk's municipal engineer, designed the bridge and supervised its construction.

CTDOT's 1990 survey of historic bridges, which was reviewed and accepted by CTSHPO, recommended that the bridge be considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. In connection with an earlier interchange-improvement project at this location, the eligibility of the bridge was affirmed in consultation between CTDOT and CTSHPO. Written and photographic documentation of the bridge was prepared to state-level standards in April 2000 and archived as part of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection (Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Library, Storrs, CT).

Measures to Minimize Harm

As noted, a Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been executed for the project among FHWA, CTDOT, CTSHPO, and the ACHP. Stipulations, including mitigation for the Glover Avenue Bridge are listed in Part 1, Section F of this document.

No clauses for the marketing of the existing structure for alternative uses are included in the MOA because of the extreme difficulty of dismantling, moving, and re-erecting stone-arch bridges. Relocation/reuse of the structure is not a feasible and prudent action since dismantling the bridge would not lend itself to maintaining any type of historic integrity.

Alternative Evaluation

Alternative 1 – Do Nothing

Although this alternative would not affect the historic bridge, it is not considered feasible and prudent; the project's Purpose and Need clearly identifies adequate circulation in the immediate vicinity of the interchange of the Merritt Parkway and Main Avenue as an essential part of the project. In addition to serving numerous multistory office and apartment complexes, Glover Avenue provides access to the Merritt 7 Metro-North Railroad station. Currently, backups at the intersection of Glover Avenue and Main Avenue regularly require the presence of police officers to direct traffic. As documented in Appendix B of the project's EA/EIE, adding lanes to Glover Avenue at this point would result in a reduction in backed-up traffic on both Glover Avenue and Main Avenue, thereby improving mobility at the Parkway interchange.

Alternative 2 – Construct New Bridge on New Alignment without Affecting the Historic Integrity of the Old Bridge

The area is densely built with multistory office and apartment complexes having little setback from Glover Avenue and the roadway alignment is fixed. Constructing a new bridge on a new alignment would result in numerous right-of-way takings and displacement of residents in two (2) multi-story

apartment buildings. Furthermore, the current Glover Avenue Bridge would need to be maintained given its historic significance. For these reasons, this alternative is not considered feasible and prudent.

Alternative 3 – Rehabilitate the Historic Bridge without Affecting the Historic Integrity of the Bridge

Rehabilitation of the bridge without affecting its historic integrity would not address the project's purpose and need. Although some historic stone-arch bridges have been widened on one side, while maintaining the other side intact, this option is not possible in the case of the Glover Avenue Bridge; the bridge must be widened on both sides, maintaining the current centerline in order to improve overall levels of service nearby Main Avenue intersection. Furthermore, widening the Glover Avenue Bridge from two lanes to four lanes would necessarily diminish the structure's integrity of design and materials. Accordingly, this alternative is not considered feasible and prudent.

Public Information and Outreach

The Route 7/Route 15 Interchange Project has been presented for public comment at a series of meetings, each of which explicitly identified the replacement of the Glover Avenue Bridge as a component of the project. The meetings, all held in Norwalk, received the required public notice; in addition, several interested local organizations were invited by mail or email. Oral comments at the meetings and subsequent written comments were received. Representatives of the following organizations attended one or more of these public meetings: the City of Norwalk Historical Commission, the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, the Norwalk Historical Society, and the Norwalk Preservation Trust. The project's public information and outreach included the following (partial list):

- September 15, 2017, 328 Flax Hill Road, Norwalk, public focus groups
- September 19, 2017, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
- October 17, 2017, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, general public
- May 7, 2019, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, PAC Section 106 Subcommittee
- July 11, 2019, 301 Merritt 7, Norwalk, PAC
- October 23, 2019, Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, general public
- November 21/2019, 328 Flax Hill Road, Norwalk, PAC Landscape Subcommittee
- December 16, 2020, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), PAC Landscape Subcommittee
- November 30, 2021, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), general public
- December 1, 2021, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams), general public
- August 16, 2023, EA/EIE Public Hearing, Norwalk City Hall, general public

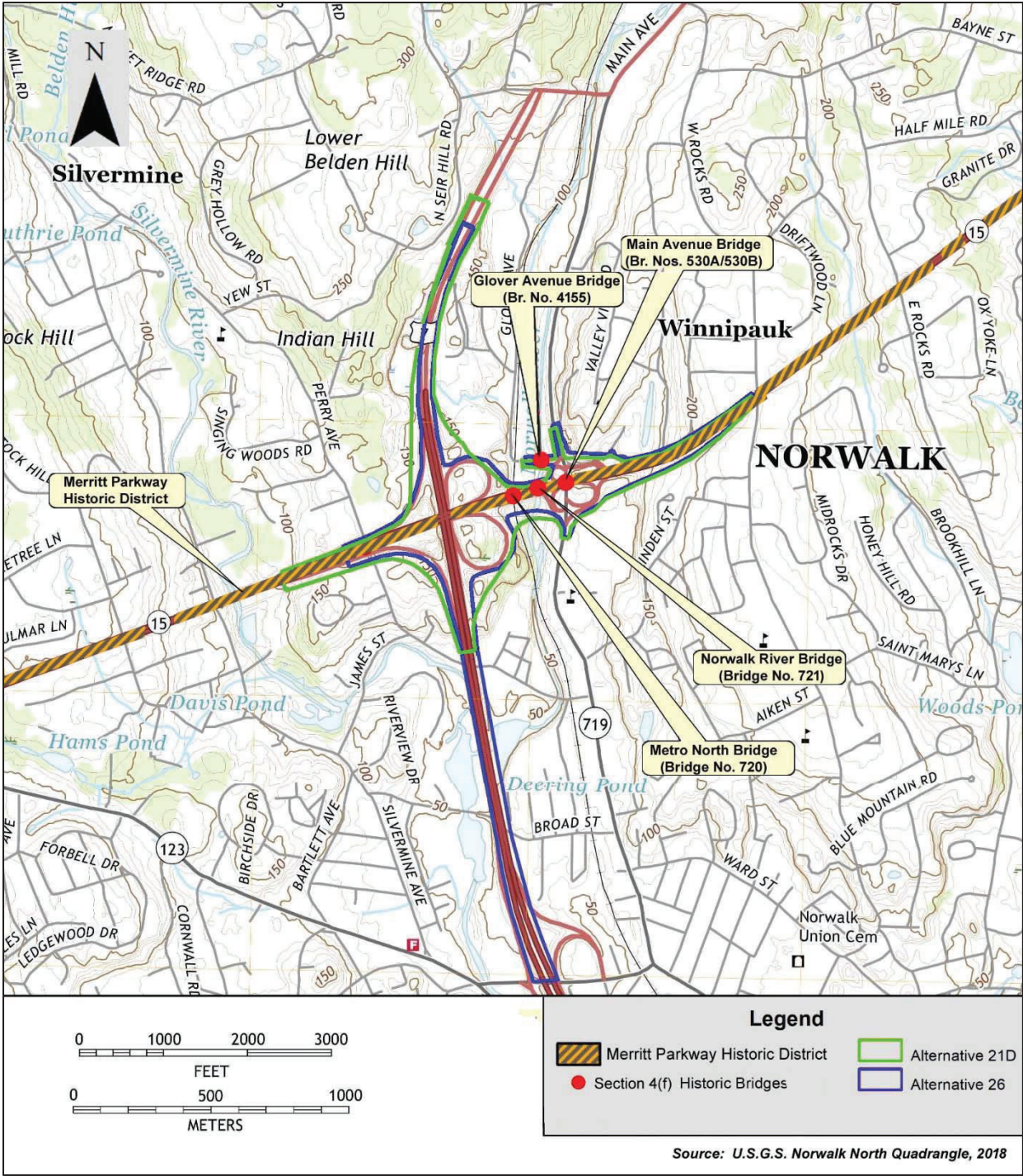
In addition to the public meetings, the project maintains a frequently updated website with copies of technical reports, announcement of public meetings, agendas, and minutes of past meetings.

