# Heroes Tunnel Public Information/CEPA Scoping Report of Meeting

## Overview

**Project Number**: 0167-0108

**Project Name**: Heroes Tunnel Rehabilitation Project

**Date of Meeting**: Monday, January 12, 2026, 5:00-8:00 PM EST

**Meeting Location**: New Haven Fire Academy, 230 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, New Haven

## Attendees

There were 11 members of the public who attended the meeting in person, including Woodbridge First Selectman Mica Cardozo. An additional 48 people joined the virtual meeting via Zoom.

## Project Team Members

| NAME | ORGANIZATION |
|---|---|
| Derick Lessard, Division Chief of Bridges | CTDOT |
| Bao Chuong, Principal Engineer | CTDOT |
| Tracey Brais, Project Manager | CTDOT |
| Sushil Dahal, Project Engineer | CTDOT |
| Kevin Fleming, Transportation Supervising Planner | CTDOT |
| Kathleen Ericson, Right-of-Way Project Coordinator | CTDOT |
| Bartholomew Sweeney, Assistant Chief Engineer | CTDOT |
| Shanice Rule, Public Involvement Coordinator | CTDOT |
| Shannon Burnham, Public Involvement Manager | CTDOT |
| **Consultant Team** | |
| Mike Egan, Project Manager | CDM Smith |
| Mahmood Khwaja, Design Manager Tunnel Engineer | CDM Smith |
| Joseph Scalise, Client Service Leader | CDM Smith |
| Carl Duesler, Lead Traffic Engineer | CDM Smith |
| Jonathan Geary, Lead Highway Engineer | CDM Smith |
| Belen Michelis, Public Involvement Lead | CDM Smith |
| Anna Germain, Public Involvement Specialist | CDM Smith |
| Ted Stevens, Transportation Planner | CDM Smith |
| Corey Richard, Project Manager | AECOM |

## Open House Stations and Display Boards

The project team conducted an open house session to provide the community members with an opportunity to learn about the Heroes Tunnel project, ask questions, and share feedback. The open house featured six informational displays boards arranged across three stations, each staffed by project team members who were available to provide additional details and respond to questions. The display boards included the following topics:

- Project Overview
- Project Schedule
- Proposed Highway Improvements
- Existing Cross Section and Proposed Improvements
- Crossover Improvements and Traffic Maintenance During Construction
- Emergency Egress Options

A project handout summarizing the information presented at the open house was provided to members of the public. The handout was also made available in digital format and in Spanish.

Every effort was made to have the meeting accessible and inclusive. The meeting venue was ADA accessible. Language assistance and/or ADA accommodations were provided at no cost to the public and efforts were made to respond to timely requests for assistance. People needing language assistance or ADA accommodations were asked to request assistance by contacting the Department's Language Assistance Line at (860) 594-2109, at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting. People who have a hearing and/or speech disability could dial 7-1-1 for the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) and instruct the operator to contact (860) 594-2243. The presentation had an option for closed captions.

A Spanish-speaking representative was available on site during the open house; however, no attendees requested language assistance during the meeting.

## Presentation

The formal presentation was available to attendees both in person and via Zoom. For virtual participants, closed captioning was available, and the CTDOT Project Manager, Tracey Brais, offered detailed instructions on how to enable this feature.

Advance registration was required for virtual participation. The presentation portion of the public meeting was streamed live via Zoom.

The following summarizes the key components of the presentation:

**Meeting Access and Virtual Participation**

- T. Brais reviewed meeting access options and available accessibility features for virtual attendees.

**Welcome and Introductions**

- T. Brais welcomed attendees and introduced members of the project team.

**Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) and Environmental Framework**

- Kevin Fleming, CTDOT transportation Supervising Planner, presented an overview of CEPA and explained the purpose and objectives of the CEPA scoping meeting.

**Project Overview**

- T. Brais provided a comprehensive overview of the project, including its history, purpose, proposed scope of work, existing conditions, and emergency response needs.

**Proposed Recommendations**

- Mike Egan, CDM Smith Project Manager, reviewed the proposed recommendations and design considerations.

**Right-of-Way Process**

- T. Brais and Kathleen Ericson, CTDOT Rights-of-Way Project Coordinator, explained the right-of-way acquisition process and how it may apply to this project.

**Environmental Considerations and Project Schedule**

- T. Brais reviewed anticipated environmental impacts, utility coordination efforts, project schedule, and the preliminary project cost.

**Question & Answer (Q&A) Session**

## Question & Answer (Q&A) Session

Following the presentation, T. Brais initiated the Q&A session, inviting questions from in-person attendees first. No comments or questions were received from the in-person audience. The Q&A session was then opened to the virtual participants.

The virtual participants were able to engage with the project team through the Zoom Q&A tool. A total of 17 questions and comments were submitted and read aloud by Belen Michelis, CDM Smith Public Involvement Lead. Similar questions were grouped together and answered collectively when possible.

