



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Division of Bridges

MEETING MINUTES

Project No.: 0094-0235
 Project Name: Rehabilitation of the Northbound Gold Star Memorial Bridge
 Date of Meeting: April 30, 2024 @ 7:00 PM
 Location of Meeting: City of Groton Municipal Building - 295 Meridian St. Groton CT 06340, and Virtual via Zoom and YouTube
 Subject of Meeting: Northbound Gold Star Memorial Bridge Rehabilitation I-95 Northbound over Thames River, Railroads, and Local Roads in New London and Groton

Attendees:

Public Members:	
16 In-person attendees	
17 Virtual attendees	
City of Groton	
Gweneviere Depot	Deputy Mayor
Cierra Patrick	Economic Development Manager
Captain Patricia Lieteau	Captain of the Police Department
Juliette Parker	Executive Assistant for the Groton Police Department
Project Team	
Name	Organization
Bartholomew Sweeney	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
Bao Chuong	CTDOT
Tracey Brais	CTDOT
Luis Alfonzo	CTDOT
Matthew Geanacopoulos	CTDOT
Shannon Burnham	CTDOT
Eileen Ego	CTDOT
John Deliberto	CTDOT
Jason Burgess	CTDOT
Keith Schoppe	CTDOT
Consultant Team	
Jacob Argiro	HNTB
Emma Covington Heilbrunn	HNTB
Nick Wild	HNTB
David Schweitzer	HNTB
David Giel	HNTB
Naomi Hodges	HNTB
Kimberli Owens	HNTB
Cole Ernst	HNTB
Rachel Gendreau	HNTB



1. Meeting Format and Attendance

The Public Information Meeting took place in person on Tuesday, April 30, 2024, at the City of Groton Municipal Building located at 295 Meridian Street, Groton CT, 06340.

The meeting was simultaneously held virtually via Zoom and live streamed on the Groton Municipal Television YouTube page. There were 16 in-person attendees and 17 attendees online from the public.

No in-person real-time translation services were requested. Closed captioning—including Spanish and other non-English translation options—was available on Zoom and YouTube.

Display boards with project plans and proposed detour routes were available for attendees to view before, during, and after the meeting. Project Team members were available to speak one-on-one with attendees.

2. Presentation: State Project No. 0094-0235: Northbound Gold Star Memorial Bridge Rehabilitation I-95 Northbound over Thames River, Railroads, and Local Roads in New London and Groton

A. Title VI: Civil Rights

- a. Overview of the Title VI Civil Rights that will be adhered to during the development of the project.

B. Project Team Overview – CTDOT and HNTB

- a. Introduction of project engineers, managers, and task leads.

C. Project Location

- a. A map of the project location, with the project limits and local abutters was presented.

D. Project Purpose and Need

- a. An overview was provided of the current project purpose and need related to increasing structural capacity and restoring the bridge to a condition rating of “satisfactory.”

E. Existing Conditions

- a. Existing conditions of the bridge deck, superstructure, and substructure were described. All components in the superstructure and deck are currently rated as fair or poor.

F. Proposed Rehabilitation Work and Construction Staging

- a. Construction will take place in two phases. Construction would include strengthening steel elements on the superstructure girder spans, replacing bridge components (such as bearings) on the girder and truss spans, and replacing the existing bridge deck, parapet fence, and overhead sign structures. The structure will also be fully repainted.

G. Maintenance and Protection of Traffic and Detours



Rehabilitation of the Northbound Gold Star Memorial Bridge
State Project No. 0094-0235

- a. During construction, a crossover technique will be utilized to maintain traffic. This involves diverting two lanes of northbound through traffic onto the southbound bridge while construction is being completed on the northbound bridge.
- b. Construction would also involve various detours on both the New London and Groton sides of the bridge. Detour durations will range from short-term (weekends/overnights to a maximum of a few months) to long-term (two or more years). The long-term detour presented is for access to Exit 86 (left-hand) from Route 32 (Northbound and Southbound) plus downtown New London (U.S. Route 1, Briggs Street and Huntington Street). These vehicles will be detoured to Exit 87, Route 349. Exit 86 (left-hand) will remain open. Vehicles on I-95 Northbound from the west will have access by remaining on I-95 Northbound via the Crossovers to Exit 86.