PART 3: DETERMINATIONS

The following Determinations apply to the Route 7/Route 15 Interchange Project, State Project 102-358, Federal Aid Project 0015(133):

1. Based upon the Section 4(f) Evaluation for the NRHP-listed Merritt Parkway Historic District, and in accordance with 23 CFR §774.3(a), FHWA has concluded that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the proposed use of the Merritt Parkway Historic District, including a contributing component (the Main Avenue Bridge), and that the proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) resource (the Merritt Parkway Historic District and its contributing components) resulting from such use.
2. Based on the Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for the NRHP-eligible Glover Avenue Bridge, and the results of public and agency consultation, as evidenced by the attachments hereto, the FHWA has determined that:
 - This component of the project meets the applicability criteria set forth in the Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges dated July 5, 1983.
 - All of the alternatives set forth in the Findings section of the above Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation have been fully evaluated. Based on those Findings, it is determined that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of Bridge No. 04155 (Glover Avenue over the Norwalk River) in the town of Norwalk.
 - This component of the project complies with the Measures to Minimize Harm Section of the above Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation; the Section 106 process has been completed and agreement among the FHWA, CTSHPO, ACHP, and CTDOT has been reached.

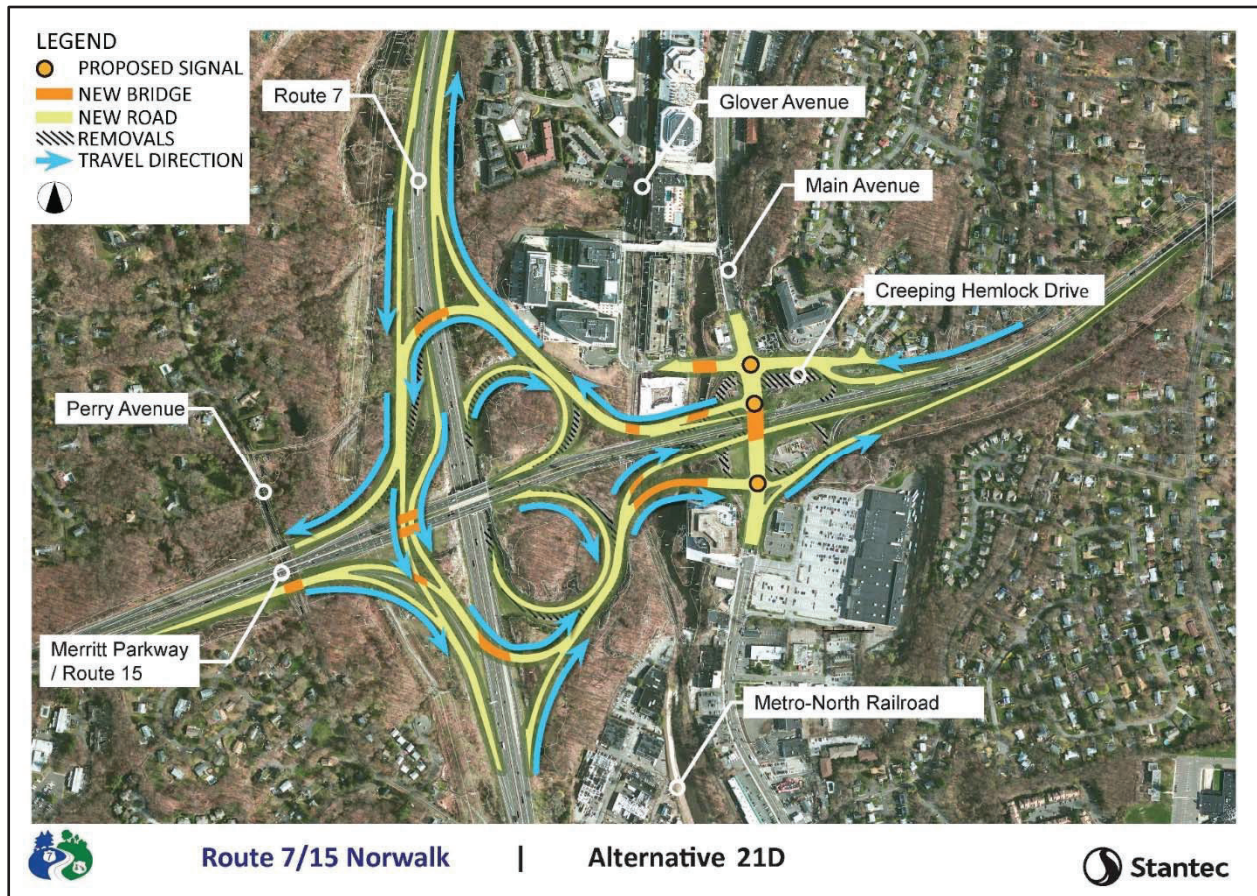
APPENDIX A:
Map of Project Area and Alternatives