The following is a summary of the questions received, and responses provided, edited for clarity. To view the full recording of the virtual public information meeting, please visit the CTDOT public meeting archives on YouTube at www.youtube.com/@ctdotofficial. The questions and responses are summarized below:

**Question:** Where are the bedrock core samples collected along the Baldwin Drive switchbacks currently stored and is there a plan for their future use?
**Response:** M. Egan stated that the cores are believed to be stored at CTDOT's laboratory in Colchester. Mahmood Khwaja, Design Manager, added that the project team does not anticipate a future need for the cores but will coordinate with CTDOT to determine whether they should be retained or disposed of in the event future project needs arise.

**Question:** Will pressurization of the air ventilation shafts at the central crossover space occur only during emergencies, or will it be part of normal operations?
**Response:** M. Egan explained that a minor level of pressure is expected to be active at all times to prevent exhaust from entering the crossover spaces. Higher levels of ventilation would be activated during emergency situations to prevent smoke intrusion and would be controlled by tunnel monitoring staff.

**Question:** Will CDM Smith continue through final design, and how will the project be procured?
**Response:** T. Brais stated that CDM Smith will remain the consultant through the final design phase. CTDOT is currently evaluating delivery options, with design-bid-build identified as the current approach, while also exploring alternatives that could allow earlier contractor involvement and shared risk.

**Question:** Will nearby residents experience construction noise during nighttime work, particularly during summer months?
**Response:** T. Brais noted that CTDOT follows best management practices and established guidance to limit construction noise during both daytime and nighttime hours. M. Egan added that the project team is evaluating the use of robotic hydro demolition, which uses pressurized water rather than jackhammering and can reduce noise, dust, and other impacts.

**Question:** How will over height vehicles be prevented from entering the tunnel?
**Response:** M. Egan explained that proposed over height detection systems would be installed at all tunnel approaches and could include warning lights, notifications to motorists, and automatic contact with emergency services. Bao Chuong, CTDOT Principal Engineer, added that CTDOT is coordinating with the Federal Highway Administration and other state departments of transportation to evaluate best practices for these systems.

**Question:** Will Baldwin Drive be repaved or repaired as part of this project?
**Response:** T. Brais stated that repaving of Baldwin Drive is not currently included in the project scope as it is primarily used by utility companies and not CTDOT Maintenance. CTDOT is coordinating with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), which owns the road, to assess conditions and determine whether improvements are needed.

**Question:** How will the project ensure that drainage and stormwater runoff will not impact the West River or Wintergreen Brook?
**Response:** Jonathan Geary, CDM Smith Lead Highway Engineer, explained that the design will minimize curbing to keep runoff within the existing right-of-way and will include deep sump catch basins and a hydrodynamic separator to improve water quality. The drainage system will connect to existing state infrastructure and is not expected to directly impact either waterway.

**Question:** Will there be any contractor pre-qualification process?
**Response:** T. Brais stated that there is an established process in place. CTDOT reviews the project scope and applicable categories and selects a contractor based on the proposed work. Additional information on this process is available on CTDOT website.

**Question:** Are there plans to improve traffic conditions on Route 69 or mitigate impacts to local businesses?
**Response:** Carl Duesler, CDM Smith Lead Traffic Engineer, stated that Route 69 improvements are being addressed under the Interchange 46 project and are not part of this project. No traffic is expected to be detoured onto Route 69, and no negative impacts to local businesses are anticipated.

**Question:** What signage or traffic control measures are planned in Hamden to address safety issues, including the use of flexible lane-dividing barriers to prevent lane changes within the tunnel and overhead barriers in advance of the tunnel to prevent trucks from entering?
**Respond:** M. Egan stated that, with respect to signage in Hamden, the project is proposing the use of variable message signs (VMS). Regarding movable barriers within the tunnel to separate lanes during construction, space constraints present a challenge. Due to the limited tunnel width, movable barriers cannot be adequately shifted to the sides, and their use would reduce available travel width. As a result, design speeds would need to be reduced, which would slow traffic through the tunnel.

**Question:** Will there be decorative lighting at the tunnel entrances?
**Response:** Derick Lessard, CTDOT Division Chief of Bridges, stated that there are no plans to install decorative lighting.

**Question:** During nighttime construction crossovers, when a single tunnel barrel is used for maintenance and protection of traffic (MPT), the CTDOT anticipate using a zipper (segmental) barrier that can be rapidly deployed to enhance public safety and operational efficiency?
**Response:** M. Egan stated that the use of zipper barriers can be evaluated; however, the limited tunnel width presents a constraint. The existing travel way width in the tunnel barrel is approximately 23 feet, and installing a two-foot-wide barrier would reduce lane widths to 10.5’ with 0’ shoulders, creating operational and safety concerns. While a zipper barrier may not be appropriate for use within the tunnel, its use within the median crossovers will be considered.

**Question:** Can you provide additional detail on how it has been determined that drainage and stormwater runoff from the project will not impact the West River or Wintergreen Brook, which run along either side of the tunnel? What stormwater

management measures are proposed and have these measures already been designed?
**Response:** J. Geary explained that the project will utilize deep sump catch basins and that the scope of work is not extensive, as it will tie to existing drainage conditions. The tunnel approaches are a curb less environment with existing swales that are already functioning and have not resulted in significant impacts outside the tunnel area. In addition, the inclusion of a hydrodynamic separator is a key improvement that will enhance stormwater treatment.