H. Environmental Impacts

- a. Minor impacts to freshwater wetlands are anticipated. Barge use may be needed to support construction but will not affect the navigation channel. Minor impacts to the boat launches are anticipated.
- b. A Peregrine Falcon nest is located on the southbound bridge. Construction time of year restrictions apply due to the nesting season.

I. Railroad, Utility, and Right of Way (ROW) Impacts

- a. Access coordination will occur with the various rail services that utilize the railway beneath the northbound bridge.
- b. Utility and ROW impacts are expected on the New London side. No utility or ROW impacts are expected on the Groton side.
- c. The CTDOT ROW acquisition process was presented.

J. Cost and Schedule

- a. The estimated cost of construction is \$591.9 million. One of the funding sources is a \$158.2 million Bridge Investment Program grant. The remaining costs will be covered by 90% federal, and 10% state funds. There are no municipal funds required. Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2025.
- b. The cost and schedule are preliminary and are subject to change.

K. Brief overview of Project 0094-0268: Southbound Gold Star Bridge Strengthening. Maintenance and protection of traffic involves single I-95 southbound lane and shoulder closures. Construction will be coordinated with 0094-0235 construction.

- a. The estimated cost of construction is \$13 million. The funding sources are 90% federal and 10% state funds. There are no municipal funds required.
- b. Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2025 and end in the summer of 2026.
- c. The cost and schedule are preliminary and are subject to change.



3. Post-Meeting Question & Answer (Q&A) Sessions

The following is a summary of the questions asked at the public meeting along with the answers that were provided. It has been edited for clarity. A recording of the entire meeting can be accessed on the Connecticut Department of Transportation's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5opJYn5rpJc>.

Q. What construction activities are underway on the northbound span and how does it connect to the project in the coming years?

A. The Northbound Project 0094-0235 is split into two (2) phases. Phase 1A includes steel repairs on the truss spans and is scheduled to be completed in June 2025. Construction of Project 0094-0235 will start after the completion of Phase 1A.

Q. Opened by sharing experiences and challenges as a vulnerable road user traveling across the bridge. Referenced United States Department of Transportation and CTDOT representative statements regarding the new multi-use path and associated Federal funding. Asked for insight into what we can expect for the multi-use path.

A. Acknowledged the interest in the shared-use path. Multi-modal improvements are an integral part of the overall Gold Star Program. A feasibility study has been performed to inform the recently developed Preliminary Design of the shared-use path (State Project No. 0094-0267). Project 0094-0267 includes multi-modal improvements to shared-use path on the southbound bridge, the approaching sidewalks, and roadways, and aims to increase connectivity to neighborhoods in New London and Groton. Coordination with local government agencies regarding the shared use path and plans for a Public Information Meeting specific to Project 0094-0267, are already underway. Expressed eagerness to receive public feedback regarding the proposed shared-use path. The current proposal is for the shared-use path to remain on the southbound bridge and be widened to provide a minimum lane width of 11 feet (most of the path would be 14 feet wide). This would allow for bi-directional bicyclist and pedestrian traffic. The path approaches on both the New London and Groton sides of the bridge would also be widened and a spur would be added to improve connectivity to Williams Street in New London.

Q. Is the construction schedule year-round or seasonal? How will the painting activities on the bridge be contained during construction to mitigate paint traveling through the air and potentially impacting the public and their property?

A. It is anticipated that Project 0094-0235 construction will be year-round, weather permitting. Fall 2029 is the target deadline for the new shared-use path and bridge deck to be open to the public. Proper containment measures will be adhered to during bridge painting activities.

Q. Inquired about impacts to facilities beneath the bridge. Expressed concerns about local road access closures. Will there be impacts to the transfer station and City Police fuel pumps (New London side) and access to the bike lane connecting to Bridge Street



(Groton side)? What will be the anticipated closures and their timeframe during the project?