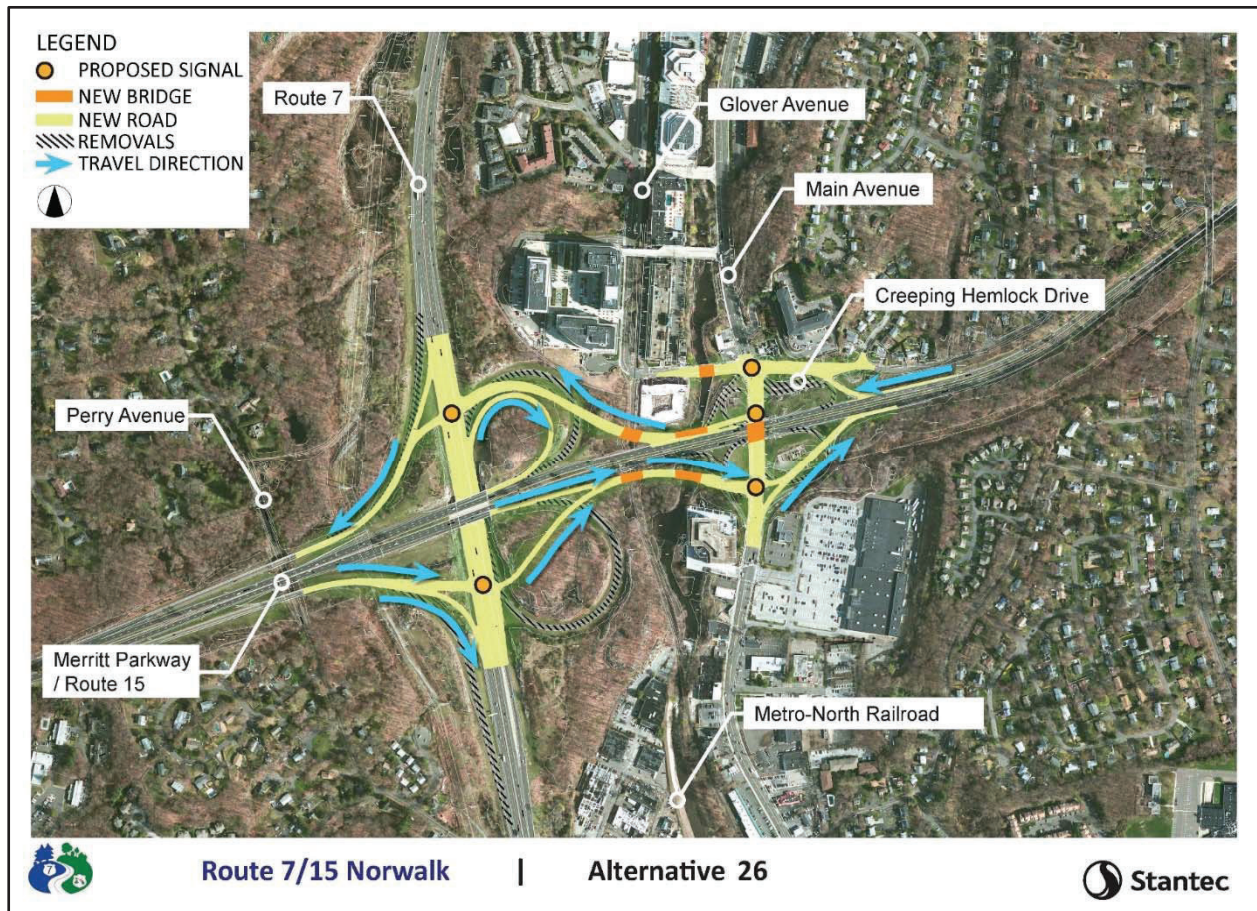
Location of project shown on the USGS Norwalk North Quadrangle. The outlines for the two build alternatives include the limits of construction activities.

APPENDIX B:

Project Plans



Aerial Depiction of Alternative 21D.



Aerial Depiction of Alternative 26.

APPENDIX C:

Photographs of Section 4(f) Resources



Photograph 1: Merritt Parkway north of the Main Avenue interchange, camera facing northeast.



Photograph 2: Merritt Parkway between Perry Avenue and the Route 7 interchange, camera facing northeast.



Photograph 3: Rock outcropping west of the Route 7 interchange, camera facing north.



Photograph 4: Merritt Parkway on ramp and off ramp at the interchange with Main Avenue, looking northwest toward the intersection of Main Avenue and Glover Avenue.



Photograph 5: Merritt Parkway Main Avenue Bridge (Bridge Nos. 530A and 530B), north elevation, camera facing southwest.



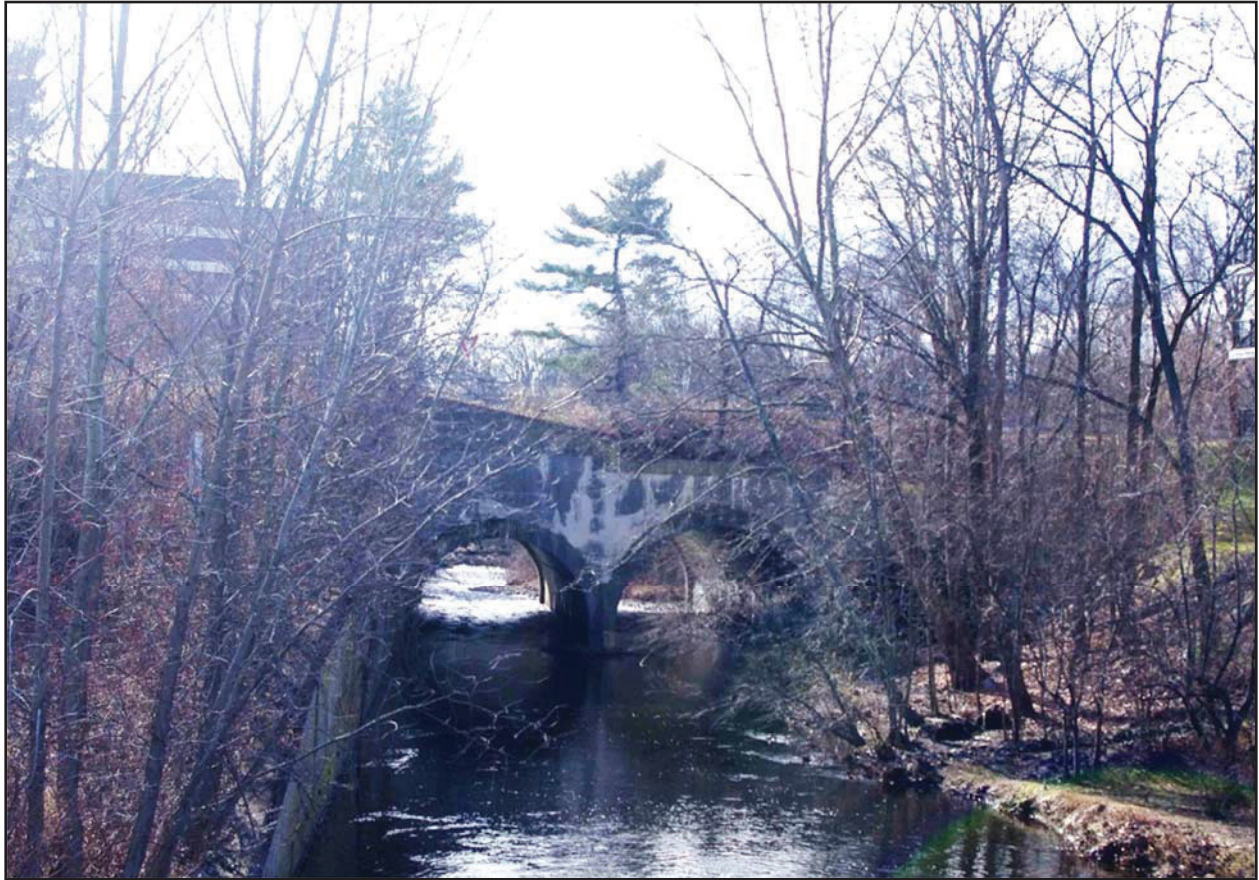
Photograph 6: Merritt Parkway Main Avenue Bridge (Bridge Nos. 530A and 530B), south elevation, camera facing north.



Photograph 7: Merritt Parkway Main Avenue Bridge (Bridge Nos. 530A and 530B), Parkway level, camera facing west.



Photograph 8: Merritt Parkway Metro-North Bridge (Bridge No. 720), north elevation, camera facing south.



Photograph 9: Merritt Parkway Norwalk River Bridge (Bridge No. 721), north elevation, camera facing south.



Photograph 10: Glover Avenue Bridge (Bridge No. 004155), south elevation, camera facing northeast. This bridge, which would be replaced under both build alternatives, is evaluated in a separate 4(f) document using the Nationwide Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges.



Photograph 11: Dedicatory inscription, Glover Avenue Bridge, south parapet. The project's MOA calls for the re-use of this stone in the new bridge.

