Connecticut Department of Transportation
State Project No. 0047-0122
Federal-Aid Project No. 0140(008)PE

Route 140 Geometry Improvements
Towns of Ellington and Tolland

Minutes of Virtual Public Information Meeting
Tuesday, December 6, 2022 – 7:00 pm
Virtually via Zoom

Representatives Present:

Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department):

Salvatore Aresco	Project Manager – Division of Highway Design
Malissa Carvalho	Project Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Samuel A. McCollum	Design Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Jonah C. Berrien	Design Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Matthew P. Geanacopoulos	Project Coordinator – Division of Rights of Way

Town of Ellington (Town):

Ken Radziwon	Director of Public Works

Purpose of Meeting:

A public informational meeting was held on Tuesday December 6, 2022, virtually on Zoom to present the proposed preliminary design for public comment. The purpose of the project is to improve the substandard roadway geometry on Route 140 between Laurel Road and Teaberry Ridge Road by addressing the multiple sharp curves, including consecutive reverse curves, as well as unsafe sight distances at the intersecting roads.

The Zoom live meeting began promptly at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Malissa Carvalho welcomed everyone to the live event, reviewed the event format, explained the process for submitting questions, and introduced the Department representatives. Mr. Ken Radziwon, the Director of Public Works for the Town of Ellington (Town), spoke on behalf of the Town and provided the Town's endorsement of the project. A formal presentation was then given by Ms. Malissa Carvalho which detailed the aspects of the proposed design.

The following topics were covered during the presentation:

- Project History
- Purpose and Need
- Project Location
- Existing Conditions
- Crash Data (January 2018 to December 2021)
- Proposed Improvements
    - Realignment of consecutive reverse curves ("S" curves) on Route 140.
    - Realignment of the Pinnacle Road intersection with Route 140 to provide a traditional "T" intersection.
    - Excavating embankments to improve sightlines.
    - Improving the drainage and roadside safety systems.

- Other Design Considerations
  - Construction
    - Estimated to take two construction seasons.
    - One-way alternating traffic pattern with temporary signal.
    - Pinnacle Road Closure with detour only during the realignment of the local road.
  - Environmental
    - Temporary and permanent wetland impacts
  - Historical and Archeological Resources
    - No historic properties affected
  - Rights of Way impacts
    - One full acquisition (land only) to increase the intersection sight distance looking right out of Hopkins Road onto Route 140.
    - A defined sight line easement for vehicles looking left out of Pinnacle Road onto Route 140.
    - A drainage right of way to extend a storm drainage pipe under Route 140 in conjunction with the roadway realignment.
    - Several slope easements for the support and for the safety of the highway to accommodate the proposed roadway slopes.
    - Rights to grade and install temporary sedimentation control systems.
  - Schedule and Cost
    - Construction is expected to being in the spring of 2025.
    - The proposed construction cost is $6.7 million.
  - Utilities
    - Overhead utility pole relocations

Public Question and Answer Session:

There were approximately 23 attendees present on the Zoom live event. The YouTube Live feature through Zoom was not functioning, but the Zoom presentation, including the question-and-answer session, was recorded and posted to YouTube subsequent to the meeting for viewing by the public.

The following questions were asked in the Zoom question and answer portal:

The first comment received stated that the project was not making significant enough changes. The attendee felt the roadway alignment of Route 140 and Pinnacle Road was not changing enough to warrant money being spent on the job and they suggested aiming for a more complete solution. Additionally, a concern was raised leaving the Hopkins Road intersection with Route 140 unchanged due to the current intersection angle. Ms. Carvalho stated that while designing the project, the team balanced impacts while still providing the proper roadway design. Expanding the design will require significant impacts to environmental resources (wetlands and Bonair Lake) along the south side of the roadway and a significant increase in rock excavation along the north side of the roadway resulting in acquiring additional property.

The Department was asked if there are any anticipated closures of Route 140 during construction. Ms. Carvalho said the reconstruction of Route 140 is anticipated to be performed using a one-way alternating traffic pattern with temporary signals, however, work shift closures may be necessary to install storm drainage cross culverts under Route 140.

The Department was asked if the construction of this project will overlap with the construction scheduled for the Burbank Road intersection project (state project 47-121). Ms. Carvalho stated the Burbank Road project is expected to start in the spring of 2024 and is estimated to last two construction seasons (April to November). Since this project is planned to start in the spring of 2025, both projects will be in construction during the 2025 season. As a result, the Department will try to mitigate the inconveniences to the public.

