



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY DIVISION

February 19, 2016

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

Re: Notice of Scoping:  
Replacement of Bridge No. 03993 - West Street over Providence & Worcester Railroad

Dear Mark:

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has reviewed DOT's Notice of Scoping for the Replacement of the one-way Bridge No. 03993 - West Street over Providence & Worcester Railroad and submit the following comments:

- The scoping notice does not indicate if the project is consistent with Middletown's complete streets and traffic calming goals. West St is designated to be a Complete Street Priority in the final draft of the city's Complete Streets Plan, which is available at:

<http://www.middletownplanning.com/documents/completestreetsfindraft031113.pdf>,

According to the scoping notice, 800 ft of West St will be reconstructed with 14-foot travel lanes and a sidewalk on one side of the street. Given West St's position in Middletown's street network, replacement of the alternating one-way bridge could lead to significant increases in traffic and travel speeds on West St, especially with such wide travel lanes. Middletown's draft complete streets plan says:

*Assess current requirements with regard to road width and turning radii in order to determine the narrowest vehicle lane width and tightest corner radii that safely balance other needs.*

While the proposed 14-ft lane width is not inconsistent with other streets in the area, there is an increasing recognition of how the design and setting of streets influence vehicle speed and public safety. That point is made in *Designing Roads that Guide Drivers to Choose Safer Speeds. Recommended Design Parameters by Road Type*, the widely-circulated 2009 report sponsored by CT DOT. The draft complete streets plan, furthermore, says some streets' "excessively wide travel lanes" can encourage speeding.

OPM notes that DOT proposes to construct narrower travel lanes (accompanied by a 10-foot wide sidewalk/multi-use path) where West St will cross the rebuilt bridge. Could that be a more appropriate model for more of West St?

- The far end of West St ends at a point between an elementary school, a church and a senior housing facility. According to the city's draft complete streets plan, the Middletown's goals for streets near schools include the following:

*Ensure that speed limits in areas within [1,000 feet] of schools are no greater than 25 miles per hour.*

*Assess traffic speeds, volumes, and vehicle types around schools; implement traffic calming in areas immediately around schools where indicated by speed and volume.*

DOT's project will apparently end outside that 1000 ft distance from the school, but the new two-way bridge might also encourage more traffic and higher speeds closer to the school, despite the posted 25 mph speed limit. OPM encourages DOT to consult with the city and its Complete Streets & Bikeway Committee to ensure that the project is consistent with the city's complete streets goals for that street and neighborhood.

- Middletown's Plan of Conservation & Development includes the following expectation regarding sidewalks:

*Require the installation of a carefully planned, high quality sidewalk system. The city should study the existing sidewalk system and develop a plan which identifies future needs. These future needs should be satisfied by the private sector during the development process, with the city filling remaining gaps, where feasible.*

The scoping notice indicates that DOT intends to install a sidewalk on one side of West St to the current terminus of a sidewalk south of the project area. That existing sidewalk, however, appears to continue only a few hundred feet further before ending on that side of the street. Beyond that point, the sidewalk appears to continue on the opposite side of West St. for the remaining 1/2 mile to the southern end of West St and the adjoining school. Has DOT coordinated with Middletown to confirm that installing a sidewalk on the east side of West St is consistent with the city's long-term plans?

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:



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