APPENDIX D:

Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
AND THE
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION
AND THE
CONNECTICUT STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
AND THE
CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
REGARDING THE
ROUTE 7/ROUTE 15 (MERRITT PARKWAY) INTERCHANGE PROJECT
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT
FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

SUBMITTED PURSUANT to 36 C.F.R. § 800.6(a)

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), an agency of the State of Connecticut, proposes a series of changes to the intersection of Route 7, Route 15 (the Merritt Parkway), and Main Avenue in Norwalk, Connecticut (the undertaking); and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is providing funding for the undertaking, making it subject to the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. § 306108) and its implementing regulations, 36 C.F.R. Part 800, in addition to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. § 4332), and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, (23 U.S.C. § 138(a)); and

WHEREAS, FHWA in consultation with CTDOT and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer (CTSHPO) has defined the Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the undertaking as shown on the attached map (Attachment A); and

WHEREAS, FHWA has consulted with CTSHPO pursuant to 36 C.F.R. Part 800 and determined that the following National Register of Historic Places-listed or eligible properties are within the undertaking's APE: the Merritt Parkway Historic District, including five of its contributing components (the Perry Avenue Bridge, the Norwalk River Bridge, the Metro-North Bridge, the Main Avenue Bridge, and the West Rocks Road Bridge); the Verneur Pratt Historic District; the Glover Avenue Bridge; and three pre-contact era archaeological sites; and

WHEREAS, FHWA, in consultation with CTSHPO, has determined that the undertaking will have unavoidable adverse effects pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.5 on the Merritt Parkway Historic District and three of its contributing components (the Norwalk River Bridge, the Metro-North Bridge, and the Main Avenue Bridge); the Glover Avenue Bridge; and three archaeological sites; (collectively, the "Historic Properties"); and

Memorandum of Agreement
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Norwalk, Connecticut

WHEREAS, the Merritt Parkway Historic District, including all its contributing components within the project limits, was documented for the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in 1992 (HAER No. CT-63, HAER No. CT-90, HAER No. CT-91, HAER No. CT-92, HAER No. CT-93, and HAER No. CT-94); and

WHEREAS, written and photographic documentation of the Glover Avenue Bridge was prepared to CTSHPO standards and archived in the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection, University of Connecticut Archives and Special Collections, in 2000; and

WHEREAS, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) of the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the Mohegan Tribe of Indians in Connecticut, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe, have participated in the consultation process pursuant to the 36 C.F.R. Part 800 regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108) and have been invited to concur in this Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and will continue to be consulted in the implementation of the MOA; and

WHEREAS, this MOA was developed with appropriate public involvement pursuant to 36 C.F.R. 800.2(d) and 800.6(a) and in consultation with the CTSHPO, CTSHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and invited Consulting Parties (listed in Attachment C); and

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (CTASLA), Merritt Parkway Conservancy (MPC), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH), the Norwalk Historical Commission (City of Norwalk), the Norwalk Historical Society, the Norwalk Preservation Trust, Preservation Connecticut, and the Silvermine Community Association have participated in the consultation process pursuant to 36 C.F.R. Part 800 and have been invited to concur in this MOA and will continue to be consulted in the implementation of the MOA; and

WHEREAS, the MPC, NASH, the City of Norwalk, and the Silvermine Community Association participated with CTDOT in the formulation of design guidelines for the project, itemized in “Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines” (Attachment B); and

WHEREAS, in accordance with 36 C.F.R. § 800.6(a)(1), FHWA has notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of its adverse effect determination with specified documentation, and the ACHP has chosen to participate in the consultation pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.6(a)(1)(iii);

NOW, THEREFORE, the FHWA, the ACHP, the CTSHPO, and the CTDOT agree that the undertaking shall be implemented with the following stipulations to ensure that effects to the

Memorandum of Agreement
Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange Project
Federal Aid Project No 0015(133) / State Project No 102-358
Norwalk, Connecticut

historic properties are taken into account:

I. STIPULATIONS

FWHA will ensure that the following measures are carried out within ten (10) years of the date on which this MOA is executed unless the deadline is extended in accordance with Section VI of this MOA.

1. In preparing the undertaking's final design, CTDOT shall, to the degree possible, follow the guidelines in "Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines" (March 2020). On behalf of FHWA, CTDOT shall distribute thirty (30), sixty (60), ninety (90) percent and final design plans with CTSHPO, the Tribes, and the concurring parties, each of whom will have a thirty (30) day comment period in which to submit their comments to CTDOT. FHWA and CTDOT will consider these comments as design further progresses.
2. Within the thirty-day comment period for each of the milestone design plan submissions listed in Stipulation 1, FHWA and CTDOT will meet with the PAC Landscape Subcommittee to review comments on the landscape design components and design of the Parkway. CTDOT & FHWA will consider their input as design further progresses.
3. CTDOT shall design the replacement for the Main Avenue Bridge and Glover Avenue Bridge in consideration of the form, scale, and materials of the existing structure so as to complement the established aesthetic of the Merritt Parkway Historic District. On behalf of FHWA, CTDOT shall share the 30, 60, and 90 percent and final design plans with CTSHPO, the Tribes, and the concurring parties, each of whom will have a thirty (30) day review period in which to submit their comments to CTDOT. FHWA and CTDOT shall consider these comments as design further progresses.
4. Throughout construction of the undertaking, CTDOT's cultural resource qualified staff shall coordinate with design and construction team to review changes to the construction documents resulting from value engineering, change orders, site conditions, or other factors which affect the design character of the parkway. CTDOT qualified staff shall consult with CTSHPO regarding these changes, should they occur. CTDOT shall provide regular updates on the construction of the undertaking to the concurring parties.

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Norwalk, Connecticut

5. Prior to construction-related activities, CTDOT shall prepare supplementary written and photographic documentation of the Glover Avenue Bridge according to HAER Level II standards. CTDOT shall submit a draft of the supplementary documentation to CTSHPO and FHWA for review and shall revise the documentation according to comments received. CTDOT shall submit the final, approved documentation to HAER and provide CTSHPO with electronic copies of the documentation upon completion.
6. CTDOT shall incorporate the existing stone tablet in the design of the Glover Avenue Bridge replacement, identifying it as the dedicatory plaque of the previous 1912 bridge on the site.
7. Prior to finalizing Plans, Specification, and Estimates, CTDOT shall, in consultation with FHWA, CTSHPO, TPHOs, and Concurring Parties, develop an Archaeological Treatment Plan that provides guidance on minimizing impacts to archaeological sites. The Archaeological Treatment Plan will be consistent with the CTSHPO's *Environmental Review Primer for Connecticut's Archaeological Resources* and the United States Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation*. It shall, to the extent practicable and offered by the THPOs, incorporate guidance based on indigenous knowledge.
8. Within 3 years of the execution of this MOA, CTDOT shall create, or cause to be created through the engagement of a qualified consultant, a web-based "story map" highlighting the history, development, and important architectural and design elements of the Merritt Parkway. The story map shall include photographs, narratives, and mapping details digitally tied to an overall GIS-based map of the National Register listed corridor. Draft materials for the story map shall be submitted to CTSHPO, and other Consulting Parties, for review and comment, as appropriate.

CTDOT shall provide the story map to the Merritt Parkway Conservancy to augment their Merritt Parkway Museum website. CTDOT shall notify CTSHPO, and the other Consulting Parties, when the webpage goes live.

II. DURATION OF THIS MOA

This MOA will expire if its terms are not carried out within ten (10) years from the date of its execution. Prior to such time, the signatories will consult to reconsider the terms of the MOA and amend it in accordance with Section VI.

