

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
INFRASTRUCTURE AND REAL ESTATE PROJECTS

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Project ID No: _____ (issued by OPM)

Date: 8/6/2013

Municipality: New London

Funding Source: Urban Act

Type of State Agency Review

Staff Contact: Nelson Tereso

Project Name: National Coast Guard Museum Pedestrian
Overpass Project

State Funds: Up to \$20,000,000

Stage 1 X **Stage 2** _____

This assessment is being conducted in conformance to the department's Environmental Classification Document to determine CEPA obligations

Project Description:

The State of Connecticut has committed to provide financial assistance for the construction of a pedestrian bridge overpass that will be integral to the success of the National Coast Guard Museum Project, access to the site, and overall improvement to New London's regional intermodal transportation center. State funds may also be used for ancillary work associated with the project, including property purchases, feasibility studies, traffic redesigns and other necessary project components.

The pedestrian overpass will provide a safe handicapped accessible connection between the Ferry Terminal and Museum on the waterfront and public parking garage located to the west across the railroad tracks. It will be fully enclosed and have three access points: 1) adjacent to the Union Station; 2) on the platform of the north-bound passenger track; and 3) between the Museum and Ferry Terminal. The present rail crossing situation is less than satisfactory. The overpass will be enclosed and protected from the weather. The three access points will each have stairs and elevator(s). The overpass will be ADA compliant and, in addition to serving the Museum, the Ferry Terminal, the waterfront Promenade, the recreational boating docks and the City Pier, it will provide AMTRAK with safe access to trains traveling in both directions.

Note: environmental remediation is a positive environmental impact, but not a CEPA activity.

RCSA sec. 22a-1a-3 Determination of environmental significance (direct/indirect)

- 1) *Impact on air and water quality or on ambient noise levels*
 - a) *Air* — The environmental review should consider the air quality impacts of trains idling on the tracks outside the location for the planned Museum as well as the air quality impacts associated with the construction activities. Air quality impacts of diesel-powered backup emergency generators and increased vehicle traffic from the Museum Project should be within the scope of review.

- b) *Water Quality* — The environmental review should consider the water quality impacts of increased marine traffic from the Museum Project, including storm water and construction run-off, within the Harbor.
 - c) *Noise* — The environmental review should consider potential noise pollution generated from the increased number of pedestrians, vehicles and other modes of transportation, as well as construction activities, diesel engines from trains and emergency generators.
- 2) *Impact on a public water supply system or serious effects on groundwater, flooding, erosion, or sedimentation*
- a) *Water Supply* — The project does not appear to be in a public water supply source water area. No negative impact to water supply is anticipated.
 - b) *Groundwater* — No negative impacts are anticipated.
 - c) *Flooding* — The proposed bridge project is within the 100-year flood zone on the community's Flood Insurance Rate Map. Because it is a State action, the project must be certified by the sponsoring agency as being in compliance with flood and stormwater management standards specified in section 25-68d of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) and section 25-68h-1 through 25-68h-3 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA) and receive approval from the DEEP. All utilities must be constructed at or above the elevation of the base flood, which is 9' (NAVD88) at this location, or floodproofed with a passive system.
- 3) *Disruption or alteration of an historic, archeological, cultural or recreational building, object, district, site or surroundings* — The public is concerned with the protection and safety of the 125-year-old historic Henry Hobson Richardson's Union Station building during all construction phases of the bridge/museum/ferry complex. Long-term use, maintenance and security of the bridge and buildings must be addressed as part of the bridge planning process. The historic brick building, currently used as a bus station, will presumably be demolished to make way for an entrance to the bridge. The environmental review should consider the cumulative impacts of the Museum Project on the Downtown Historic District.
- 4) *Effect on natural land resources and formations, including coastal and inland wetlands, and the maintenance of in-stream flows* — The proposed bridge project is within Connecticut's coastal boundary as defined by section 22a-94 of the CGS and is subject to the provisions of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA), sections 22a-90 through 22a-112. The project can be considered to be a municipal improvement according to section 8-24 of the CGS. Therefore, a Coastal Site Plan Review, in accordance with sections 22a-105 through 22a-109 of the CGS, must be included in the review by the local planning commission.

- 5) *Effect on natural communities and upon critical species of animal or plant and their habitats: interference with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species* — The Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) has determined that the proposed pedestrian bridge will not impact any extant populations of Federally listed endangered or threatened species or species listed by the State, pursuant to section 26-306 of the CGS, as endangered, threatened or special concern in the project area. This determination is good for one year. If work has not begun on this project by June 14, 2014 or the scope of the work changes, please submit an NDDDB Request for Review.

A member of the public suggests consideration should be given to the pedestrians, fishermen and nature lovers who depend on the convenience of access for continued enjoyment and utilization of their beautiful New London waterfront.

A member of the public suggests bird-building collision fatalities are considered in the design of the proposed structures.

