



Connecticut Department of Transportation

**State Project No. 0145-0106
Federal-Aid Project No. 0089(120)
Rehabilitation of Bridge No. 00848
Route 89 over Interstate 84
Towns of Ashford and Union**

**March 13, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Virtual Meeting via Zoom Webinar**

Minutes of Virtual Public Informational Meeting

In Attendance:

Panelists:

Francisco Fadul – CTDOT, CLE Bridge Program – Project Engineer
Stephanie Maurer – CTDOT, CLE Bridge Program – Project Manager
Dennis Garceau – GM2 Associates, Inc. – Project Manager
Daniel Carnein – GM2 Associates, Inc. – Project Engineer
Paola Barbosa – GM2 Associates, Inc. – Civil Engineer
Riyad Al-Bakri – GM2 Associates, Inc. – Civil Engineer

Attendees:

There were approximately 10 attendees from the public. The First Selectman of the Town of Ashford, Cathryn Silver-Smith, and the First Selectman/Director of Public Works of the Town of Union, David Eaton. Paul Varga, Chief of Ashford Volunteer Fire Department, and Mark Elliot of CTDOT District 2 Construction were in attendance.

Presentation:

A Virtual Public Information Meeting (VPIM) was held for this project on March 13, 2024. This virtual meeting was conducted via Zoom Webinar; technical difficulties precluded the YouTube Livestream. A recording of the presentation was uploaded to the Connecticut Department of Transportation YouTube account the morning after the meeting.

A recording of the presentation can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOTUnion145-106>

Stephanie Maurer, CTDOT Project Engineer, opened the meeting, described the means of communication open to participants during the live Q&A session, introduced the project team, and presented Title VI procedures and further introductory information. Dennis Garceau, GM2 Project Manager, discussed the existing condition and proposed plans of the project (see details below). Daniel Carnein, GM2 Project Engineer, solicited questions and comments from attendees and directed these questions to various panelists to be answered.

During the meeting, links pertaining to the project email address, project phone number, project webpage, voluntary post-meeting survey, and civil rights information were posted for all attendees within the Zoom Webinar Chat.



General Overview and Existing Conditions

- The project area was presented with a location map and an aerial satellite view.
- A diagram of basic structural elements of bridges was shown and bridge condition ratings were presented to help attendees better understand structure-related terminology.
- The existing roadway was described as a two-lane roadway carrying Route 89 with about 900 vehicles per day over Interstate 84. The roadway width is 38 feet (curb-to-curb). The existing structure is a 2-span (96' – 96') bridge with a reinforced concrete deck supported by a continuous steel beam superstructure on two concrete abutments and a pier. The bridge was originally constructed in 1958.
- Photo examples were presented of deterioration present at the structure, and it was noted that the superstructure has a condition rating of “4” (poor condition).
- The Purpose and Need statement “to address the structural deficiencies of Bridge 00848, and to provide a structure that accommodates safe travel to all vehicular traffic” was presented.
- Project goals were outlined; these included improving the condition rating of the superstructure to a “7” (good condition) or greater, improving the load carrying capacity, improving minimum vertical clearance to current standards, and minimizing disruption to traffic during construction.

Proposed Plans

- The proposed roadway plan was presented, showing the limits of the shoulder, buffer area, and travel way. Limits of mill and overlay and full depth construction were also shown. The Complete Streets design philosophy was briefly explained to attendees.
- An aerial view (satellite imagery) showing the limits of the proposed buffered shoulders was also presented.
- The proposed bridge plan was presented, showing the widths of roadway elements on the bridge, the locations of the abutments and cent pier, and the total length. The town line between Ashford and Union was shown on this plan.
- The proposed bridge elevation was presented, showing the new abutments and wingwalls, new wall pier, new steel girders, and protective fence. The minimum vertical clearance in the proposed condition was shown as well.
- The proposed typical section was presented, showing the girder spacings, deck thickness, wearing surface thickness, and widths of roadway elements.

Construction Staging and Maintenance and Protection of Traffic

- Stage construction sections were presented. It was explained that the west side of the bridge will be replaced while alternating one-way traffic moves through the existing east side of the bridge in stage 1. Then, the east side of the bridge will be replaced while alternating one-way traffic moves through the newly constructed west side of the bridge. The final condition, with a wider out-to-out width and buffered shoulders, was shown.
- The detour plan of Route 89 Northbound was presented, followed by the detour plan of Route 89 Southbound. It was explained that these detours will occur only when short-duration nighttime closures of the bridge are necessary during the removal of existing beams and placement of new beams.



Impacts

- It was stated that temporary relocation of overhead utilities will be required.
- It was stated that no temporary or permanent property impacts are anticipated.
- It was stated that no wetlands or watercourse impacts are anticipated. A Construction Stormwater General Permit will be required.