A. Shared-use path reconstruction activities will be coordinated with the work on the northbound bridge structure to reduce impacts and length of detours. Coordination regarding path reconstruction, traffic detours, and access to City properties is already underway with the cities of New London and Groton.

Q. How will the southbound strengthening project's anticipated right lane and shoulder closures impact the bike lane?

A. There are no anticipated closures of the bike lane/sidewalk during the southbound strengthening project.

Q. When will permit vehicles be allowed to travel across the bridge, and how much traffic and weight will they add to the bridge?

A. The goal for deck work completion on Project 0094-0235 is the end of September 2029. The bridge would be opened up to all traffic, including permit vehicles, at that time. There are an estimated 70 permit vehicles currently detoured around the Gold Star Bridge. It is not anticipated that the permit vehicle traffic volume will significantly impact the highway or bridge capacity. The bridge will be designed according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design code and standards, which include designing for standard permit vehicle loadings and axle spacings.

Q. What will happen in summertime when the roads are filled with beach/summer traffic? How do you plan to manage detours and construction during seasonal traffic when the roads are already extremely congested due to adjacent construction projects?

A. Coordination is underway with other construction projects in the area; adjacent projects are considered as we develop the Special Provisions and progress through the rest of the design of Project 0094-0235. Traffic studies and modeling were conducted for non-summer, spring, and summer conditions. Our current detour/staging design is based on summer conditions to ensure we can accommodate those high traffic volumes.

Q. How many parking spots are available for vehicles with trailers at each boat launch? What additional parking has been identified close to the boat launches? Do you have usage rates for the boat launch lots to indicate how much additional parking will be needed?

A. The boat launches will not be closed during the summer season. Other information regarding parking and usage rates will be coordinated with the boat launch owner (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection).

Q. How do we incentivize the local traffic to become something other than car traffic and encourage cars to move more slowly and safely through the bridge area?

A. We are proposing to widen the path. With the shared-use path widened, it would promote more usage of the path.



Q. Provided background on hopes for the shared-use path. Expressed desire to see more urgency to address pedestrian and cyclist concerns.

A. The overall Gold Star Bridge Program is broken out into separate projects, one of which is the shared-use path. This meeting was specific to the Northbound Rehabilitation Project (0094-0235). The shared-use path project will have a dedicated public information meeting that will include details regarding the new shared-use path.

Q. Is the slide deck going to be posted anywhere after this meeting concludes?

A. Yes; the PowerPoint will be posted on the Gold Star Bridge project website located here: <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/bridges/project-pages/gold-star-memorial-bridge>.

Q. Given what happened in Baltimore with the bridge collapse, is someone looking into collision predictions for this bridge?

A. A vessel collision study and collision analysis have been performed. Based on that analysis, there is minimal risk of collapse.

Q. Will the railings be replaced in kind with the railings on the southbound span? Expressed concerns about the north and southbound bridges looking the same.

A. The southbound span railings will be addressed during the shared-use path project. Concerns regarding the north and southbound bridges looking the same were noted and will be discussed.

Q. Will the new barrier be see-through?

A. Yes.

Q. Noted that the employees of abutting businesses such as Electric Boat, Pfizer, the Naval Submarine Base, etc. make up a large amount of the traffic that will be impacted. Engagement coordination with these abutters will help to mitigate impacts. What are the hours of operation of the construction? Will this be a 24-hour operation?

A. Coordination with the large stakeholders in the area will occur to mitigate as many impacts as possible. An eight-hour shift is anticipated during the day. Some work may be done overnight or on weekends.

Q. Considering the age of the bridge, is it worth repairing? Why not replace it?

A. A bridge rehabilitation study was performed, and bridge replacement was considered. It was concluded that the impacts and cost of a replacement would be substantial, and that rehabilitation is the best option.

Q. What coordination will be done with the Navy regarding concerns with moving submarines operating near barge-based rehabilitation workers and equipment?

A. Coordination with the Navy is already underway and will continue as the design progresses.



Rehabilitation of the Northbound Gold Star Memorial Bridge
State Project No. 0094-0235

At this point in the meeting, there were no further questions or comments from meeting participants. Tracey Brais, CTDOT Project Manager, concluded the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.