- 6) *Use of pesticides, toxic or hazardous materials or any other substance in such quantities as to create extensive detrimental environmental impact*— No negative impacts are anticipated.
- 7) *Substantial aesthetic or visual effects* — There are concerns regarding the visual and architectural relationship between the bridge and the station, but thoughtful design planning for the entire museum/ferry/bridge/station complex should be able to resolve those issues and many interests will be involved in this decision-making. Any environmental review should consider the impact of the proposed project on the visual and aesthetic qualities of historic Union Station. The close proximity of the pedestrian overpass may negatively impact the appearance of the station and may impact the visibility and historical setting of the north edge of the station.
- 8) *Inconsistency with the written and/or mapped policies of the statewide Plan of Conservation and Development and such other plans and policies developed or coordinated by the Office of Policy and Management or other agency* — The proposed project is located within an area designated as Balanced Priority Funding Area. This area is considered a Balanced Priority Funding Area because it meets the criteria of both Priority Funding Areas and Conservation Areas. The area is considered a Priority Funding Area due to its location in downtown New London and a Conservation Area due to its location within a floodplain. The proposed project satisfies Growth Management Principal #1 which is to Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure. The proposed project also satisfies Growth Management Principal #3 which is to Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options.
- 9) *Disruption or division of an established community or inconsistency with adopted municipal or regional plans*— No negative impacts are anticipated.

- 10) *Displacement or addition of substantial numbers of people* — The Greyhound Bus Station may need to be demolished to make way for an entrance to the pedestrian overpass bridge. Any environmental review will need to evaluate the relocation of this service into the downtown area. Relocation of the bus station, especially, will have a significant impact on the area to which it moves. It is unclear at this time whether the SEAT station will have to be relocated.
- 11) *Substantial increase in congestion (traffic, recreational, other)* — There are concerns that the parking and pedestrian area around the Greyhound Station, regularly used by bus and rail passengers, will be considerably altered during and after construction and could become unavailable for this use. Any environmental review should consider how this will affect current use, especially for rail passenger pick-up and departure. Currently there is a major pedestrian crosswalk from the Parade/garage area to Union Station property on the “riverside” of Water Street and on to the SEAT bus parking/pick-up area. Construction of the bridge and eventual entrance to the bridge will affect uses of this area. Use of this area should be included in planning and design considerations.

A traffic study will need to assess the proposed full build-out of development for number of people utilizing the bridge, stairways, elevator(s), etc. when the museum opens. These numbers will be used to determine the width of pedestrian passageways elevator(s) size and the height of the steps up and down from street level to the entrance to the Museum and Terminal. These factors will affect the architectural relationship of the bridge to Union Station and should be considered in the design.

Tour and school buses will need drop-off and parking areas. The bridge will be the access point for museum visitors, Block Island Ferry passengers and many train passengers. Parking and access for cars and tour busses, with the passengers they contain, directly relates to use of the bridge.

The environmental review should consider the additional number, type and location of vehicle drop-off/pick-ups, bus lay-by storage areas offsite, and bus pick-up areas and the impact each have on the present usage of Union Station.

The Museum Project and related improvements will significantly increase the number and flow patterns of people entering onto and crossing over Union Station property resulting in a detrimental impact on the public safety, security and crowd control issues which are currently being managed adequately by the private owner. The impact of increased vehicular, marine and pedestrian traffic and parking demand should be a part of the environmental review. The traffic study should consider the effects of displacing the bus station, taxi and passenger pick-up and drop-off area and parking area that the downtown (westernmost) side of the footbridge will occupy that currently serves as the Greyhound bus station.

- 12) *A substantial increase in the type or rate of energy use as a direct or indirect result of the action*— The environmental review should consider the additional power demanded by

the footbridge, Museum and ferry terminal, including construction-related demands, lighting, elevator(s), security, heating & cooling systems necessary to operate the footbridge itself and to provide nighttime public safety.

A member of the public suggests the environmental review should include an analysis of projected energies expended and Greenhouse Gases (“GHGs”) produced by the project and ancillary work. In addition the environmental review should include a life cycle energy analysis for the overpass and each of the RITC options for the purpose of selecting the alternative requiring the least energy expenditure and producing the least GHGs.

- 13) *The creation of a hazard to human health or safety* — Maintenance and security are issues of great concern as part of the overall project. The safety of all pedestrians, at all times, in all weather, is a significant obligation. Responsibility must be clearly defined.
- 14) *Any other substantial impact on natural, cultural, recreational or scenic resources* — An appropriate review is required to consider direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed project. DECD must also consider cumulative impacts in its environmental review. Moreover, CEPA requires that the scope of review must necessarily encompass the impacts not just from the Pedestrian Overpass Project, but also from the larger project, which includes the proposed Museum and ferry terminal. The pedestrian overpass itself is an integral part of the overall development plan which can and should not be reviewed in isolation. Impacts from the Museum and ferry terminal are within the statutory definitions of indirect and cumulative effects. The scope must also be of sufficient breadth to consider the consequences to be experienced by every person who will use Union Station during construction and once the Museum Project and all associated development is built.

The environmental review should consider the economic impacts associated with construction and operation of the Museum Project on area businesses, including Union Station itself.

The environmental review may include an alternatives analysis which may need to include a comparison of the impact of the four possible locations of the pedestrian bridge and a tunnel. The environmental review should establish the criteria/standards for determining that the pedestrian overpass is the preferred alternative.

Conclusion:

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) is required to determine the extent of cumulative impact associated with this project.

Recommendations:

DECD recommends preparation of an EIE to determine the extent of cumulative impact associated with the proposed project.