**Question:** Are there plans to widen the tunnel to provide sidewalks or emergency egress walkways?
**Response:** M. Egan explained that the project team evaluated widening options but is constrained by the existing tunnel cross section. There is insufficient width to meet minimum NFPA 502 requirements for a dedicated walkway. NFPA 502 allows the existing roadway to be used for emergency egress when traffic is stopped, which informed the proposed safety systems.

**Question:** Will graffiti removal and historic masonry repairs be addressed as part of the project?
**Response:** M. Egan stated that the project includes rehabilitation of the ventilation building at the top of West Rock, and CTDOT anticipates maintaining the facility more regularly following rehabilitation. D. Lessard added that historic masonry, including previously installed brick repairs, will be reviewed during final design.

At the conclusion of the Q&A session, attendees were invited to submit additional comments or questions.

**Comment**: The Lincoln Tunnel uses flexible lane barriers to prevent lane changes as an example for consideration.
**Response**: T. Brais thanked the commenter for the suggestion and noted that the project team will consider whether flexible barriers or delineators are appropriate and should be evaluated during final design.

The project was generally well received by those in attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

# Event Photos

Figure 1: Sign-in Table

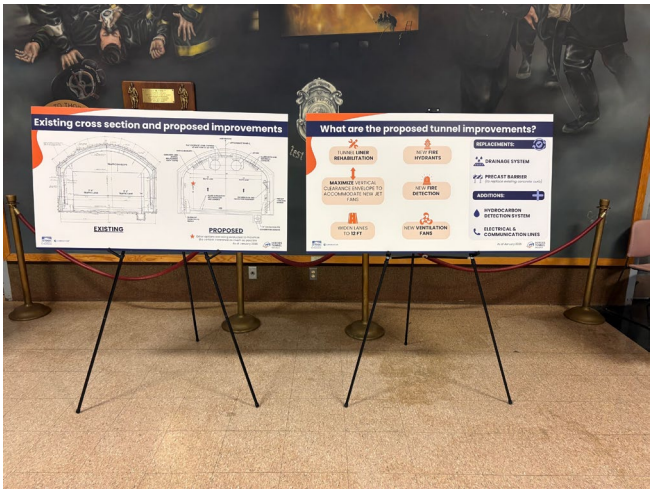


Figure 2: Display Boards

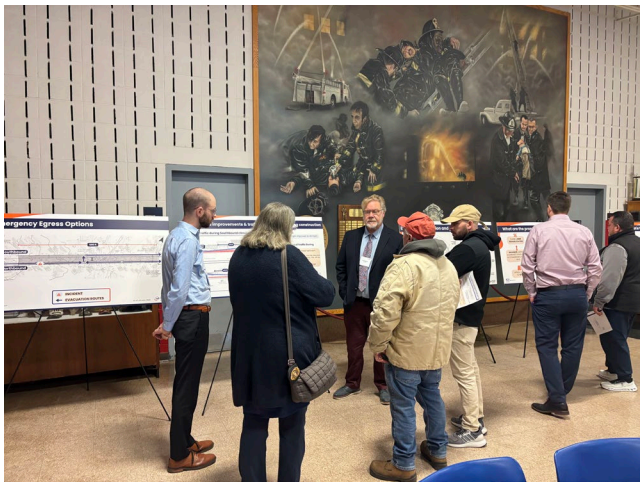

Figure 3: Project Team Conversing with Attendees

Figure 4: Mike Egan Presenting


Figure 5: Trais Brais Presenting

Figure 6: Audience during Presentation

## Advertising Efforts

To maximize outreach and provide equitable awareness of the Public Information Meetings, a comprehensive and inclusive advertising strategy was implemented across multiple platforms.

Social media served as a key component of the outreach effort, with organic promotions on Facebook, Instagram, and X. Posts were shared on the project's social media channels and strategically tagged organizations to encourage redistribution within their respective networks.

In addition to digital outreach, printed materials were utilized to broaden accessibility and visibility. Outreach efforts extended to 16 community-based organizations, which received multilingual flyers in both English and Spanish in digital or printed formats for display and distribution. This approach helped extend information to reach traditionally underrepresented populations.

The City of New Haven and Town of Woodbridge further supported outreach by prominently featuring meeting information on their official websites, providing residents visiting the municipal platforms with information and awareness.

Print and online media were also utilized to broaden awareness. Legal notices were published in several widely circulated publications, including *La Voz Hispana*, *Woodbridge News*, and the *New Haven Register.* These outlets were selected to reach diverse demographic groups and geographic areas within the study area.

Additionally, the meeting was listed on the Connecticut State Agency Public Meeting Calendar. The CTDOT Office of Communications issued a press release and included the meeting on its online calendar of events. An email notification was distributed to all registered stakeholders using the project's email list, and the presentation slides and display boards were posted to the project website in advance of the meeting.