



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY DIVISION

May 20, 2016

Mr. Mark W. Alexander, Transportation Assistant Planning Director  
Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Policy and Planning  
2800 Berlin Turnpike,  
Newington, CT 06131

Re: Notice of Scoping:  
Intersection Improvements: Route 34 (Berkshire Rd.) at SR 490 (Wasserman Way), Route 34 (Berkshire Road) at Toddy Hill Road, and SR 490 (Wasserman Way) at I-84 Interchange 11 Ramps

Dear Mark:

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has reviewed the *Notice of Scoping for the Intersection Improvements: Route 34 (Berkshire Rd.) at SR 490 (Wasserman Way), Route 34 (Berkshire Road) at Toddy Hill Road, and SR 490 (Wasserman Way) at I-84 Interchange 11 Ramps in Newtown* and submits the following comment:

- In 2000, DOT completed an I-84 Corridor Deficiencies/Needs Study that included the Exit 11 area covered by this scoping notice. The study evaluated six alternatives for the area and recommended Alternate 5 as the long-term preferred alternate.

According to local news articles, however, it appears DOT was implementing a very different design concept within a few years, apparently intended to improve travel safety and enhance traffic flow in the area by simplifying and downsizing the interchange. Those articles seem to suggest that this option was supported by state and local officials, and had reached an advanced design stage by mid-2008:

- [Future I-84 Widening, Interchange Improvements Described](#)  
The Newtown Bee, May 20, 2005  
<http://newtownbee.com/future-i-84-widening-interchange-improvements-described/>
- [DOT Describes Plans To Reconfigure Exit 11 Interchange Of Interstate 84](#)  
The Newtown Bee, June 29, 2007  
<http://newtownbee.com/dot-describes-plans-to-reconfigure-exit-11-interchange-of-interstate-84/>
- [In Final Design Phase –Exit 11 Improvements Still Two Years Off](#)  
The Newtown Bee, August 8, 2008  
<http://newtownbee.com/in-final-design-phase-exit-11-improvements-still-two-years-off/>

The design concept highlighted in the current scoping notice has some similarity to the preferred alternative identified in 2000, with some significant changes. However, this design appears to be completely different from the approach described in those news articles.

Given the large impact and cost of such a project and increasing awareness of statewide infrastructure funding needs, OPM is concerned about the drastic shift in design concepts for this project across a relatively short period of time and whether the public is adequately informed of the basis for such changes. How did DOT evaluate and prioritize the factors considered in undertaking this project and how have those factors changed over time? Specifically, what factors caused DOT to begin and then abandon the approach described in the 2005-2008 news articles in favor of the concept highlighted in this scoping notice?

- The 2000 I-84 Corridor Study emphasizes traffic projections and intersection level-of-service (LOS) as two of the primary considerations when identifying existing issues and evaluating proposed alternatives. The screening analysis for alternatives includes traffic projections out to 2025. We are now 60%+ through that period of time and how do actual traffic measurements compare to those projections? Has DOT reevaluated LOS at these intersections since the original study in 2000? How has the design evolved to reflect our greater interest in providing for pedestrians, bicyclists and other transportation modes?

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Notice of Scoping and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely:



Matthew Pafford  
Environmental Analyst  
State of Connecticut  
Office of Policy and Management  
450 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860.418.6412  
[Matthew.pafford@ct.gov](mailto:Matthew.pafford@ct.gov)