Construction Schedule and Cost

- It was stated that the anticipated schedule is for construction to start in August 2025 and to be completed by August 2027.
- It was stated that the anticipated construction cost is \$13,500,000 and the project is to be 80% federal-funded and 20% state-funded.
- It was noted that the right-of-way impacts, environmental impacts, and the preliminary project cost and schedule are all preliminary and subject to change as design progresses.

Public Questions and Comments:

The following questions were asked and answered during the live Question & Answer session through the Zoom Webinar Q&A tool:

Question: An attendee asked if there are any anticipated impacts to private properties.

Response: Stephanie Maurer responded that there will not be any private properties impacted and that all construction will be contained within the CTDOT right-of-way.

Question: An attendee asked how long construction for the bridge will take.

Response: Dennis Garceau responded that it is anticipated for construction to last 2 construction seasons, from August 2025 to August 2027.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith, First Selectman of the Town of Ashford, asked how traffic will be managed during construction.

Response: Dennis Garceau responded that alternating traffic controlled by a temporary signal will be maintained throughout construction.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith asked if there will be any spillover of traffic onto Frontage Road.

Response: Dennis Garceau responded that there is not anticipated to be any additional traffic on frontage road due to construction, as alternating one-way traffic will be maintained during construction.



Question: David Eaton, First Selectman and Director of Public Works for the Town of Union, asked if the fire department will have the ability to override the temporary traffic signal lights during emergencies.

Response: Dennis Garceau responded that it is typical for temporary traffic signals to incorporate such features for emergency overrides. Stephanie Maurer added that the CTDOT will continue to coordinate with the fire department (in each town) throughout design, and especially during construction of the project.

Question: An attendee asked how access to I-84 from Route 89 will be affected.

Response: Dennis Garceau initially responded by displaying the detour plan for Route 89 Northbound again and describing the detour plan, noting that the detour will only be necessary during short-duration nighttime closures due to the removal or placement of bridge beams. Daniel Carnein then suggested that the question was intended to inquire about the impacts to access of I-84 via the on-ramp south of the bridge. Dennis Garceau subsequently clarified that access to on- and off-ramps for I-84 will be maintained throughout the full duration of construction.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith asked what kind of guarantee there is that there will be no impact to the surrounding watershed during construction activities.

Response: Stephanie Maurer responded by displaying the slide containing information on environmental impacts and explaining that each construction project must obtain a permit for the discharge of water during construction. She continued to explain that there are regulations to which the contractor must conform, and there will be CTDOT oversight of the contractor to ensure that those regulations are followed. Dennis Garceau added that the bid documents for the project will incorporate provisions to prevent the contractor from impacting the surrounding watershed.

Question: An attendee followed up on their previous question by specifying that they are interested in going to Sturbridge, MA from Route 89 frequently.

Response: Dennis Garceau affirmed that access to I-84 from Route 89 via the on-ramp south of the bridge will not be impacted by construction.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith followed up on her previous question regarding watershed impacts, asking how the contractor will be held to compliance with the aforementioned regulations and provisions in permit and bid documents.

Response: Stephanie Maurer responded that personnel from the DOT district will be in the field actively monitoring the contractor once the project enters the construction phase.



Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith asked how Ashford's emergency responders will be kept informed of changes in access during construction.

Response: Stephanie Maurer continued from her previous response by explaining that the DOT district personnel that monitor the project will be in continuous coordination with the towns regarding any construction needs and impacts to access, traffic, etc.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith asked if the water will be tested (by contractor or DOT personnel).

Response: Stephanie Maurer initially responded that she was not fully certain of the intent of the question, but assumed it was intended to ask if testing for sediment within water will be performed. She stated that inspection for particles suspended in water would be visual in nature. Cathryn Silver-Smith then clarified that she was referring to the testing of water in the watershed. Dennis Garceau responded that proper protocols will be established during the permitting process and adhered to for the protection of the watershed and for water testing, if deemed necessary. However, water testing is not typically required.

Question: An attendee asked if Morey Pond will be impacted in any way.

Response: Daniel Carnein directed the question to Dennis Garceau and asked if significant discharge of water is anticipated during the construction of the project. Dennis Garceau responded that the anticipated project limits end before the on-ramp to I-84. Morey Pond is further from the bridge than the on-ramp, so there are no construction activities anticipated to impact the pond. He further explained that all necessary erosion and sedimentation control provisions will be adhered to.

In response to an additional comment from Cathryn Silver-Smith that Morey Pond is just one area of the watershed, Daniel Carnein summarized that no impacts to the watershed, including Morey Pond, are anticipated.

Question: An attendee asked what the impacts to I-84 may be.