III. UNANTICIPATED DISCOVERIES AND EFFECTS

- A. In the event that an historic property is discovered or unanticipated effects on identified archaeological properties occurs, CTDOT shall notify the FHWA and CTSHPO and refrain from further project activities in the immediate vicinity of that may reasonably be assumed to affect the historic property. CTDOT shall to the extent possible, protect the historic property *in situ* to allow for consultation with FHWA, CTSHPO, and the Tribes. No artifacts shall be removed from the site unless approved by all parties.
- B. In consultation with FHWA, CTSHPO, and the Tribes, CTDOT shall develop a suitable course of action to address the discovery.
- C. In the event that an acceptable resolution cannot be achieved, FHWA will follow the dispute resolution process set forth in Section V.

IV. MONITORING AND REPORTING

CTDOT shall provide notification to all signatories and concurring parties to this MOA, via email or letter, when all stipulations of this MOA have been fully satisfied.

Each year following the execution of this MOA until it expires or is terminated, CTDOT shall provide all parties to this MOA a summary report detailing work undertaken pursuant to its terms. Such report shall include any scheduling changes proposed, any problems encountered, and any disputes and objections received in FHWA and CTDOT's efforts to carry out the terms of this MOA.

V. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Should any signatory or concurring party to this MOA object at any time to any actions proposed or the manner in which the terms of this MOA are implemented, FHWA shall consult with such party to resolve the objection. If FHWA determines that such objection cannot be resolved, FHWA will:

- 1. Forward all documentation relevant to the dispute, including the FHWA's proposed resolution, to ACHP. ACHP shall provide FHWA with its advice on the resolution of the objection within thirty (30) days of receiving adequate documentation. Prior to reaching its final decision on the dispute, FHWA shall prepare a written response that takes into account any timely advice or comments regarding the dispute from ACHP, signatories, and concurring parties, and shall provide them with a copy of its written response. FHWA will then proceed according to its final decision.

Memorandum of Agreement
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Norwalk, Connecticut

2. If ACHP does not provide its advice regarding the dispute within the thirty (30) day time period, FHWA may make a final decision on the dispute and proceed accordingly. Prior to reaching such a final decision, FHWA shall prepare a written response that takes into account any timely comments regarding the dispute from the signatories and concurring parties to the MOA, and shall provide them and ACHP with a copy of such written response.
3. Notify the Signatories, Invited Signatories, and consulting parties of its final decision. FHWA shall then proceed according to its final decision.
4. Carry out all other actions subject to the terms of this agreement that are not the subject of the dispute.

VI. AMENDMENTS

If any signatory to this MOA believes that this MOA should be amended, that signatory may propose amendments to the other signatories, whereupon all signatories shall consult to consider the amendments pursuant to 36 C.F.R. §§ 800.6(c)(7) and 800.6(c)(8).

VII. TERMINATION

If any signatory to this MOA determines that its terms will not or cannot be carried out, that party shall immediately consult with the other signatories to attempt to develop an amendment per Stipulation VI, above. If within thirty (30) days (or another time period agreed to by all signatories) an amendment cannot be reached, any signatory may terminate the MOA upon written notification to the other signatories.

Once the MOA is terminated, and prior to work continuing on the undertaking, FHWA must either (a) execute an MOA pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6 or (b) request, take into account, and respond to the comments of the ACHP under 36 CFR § 800.7. FHWA shall notify the signatories as to the course of action it will pursue.

VIII. COUNTERPARTS

This MOA may be signed in counterpart copies, all of which, taken together, shall constitute but one and the same document.

Memorandum of Agreement
Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange Project
Federal Aid Project No 0015(133) / State Project No 102-358
Norwalk, Connecticut

EXECUTION OF THIS MOA

Execution of this MOA by FHWA, CTSHPO, CTDOT, and ACHP and implementation of its terms are evidence that

- a. FHWA has afforded ACHP an opportunity to comment on the proposed undertaking and its effects on the historic properties; and
- b. FHWA has afforded CTSHPO an opportunity to comment on the proposed undertaking and its effects on the historic properties; and
- c. FHWA has taken into account the effects of the undertaking on the historic properties.

SIGNATURES FOLLOW ON SEPARATE PAGES

Signatories

- ☒ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- ☒ Federal Highway Administration
- ☒ Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer
- ☒ Connecticut Department of Transportation (*Invited Signatory*)

Concurring Parties

- ☒ Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects
- ☒ Merritt Parkway Conservancy
- ☐ National Trust for Historic Preservation
- ☐ Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH)
- ☐ Norwalk Historical Commission
- ☒ Norwalk Historical Society
- ☒ Norwalk Preservation Trust
- ☒ Preservation Connecticut

SIGNATORY PAGE

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
AND THE
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION
AND THE
CONNECTICUT STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
AND THE
CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
REGARDING THE
ROUTE 7/ROUTE 15 (MERRITT PARKWAY) INTERCHANGE PROJECT
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

By: **Reid Nelson** Digitally signed by Reid Nelson
Date: 2024.06.12 11:03:28
-04'00'

Reid Nelson, Executive Director

Date: _____

SIGNATORY PAGE

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
AND THE
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Federal Highway Administration

By: Amy Jackson-Grove
Amy Jackson-Grove, Division Administrator

 Digitally signed by Amy Jackson-Grove
Date: 2024.04.10 13:40:56 -04'00'

Date: 4/10/2024

SIGNATORY PAGE

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
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ROUTE 7/ROUTE 15 (MERRITT PARKWAY) INTERCHANGE PROJECT
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer

By:



Digitally signed by Jonathan
Kinney
Date: 2024.02.20 12:19:30 -05'00'

Jonathan Kinney
Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: 2/20/24

SIGNATORY PAGE

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
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FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Connecticut Department of Transportation

By: **Kimberly Lesay**

Kimberly Lesay
Bureau Chief, Bureau of Policy and Planning

Digitally signed by Kimberly Lesay
DN: cn=Kimberly Lesay, o=Connecticut Department of
Transportation, ou=Bureau Chief of Policy & Planning,
email=kimberly.lesay@ct.gov, c=US
Date: 2024.04.03 16:30:13 -04'00'

Date: **April 3, 2024**

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Concurring Party

Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

By: **Peter F Viteretto**  Digitally signed by Peter F Viteretto
Date: 2024.03.20 19:15:13 -04'00'

Peter Viteretto

Date: **20 March 2024**

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Concurring Party

Merritt Parkway Conservancy



By

Wes Haynes, Executive Director

Date: March 27, 2024

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Concurring Party

National Trust for Historic Preservation

By: _____
Thompson M. Mayes
Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel

Date: _____

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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Concurring Party

Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH)

By: _____
Heather Dunn, President

Date: _____

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
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FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
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Concurring Party

Norwalk Historical Commission, City of Norwalk

By: _____
Dana Laird, Chair

Date: _____

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
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Concurring Party

Norwalk Historical Society

By: 
Diane Jellerette, Executive Director

Date: 2/22/2024

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358

Concurring Party

Norwalk Preservation Trust

By:


Tod Bryant, President

Date:

3/20/2024

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
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NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

FEDERAL AID PROJECT 0015(133)
STATE PROJECT 102-358**

Concurring Party

Preservation Connecticut

By:


Jane Montanaro, Executive Director

Date:

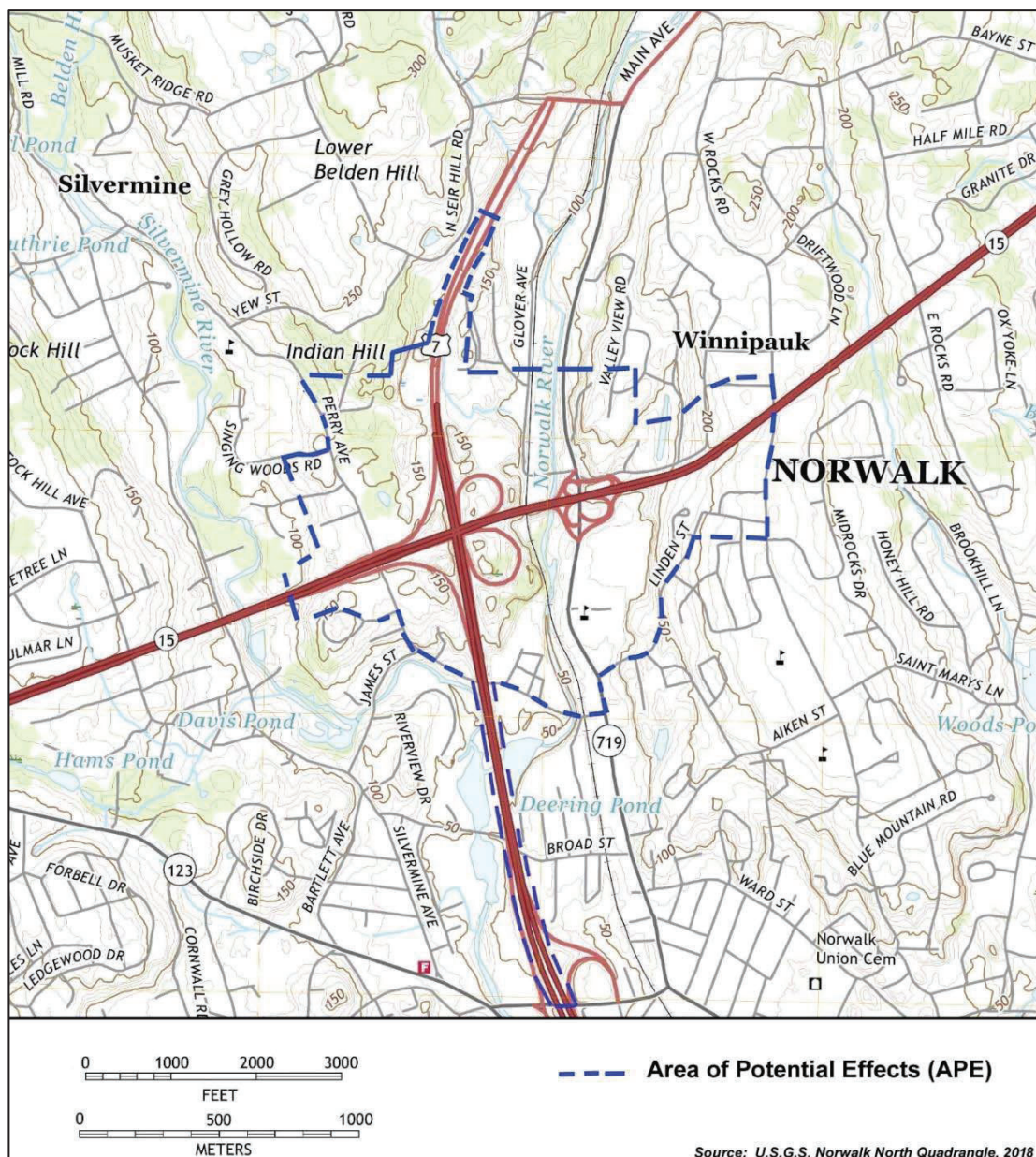
2/27/24

Memorandum of Agreement
Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange Project
Federal Aid Project No 0015(133) / State Project No 102-358
Norwalk, Connecticut

ATTACHMENT A

Description of Undertaking and Area of Potential Effects (APE)

The APE shown encompasses direct and indirect impacts (visual, noise) for the undertaking. The following page shows the project area and anticipated direct impacts.



Memorandum of Agreement
Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange Project
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Project Site Impacts

Project limits encompassing all of the build alternatives considered under the Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE). This area is anticipated to have ground-disturbing impacts caused by the undertaking.



Memorandum of Agreement
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Norwalk, Connecticut

ATTACHMENT B

Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2020)

To:	7-15 Norwalk Project Advisory Committee Section 106/Landscape Subcommittee	From:	John F. Eberle, PE Stantec Consulting Services Inc. 55 Church Street New Haven, CT 06510
File:	192310508	Date:	April 21, 2020

Reference: Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines

As a follow-up to the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Section 106/Landscape Subcommittee meeting of November 21, 2019, Stantec provided an update to the draft Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines ('Guidelines') to attendees taking into consideration comments recorded at the meeting. The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide some direction for assessing alternatives as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA) document, and to inform the development of the design of the preferred alternative subsequent to the conclusion of the Environmental Documentation process. The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the background and key assumptions for development of the Guidelines as well as provide expanded definitions of guideline categories.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is proposing a series of changes to the intersection of Route 7, Route 15 (the Merritt Parkway), and Main Avenue in Norwalk, Connecticut. Interchange No. 39 currently provides partial connections between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway including:

- Route 7 northbound to the Merritt Parkway southbound
- Route 7 southbound to the Merritt Parkway southbound
- Merritt Parkway northbound to Route 7 northbound
- Merritt Parkway northbound to Route 7 southbound.

Connections between Route 7 and the Merritt Parkway to and from the north are not provided. The project is intended to remedy this situation by providing full connections between Route 7, the Merritt Parkway, and Main Avenue.

The Merritt Parkway, completed in the early 1940s and extending 37 miles from the Connecticut/New York state line to the Housatonic River in Stratford, has been designated both a Connecticut Scenic Road and a National Scenic Byway. The Parkway is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a significant example of an important type of designed landscape (early 20th-century scenic parkways inspired by the City Beautiful Movement).

Because of the Parkway's historic significance, it is imperative that the project be undertaken in a way that is sympathetic to its essential character. Currently, the project is in the planning phase, evaluating alternatives that will meet the project's Purpose and Need. Once a preferred alternative is selected, the design will be further developed to a greater level of detail.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to inform the development of the final design so that the project's improvements can be integrated into the Parkway's historic character and landscape aesthetic.

Reference: Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines

II. PROCESS

The Guidelines build upon understandings of the Parkway's essential character as articulated in previous documents, including

- "Merritt Parkway Historic District," National Register of Historic Places documentation, prepared by Catherine Lynn and Christopher Wigren (1991).
- *A Landscape Plan for the Merritt Parkway* (1994).
- *Merritt Parkway Guidelines for General Maintenance and Transportation Improvements* (1994).
- *Merritt Parkway Conservation and Restoration Plan: Bridge Restoration Guide* (2002).
- .
- Published studies, including *The Merritt Parkway* by Bruce Radde (1991) and *The Merritt Parkway: The Road that Shaped a Region* by Laurie Heiss and Jill Smyth (2014).