It was asked if the proposed improvements would increase the traffic volume on Pinnacle Road after construction is completed. Mr. Aresco explained that since there is no traffic signal proposed at this intersection, there is no data acquired to determine if traffic volumes will increase because of the improvements. Traffic volume projections would typically consider growth of the area and any major traffic generators. Although Pinnacle Road is a connector between Route 140 and Cider Mill Road, there is no anticipated increase in traffic volumes expected due to realigning the intersection with Route 140.

The Department was asked to explain who is accountable if accident rates do not drop because of the project. Mr. Aresco noted that the Department works with UCONN, municipalities, and first responders to make sure crash data is obtained and recorded. The Department goes back after construction is completed and monitors the data to see the impact. Should crashes not decrease, it is expected that the municipality would communicate with the Department. Mr. Aresco also noted that although the proposed improvements do not significantly straighten out the roadway, the project was able to take the substandard geometry existing today and provide an improvement that allows vehicles to negotiate the curves by meeting standard design and providing the proper transitions between curves.

The Department was asked what condition Route 140 will be left in 2025 during the winter season since construction will extend to the 2026 construction season. Mr. Aresco stated that the Department is currently in the conceptual stage of design in regard to construction staging. The design team will coordinate with utility companies and then lay out the best scenario for construction. Maintenance staff is still responsible for the plowing the roadway during the winter and the condition during the winter shutdown will also be coordinated with them.

The discussion transitioned to an inquiry about crash data and if any crashes were related to speeding or DUIs since speeding is known to be a problem on this section of roadway. During the meeting, the crash data was reviewed, and the Department stated one crash specifically had driving too fast for the conditions as a possible cause for the crash. Three others were unknow but could possibly be related to speeding based on the description provided. Ms. Carvalho specified crash information is taken from a database that collects information from police reports. When filling out the police reports, officers use their best judgement to determine the cause of the crash based on the evidence and the information provided.

It was questioned whether Hopkins Road would remain a dirt road or if the roadway will be paved as a result of the project. Mr. Aresco stated the portion of Hopkins Road being reconstructed will be paved within the construction limits, but the section of roadway beyond the limits will remain a dirt road.

The Department was asked how it plans on removing the rock cut located on the inside of one of the reverse curves and if any blasting is expected. Mr. Aresco responded that the Department has a standard specification for rock removal and blasting is an allowed

construction method in the specification. The Department does not dictate if blasting is the best method, and the Contractor could decide to use it as a necessary method. Currently, the Department is waiting on geotechnical and subsurface data to determine if the type of rock can allow blasting as an option. Mr. Aresco also detailed that if the rock can be blasted, the Contractor needs to be licensed and coordinate with the local Fire Marshal to perform any blasting operations.

It was asked if any night work was anticipated to construct the project. Mr. Aresco stated that near residential neighborhoods, the Department tries to avoid nightwork. Additionally, it is not beneficial for the Contractor to perform nightwork if they are able to perform work offline. Performing work offline means that they have a protected work area separated from where traffic is using the roadway. It will cost the Contractor more money to work at night since they have to pay their staff overtime or a shift differential and run equipment for lights.

A question was asked inquiring what the Department's process is going forward and if the project is now approved or proceeding as is. Mr. Aresco replied that the Department takes into consideration all comments received during the public comment period. What happens now is the Department completes the public information process, gathers comments from the comment period, develops documents summarizing all processes during the preliminary design phase, and brings the project to a milestone called design approval. Design approval is where the design is approved and moves forward to the final design phase of the project, where the coordination process with utility companies begins. The final design phase is more involved, and the design is developed in more detail including drainage design and permit applications.

The following questions were asked in the Zoom registration:

A question was asked in the Zoom registration inquiring why the Department decided to focus on this section of Route 140 when a more dangerous area is the Webster Road intersection with Route 140. The intersection is offset at its approaches to Route 140 and Route 140 contains a steep sharp curve before the intersection with Webster Road.

The following response was emailed to the individual subsequent to the meeting: This section of Route 140 was one of the independent locations recommended to imitate a project from a larger corridor engineering study of Route 140 between Route 83 and Route 30. The study also recommended improving the intersection sight distance from Webster Road which was included in State Project No. 47-119 that replaced Bridge No. 2668.

Adjournment:

The Department encouraged the attendees to submit comments, pointing participants to the project website (https://portal.ct.gov/DOTEllington47-122) which contains various methods of submittal. A two-week comment period, that runs until December 21, 2022, is provided for stakeholders and citizens to submit comments. The project was generally well received by attendees. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00 pm.

Submitted By: Malissa Carvalho
I am the author of this document
2022.12.12 14:03:10-05'00'

Malissa Carvalho
Project Engineer

Approved By: Digitally signed by Salvatore Aresco, P.E.
Date: 2022.12.12 15:45:25-05'00'

Salvatore Aresco, P.E.
Project Manager