

---

**From:** Jonathan <jpsteinberg@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 30, 2016 5:20 PM  
**To:** DOT Environmental Planning  
**Cc:** jmarpe@westportct.gov; Redeker, James P  
**Subject:** RE: Cribari (Rte. 126) Bridge Renovation Project  
**Attachments:** CribariBridge Steinberg.docx

Sorry, I failed to send signed version (attached).

---

**From:** Jonathan [<mailto:jpsteinberg@optonline.net>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 30, 2016 5:11 PM  
**To:** 'dot.environmentalplanning@ct.gov'  
**Cc:** 'jmarpe@westportct.gov' ; 'james.redeker@ct.gov'  
**Subject:** Cribari (Rte. 126) Bridge Renovation Project

Mr. Alexander:

Please find attached my submission regarding proposed work on the Cribari (Route 136) Bridge in Westport.

Jonathan Steinberg  
State Representative, 136<sup>th</sup> District  
Connecticut Genera Assembly



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN STEINBERG**  
136<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 4020  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
CAPITOL: 860-240-8585  
TOLL FREE: 800-842-8267  
HOME: 203-226-6749  
E-MAIL: Jonathan.Steinberg@cga.ct.gov

**MAJORITY WHIP-AT-LARGE**

**MEMBER**  
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE  
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**Proposed DOT Work on the Cribari (Route 136) Bridge in Westport**

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

Mr. Alexander:

While we appreciate DOT's deliberative and thorough efforts to develop a plan for the Cribari (Rte. 136) Bridge in Westport, my sentiments — and those of many Westporters — can be summed up as “fix it, don't replace it.”

As has been indicated in public hearing on the bridge and through other communiques, there is significant community support for rehabilitating the bridge, and significant opposition to replacing it.

Most notable is the bridge's historic significance as an example of a classic swing bridge, one of the few remaining in the state (as was nicely documented in the historical study provided to DOT). The current bridge, in scale and design, befits the historic and intimate neighborhood in which it is located. And the town is awaiting an imminent decision on its application to designate a stretch of Rte. 136, leading up to the bridge from the east, as scenic (affording additional rationale for general preservation).

The community is particularly concerned about the prospect of increased truck traffic on the bridge, specifically 18-wheel tractor trailers diverted off I-95 because of road work or general congestion. Not only would such trucks face difficulties negotiating the tight turns in the neighborhood, the incursion of such vehicles in the area would have a negative effect on traffic, pedestrian safety and air quality.

We have repeatedly sought DOT agreement to a height restriction on any bridge reconfiguration to keep such trucks off the bridge. DOT's unwillingness to date to provide such assurances gives the impression that such an outcome is precisely the Department's intent. Federal and state bridge standards may not offer precedents for building in such height limits, but community acceptance of DOT's bridge work will likely hinge on this concession. We will not be dissuaded on this point.

We're told that one of the arguments in favor of replacement would be to increase vehicle throughput over the river. However, any benefits regarding traffic on the bridge itself will be negated by the functional limitations of the roads on either side of the bridge, i.e., there's really little prospect of improving traffic flow on streets with sharp turns and high commercial density of development. In addition, the current bridge configuration, with its limitations, actually provides a traffic calming feature which enhances overall safety for vehicles, pedestrians and bike-riders.

Of note, Westport has recently received a large state grant (\$440,000) for use in Transit Oriented Development (TOD) planning. This funding could not be more timely, given recent and prospective development projects and the increasingly troublesome aspects of traffic driven by the heavily-accessed Metro North station and I-95 exit in close proximity. The TOD study will also likely consider mass transit improvements, parking, and even the possibility of creating a Village District. The Cribari Bridge is an integral component of the Saugatuck neighborhood and will be an important subject for discussion as part of this planning work. DOT should consider postponing work on the Cribari Bridge – which is not seriously deficient currently – to allow the study to weigh in on relevant traffic planning aspects.

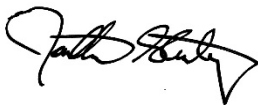
Which brings me to a broader point which is top of mind for me as House Chair of the Transportation Bonding Subcommittee of the Legislature's Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee: DOT's priorities. As has been noted over the years, DOT has had to deal with limited resources, thus requiring strategic prioritization of projects based on urgency and other key factors. Even with the Governor's ambitious "Let's Go CT" initiative, funding at any given time will be limited, while needs are both backlogged and growing. The vast majority of funding is for "state of good repair" which, ostensibly, the Cribari Bridge project embodies. But it certainly can be argued that a full bridge replacement -- at a cost in the range of \$35 million -- is not consistent with efficient and strategic use of limited funding -- particularly when rehabilitation will keep the bridge in effective operation at half the cost.

I must add that I find it a bit ironic that the estimated 75-year cost analyses of replacement versus rehabilitation are -- just coincidentally -- virtually equal, giving full favorability to replacement based on functional standard benefits. While there is little doubt that rehabilitation of existing infrastructure will require more maintenance than a totally new structure, I have to at least question the assumptions used to arrive at this preliminary cost analysis, based on this remarkable coincidence of cost comparability.

In summary, there are a number of compelling arguments favoring limited rehabilitation of the Cribari Bridge, bolstered by the demonstrated strong feelings of the Westport community. While we respect the process under which DOT is operating (which we expect will soon give appropriate consideration to the historic significance of the bridge and its setting), we are concerned and somewhat frustrated by the Department's circumspect and sometimes evasive responses to queries about its intentions. The sooner we can come to terms on a project plan which addresses the absolutely required fixes to the bridge while acknowledging the needs and desires of the affected community, the sooner tensions and misunderstandings can be resolved.

I would prefer to help mediate a fair and reasonable resolution, based on the issues and concerns already noted. But I must state, unequivocally, that I support an outcome which is consistent with what we value for the Saugatuck community and will tirelessly advocate for that agenda.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Steinberg  
State Representative, 136<sup>th</sup> District

cc: James Redeker, Commissioner DOT  
James Marpe, First Selectman, Westport