The Guidelines were initially prepared by Stantec, CTDOT's engineering and landscape architecture consultant, and then reviewed, revised, and approved by CTDOT. Public involvement included a landscape workshop held in Norwalk in September 2018 and presentation of the draft Guidelines to the Project Advisory Committee Section 106/Landscape Subcommittee in November 2019. Follow-up included incorporation of stakeholder comments recorded at the meeting and redistribution of the edited Guidelines. The stakeholders who participated included representatives of the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, Preservation Connecticut (formerly the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation), the City of Norwalk, neighborhood groups, and local business owners.

III. KEY ASSUMPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES IN THE FINAL DESIGN

- The project's Purpose and Need cannot be met without some changes to the Parkway as it currently exists; additional ramps and entrance/exit lanes will be necessary.
- Application of the Guidelines to the existing Parkway within the project limits revealed a mix of positive and negative attributes. Positive attributes include some areas with appropriate plantings, some effective buffers, and a few distinctive rock outcroppings. Negative attributes include invasive species, depleted plantings, encroachment of modern development, lack of buffers in key areas, poor access for maintenance, and inconsistent guiderail and signage standards and aesthetics.
- Implementation of the Guidelines in the design process can both preserve and enhance existing positive attributes and improve existing negative attributes, thereby integrating the project's improvements into the Parkway's historic character and landscape aesthetic.

IV. THE GUIDELINES

The Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines that will be implemented in the course of finalizing the design of the preferred alternative are as presented in tabular form on the next page.

Category	Guidelines
Views within, from, and to Parkway (all user groups)	Parkway road sides exhibit varied spatial organization with focal points and park-like experiences
	Views of ramp roadside landscapes exhibit park-like characteristics
	Bridge structures are featured, yet integrated into planting design, vegetation, and topography
	Distant landscape views beyond the right-of-way are provided (distinctive architecture, scenic vistas)
Vegetation and planting design	Widths of road sides are adequate for planting and creating and/or maintaining naturalized landscape character
	Vegetation and planting frame views, complement bridge structures, and screen unsightly views
	Non-invasive plant species and palette are complementary of the Parkway setting
	Seasonal characteristics and clusters of native and specimen plant species provide contrast and visual interest between ground plane, understory, and canopy
Topography	Existing and advantageous vegetation is preserved to provide aesthetic, buffer and park-like value
	Built road-sides transition into naturalized landscape
	Slight to moderate slopes on roadsides are conducive to planting and landscape maintenance access
Aesthetic Rehabilitation	Remnant, scarred, and cluttered right-of-way areas are rehabilitated to enhance Parkway character
	Engineered components (e.g. stormwater measures) do not detract from Parkway landscape features
Circulation	Roadway footprint does not diminish existing Parkway landscape character
Amenities	Fences and barriers do not visually impose upon park-like and naturalized features
	Design vocabulary is consistent and recognizable as the Parkway
Sustainability	Planting areas provide suitable space and soil volume to allow plant species to achieve potential growth and habit
	Park-like landscape provides ease of access to road sides for sustained maintenance
Natural features	Landscape design and vegetation reveal natural and scenic resources such as watercourses, landform, and rocky ledge
Safety	Vegetation, planted areas, and amenities do not obstruct critical sight lines
	Planting design and vegetated areas conform to CTDOT safety guidelines

Reference: Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines

Guidelines are grouped according to the following categories:

Views within, from, and to the Parkway

All user groups (motorists, passengers, cyclists, pedestrians, building occupants, other) within, approaching, and leaving the project area should experience the park-like setting of the Merritt Parkway. This experience may be enhanced through landscape design including varied spatial organization created by plantings and vegetation; focal points that highlight natural and cultural features within the landscape; and view corridors that accentuate distant architectural and natural features. In instances where buildings are very close to the Parkway ROW with minimal landscape buffer, landscape enhancement options within the immediate building surrounds within the Parkway ROW may be limited.

Vegetation and planting design

The width of roadside established in the preferred alternative must be adequate for planting. Existing vegetation with aesthetic and functional qualities should be preserved to create and/or maintain naturalized landscape character within the Merritt Parkway right-of-way. Framing views, enhancing bridge structures, screening unsightly views, and buffering between roadway lengths with native and non-invasive species are desired characteristics. Roadsides provide opportunity to enhance seasonal interest of the Parkway surrounds with clusters of native and specimen plant species that provide contrast between ground plane, understory, and canopy.

Topography

Topography and roadway alignment are key features in creating a park-like setting and unique travel experience. To the extent that new ramp lengths are needed, their respective roadsides should transition smoothly into the naturalized landscape. Slight to moderate slopes on roadsides are conducive to preserving desirable stands of existing vegetation and establishing new plantings that accentuate views and that are easily accessible for sustained landscape maintenance.

Amenities

Design vocabulary will be consistent and recognizable as the Parkway. As the CTDOT progresses with phased safety improvements along the entire length of the Parkway, amenities such as guiderail, parapet walls, signage, drainage appurtenances, and roadway edge treatments are being installed consistently, with a common aesthetic. To the extent possible, these same amenities will be incorporated into the design of new and rehabilitated access and egress ramps for the two proposed interchanges in the project area.

Aesthetic Rehabilitation

The project area has experienced decades of intervention, including the construction of Route 7 over 25 years ago, and the start and termination of construction of the Main Avenue interchange in 2006. This project, through landscape design integrated with roadway engineering, will aim to rehabilitate remnant, scarred and cluttered right-of-way areas to enhance the Parkway's character within the project area. Integrated landscape architecture and engineering design for stormwater measures and other critical functions should not detract from existing Parkway features. They should be visual attributes.

Reference: Merritt Parkway Landscape Assessment Guidelines

Circulation

Through integrated engineering and landscape architecture design, the roadway footprint of the preferred alternative will minimize visual impact on existing Parkway character. Opportunities to enhance roadsides and preserve existing natural features, in conjunction with new ramp alignments, are priorities. Fences and barriers that may be required will not impose upon or detract from the Parkway's existing and/or re-established park-like character.

Sustainability

More today than at any other point in the Parkway's history, sustainability in design and maintenance is paramount. Planting areas should provide suitable spaces and soil volume to allow for adequate plant growth and visual impact. Creating a park-like landscape with ease of access for sustained maintenance, optimum safety conditions for field staff, and minimal traffic disruption during maintenance operations are an important part of these design guidelines.

Natural features

Landscape reveals natural resources (e.g., watercourses, woodlands, rocky ledge). In recognizing the rich landscape history of the Parkway, preserving and exposing/uncovering natural features is essential. New plantings and landform may provide enhancement by accentuating view corridors toward natural features and displacing invasive vegetation.

Safety

Safety goes hand in hand with all landscape guidelines. Landscape architecture and engineering design prioritize safety, mobility and user experience. As such, vegetation, planted areas, and amenities will be located so as not obstruct critical sight lines. Planting design and vegetated areas will conform to CTDOT safety guidelines while aiming for enhancement of the Parkway's park-like character as a foundation of the preferred alternative's design.

Stantec Consulting Services Inc.

John F. Eberle, PE

Principal

Phone: 203 495 1645

Fax: 203 495 1652

john.eberle@stantec.com

Attachment:

c.