Response: Dennis Garceau responded that traffic on I-84 will be maintained for the majority of the construction duration. He further explained that during times of overhead construction where the contractor is utilizing a crane, short-duration closures of I-84 below the bridge will be necessary, and traffic will need to use the nearest exit and entrance ramps to and from I-84 to circumvent these closures.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith commented that Ashford needs its emergency services notified whenever access is changed.

Response: Stephanie Maurer affirmed that the CTDOT will coordinate with the emergency services whenever access is anticipated to change.



Question: An attendee asked if there will be any weight limits on the one-way traffic sections of the bridge during construction.

Response: Dennis Garceau answered that there will not be any additional weight restrictions on the portions of the bridge carrying alternating one-way traffic during construction, and that there are currently no weight restrictions on the existing bridge.

The following questions were asked and answered outside of the live Zoom Webinar, either before the meeting or after the meeting during the subsequent two-week comment period:

Question: A member from the public asked if access to either Route 84 EB or WB will be completely closed at any time during the bridge replacement (sent via project email).

Response: CTDOT responded via email that access to both I-84 EB and I-84 WB will be maintained during construction for the bridge replacement. The response noted, however, that there are some work activities during construction that will require both Route 89 and I-84 to be closed for short durations in the vicinity of the bridge during construction. The response explained that these short-term nighttime closures are anticipated during the removal of the existing beams and the placement of the new beams during construction. Descriptions of the detours required during these short-duration closures and a link to the detour plans shown during the live presentation were provided in the response.

Question: A caller from the public asked what the existing and proposed minimum vertical clearances are and why the existing minimum vertical clearance needs to be improved. The caller cited misinformation that the vertical clearance is currently well above standard.

Response: The existing minimum vertical clearance, which is located along the right white painted shoulder line for I-84 EB is 14'-11" per the CTDOT bridge inspection report (see attached "Clearance Diagram" with highlighted dimension from the report). An understanding of roadway classification and purpose of replacement (i.e. not a replacement for the sole purpose of raising the bridge) is important when looking into the standard charts of the CTDOT Highway Design Manual; the highlights in the attached copy of Figure 9-4A are meant to clarify the minimum vertical clearances applicable to this project. Please note the highlighted minimum vertical clearance of 16'-3" required over the entire roadway width for a freeway or expressway passing under the bridge. The new bridge for Route 89 over I-84 is required to and will provide a minimum vertical clearance of 16'-3" over the entire width of both I-84 EB and I-84 WB for the project.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith commented that a state contractor with a general permit for water discharge as the basic "control" to protect our watershed (which supports Ashford, Union, Eastford, Willington, Mansfield/Storrs/UCONN...) does not inspire confidence. Will Ashford sign off on that permit and any others? What information/updates will our Town building department receive during the project?



Response: State projects are not subject to local permit related approvals, they rise to Federal level approval. The stormwater permit, although it is a 'general permit', does undergo review and approval by DEEP. Please note that the CTDOT Office of Environmental Planning identified this location as being within a public water supply watershed during the permit needs determination process, and as such will incorporate amended standard specification language in the contract documents to protect the public water supply during construction. Please see attached "Section 1.10 Environmental Compliance," which provides the additional and required "Best Management Practices" that pertain specifically to the protection of the drinking water watershed for the project site. CTDOT will update the Town on the upcoming start of construction, anticipated end of construction and duration when the project gets closer to the construction phase. CTDOT will have more firm dates and durations to share once the project is in the Bidding Phase, which at this time is anticipated to occur in Spring 2025. Once construction begins, closures will be coordinated through the CTDOT District contacts assigned to the project.

Question: Cathryn Silver-Smith commented that she also thinks that concerns about notifying Ashford's emergency personnel (Fire Department) whenever bridge access changes (one-lane access -versus- closed entirely) were not adequately addressed. Ashford residents live on both sides of Rt 84. Our FD should know ahead of time if the bridge is supporting one-lane access or is closed. If I understand correctly, when the bridge is closed, they will need to take a (considerable) detour to Exit 73 (or 71), basically up then down again on Rt. 84 to get to the other side unless they identify another route.

Response: It is standard procedure to include a specific list of the emergency units' contact information within the project contract documents. Language shall be included on the plans and within the contract documents to inform and remind the contractor and the CTDOT inspectors that protocol shall be followed to notify the Towns and respective emergency units a minimum of 2 weeks in advance of any necessary planned bridge closure throughout the full construction duration for the project.

Adjournment:

The project was generally well received by the attendees. The live virtual presentation was closed at approximately 7:30 p.m. Daniel Carnein of GM2 restated to the attendees the means of contact for submitting any comments/questions after the presentation regarding the project. Attendees were notified of the end date of the comment period of March 27, 2024. Participants were encouraged to take the voluntary post-meeting survey. All attendees were thanked for their time and attention related to the project presentation.

Attachments:

CTDOT HDM Section 9-4.0

00848 Clearance Diagram

0145-0106 Section 1.10 Environmental Compliance BMP