Design with community in mind

Memorandum of Agreement
Route 7 / Route 15 Interchange Project
Federal Aid Project No 0015(133) / State Project No 102-358
Norwalk, Connecticut

ATTACHMENT C

List of Section 106 Consulting Parties

Throughout the Section 106 evaluation of this project, several parties have participated in the evaluation of the undertaking's potential impacts to historic properties. Although not all of the below-listed parties have opted to be concurring parties to this MOA, they will continue to be informed of the progress of this project and provided with the opportunity to continue providing input. The Section 106 consulting parties to the Route 7/15 Interchange Project #102-358 are:

City of Norwalk
Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
Delaware Nation
Delaware Tribe of Indians
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
Merritt Parkway Conservancy
The Mohegan Tribe
Narragansett Indian Tribe
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH)
Norwalk Historical Commission
Norwalk Historical Society
Norwalk Land Trust
Norwalk Preservation Trust
Norwalk River Watershed Association
Preservation Connecticut
Sierra Club, CT
Silvermine Community Association
Stockbridge-Munsee Community

APPENDIX E:
Notification of Draft 4(f) to DOI



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Kevin Carifa
Transportation Planning Director
Connecticut Department of Transportation
Bureau of Policy and Planning

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Carifa".

DATE: July 18, 2023

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability
Environmental Assessment / Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE)
Route 7/15 Norwalk Project
City of Norwalk, Connecticut
State Project No. 102-358

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to construct improvements to the interchange of Route 7 and Route 15 and to improve interconnections with local roads in the City of Norwalk (Norwalk), Connecticut. An Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) was conducted to determine if any significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action.

Purpose and Need

The proposed project will address the missing connections on the existing Route 15 and Route 7 Interchange and would consequently improve the mobility for motorists at the following connections:

- Southbound Route 15 to northbound Route 7
- Southbound Route 15 to southbound Route 7
- Northbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15
- Southbound Route 7 to northbound Route 15

Additionally, improvements to the Route 15 and Main Avenue ramps will address the substandard acceleration lanes, steep changes in grade, sharp curves, and limited sight distance. These factors contribute to a high number of crashes on the Merritt Parkway.

On local networks, Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive will be upgraded to expand mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. The upgrade will include installing bicycle facilities and adequate shoulder widths, where there are none today. Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks will be installed in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Project Location

The Project is in the northern portion of Norwalk at the interchange of Routes 7 and 15 (Interchange 39) and includes the interchange of Route 15 and Main Avenue (Interchange 40); Route 719 (Main Avenue); and Glover Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive in the vicinity of Main Avenue. The proposed limits of construction (Project Site) extend along Route 15 from approximately 0.5 miles west of Route 7 to approximately 0.5 miles east of Main Avenue and along Route 7 from approximately 0.5 miles south to approximately 0.5 miles north of Route 15.

The EA/EIE, including a proposed project location map, drawings, analyses of potential impacts, project commitments and mitigation, and additional information about the proposed project is available for inspection at:

CTDOT
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06131

FHWA CT Division Office
450 Main Street, Suite 612
Hartford, CT 06103

Connecticut State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

Norwalk Public Library
Main Branch
1 Belden Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Public Library
South Norwalk Branch
10 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

WestCOG
1 Riverside Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

The EA/EIE is also available online at: www.ct.gov/environmentaldocuments or on the Route 7/15 Interchange project website at: <http://7-15norwalk.com>.

A public hearing will be held for the project on Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 7:00 to 9:00 pm in the Community Room of Norwalk City Hall at 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851. There will be an open house held from 6:00 to 7:00 pm in the Community Room before the Public Hearing begins. The public hearing will be recorded and a copy of the recording will be made available on the project website: <http://7-15norwalk.com>.

In accordance with the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), the project was scoped in the Environmental Monitor on October 3, 2017; and a notice of availability of the EA/EIE was posted in the Environmental Monitor on July 18, 2023.

Please address any written comments, and/or requests for document hardcopies to Mr. Kevin Carifa, Transportation Planning Director, CTDOT, Bureau of Policy and Planning, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131 or by email at dot.environmentalplanning@ct.gov by August 31, 2023.

Alternatively, comments may also be submitted through the project website at <http://7-15norwalk.com/ea-comments> prior to the close of business on August 31, 2023.

Route 7 and 15 Interchange Project Environmental Assessment – Interested Parties Mailing List:

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Ms. Mandy Ranslow
401 F Street NW, Suite 308
Washington, DC 20001

American Society of Landscape Architects,
--Connecticut Chapter
34 Wall Street
Norwalk, CT 06850

City of Norwalk
Mr. Steven Kleppin
125 East Ave., Room 223
Norwalk, CT 06856

CT Dep't of Energy & Environmental Protection
(CTDEEP)
Mr. Frederick Riese
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

CT Department of Public Health
Ms. Lori Mathieu
410 Capitol Avenue, MS #12 DWS
P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308

CT Office of Policy & Management
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450 Capitol Avenue MS #54 ORG
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

CT State Historic Preservation Office
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Hartford, CT 06103

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Anadarko, OK 73005

Delaware Tribe of Indians
Ms. Susan Bacher
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Stroud Hall, Room 437
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Federal Transit Administration
Ms. Mary Mello
55 Broadway, Suite 920
Cambridge, MA 02142-0193

First District Water Department
12 New Canaan Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribal Nation
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550 Trolley Line Blvd.
P.O. Box 3202
Mashantucket, CT 06338-3202

Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Mr. Wes Haynes
P.O. Box 17072
Stamford, CT 06907

The Mohegan Tribe
Mr. James Quinn
Mohegan Community & Government Center
13 Crow Hill Road
Uncasville, CT 06382

Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. E.A. Cam
344 Audubon Court
New Haven, CT 06510
Mr. John Brown III
4425A South County Trail
Charlestown, RI 02813

National Trust for Historic Preservation
Ms. Betsy Merritt
600 14th Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners
Ms. Heather Dunne
PMB 731
Norwalk, CT 06850

Norwalk Historical Commission
Ms. Dana Laird
41 N. Main Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

Norwalk Historical Society
Ms. Diane Jellerette
P.O. Box 1640
Norwalk, CT 06852

Norwalk Land Trust
Ms. Lisa Shanahan
P.O. Box 34
Norwalk, CT 06853

Norwalk Preservation Trust
Mr. Tod Bryant
P.O. Box 874
Norwalk, CT 06852

Norwalk River Watershed Association
Louise Washer
P.O. Box 7114
Wilton, CT 06897

Office of Senator Duff
Sen. Bob Duff
Mr. Ken Saccente
210 Capitol Ave., Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Preservation Connecticut
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Mr. Christopher Wigren
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Hamden, CT 06517-4002

Sierra Club CT
Ms. Susan Eastwood
30 Arbor Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Silvermine Community Association
Mr. Peter Viteretto
115 New Canaan Ave., PMB #704
Norwalk, CT 06850

Town of Wilton
Mr. Michael Wrinn
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

US Army Corps of Engineers
New England District
Mr. Daniel Breen
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

US Department of the Interior
Ms. Carol Braegelmann, Division Chief
Mr. Shawn K. Alam
1849 C Street, NW (MS 2629-MIB)
Washington, DC 20240

US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
Mr. Timothy Timmerman
5 Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109

US Fish & Wildlife Service,
New England Field Office
Mr. John Warner
Mr. David Simmons
70 Commercial Street, Suite 308
Concord, NH 03301

Western Connecticut Council of Governments
Mr. Frances Pickering
Ms. Kristin Hadjstylianos
One Riverside Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482