

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

Date: June 2, 2026

Project Name: Heroes Tunnel Rehabilitation

State Project Number: 0167-0108

Municipality: New Haven, Woodbridge, Hamden

Staff Contact: Kevin Fleming

This assessment is being conducted in conformance to the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Environmental Classification Document (ECD) to determine Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) obligations.

This project proposes to rehabilitate the Heroes Tunnel in Hamden, New Haven and Woodbridge, Connecticut. The proposed project involves partial depth replacement of the concrete liner in both tunnel barrels, installing new fire protection and life safety systems including ventilation fans that are mounted to the tunnel ceiling. The project also involves constructing an access road to reach the ventilation building, repairing the central shaft concrete, rehabilitating the ventilation building using in-kind materials and repairing the portal walls. Additional improvements include full depth pavement reconstruction on Route 15 within the tunnel limits and the construction of an ancillary/electrical building near a Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) maintenance facility close to the south portal wall.

This project was scoped in the Environmental Monitor on December 16, 2025, and January 6, 2026. It was also advertised in a press release on CTDOT's website on December 19, 2025, as well as in local print publications *La Voz Hispana*, *Woodbridge News*, and the *New Haven Register*. A Public Scoping Meeting was held on January 12, 2026, at 6 at New Haven Fire Academy, 230 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, New Haven, CT. The public comment period remained open until the close of business on January 28, 2026. During the scoping period CTDOT received comments from one State agency, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP). Comments were received from the public at the Scoping Meeting, by email and also voice mail. A report of the public scoping meeting is attached along with CTDEEP's comments. Comments are addressed in the appropriate sections below where needed.

The proposed action is non-site specific, or encompasses multiple sites;

Current site ownership:

N/A, State; Municipal, Private,
 Other: Please Explain.

Anticipated ownership upon project completion:

N/A, State; Municipal, Private,
 Other: Please Explain.

Locational Guide Map Criteria:

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/55905873aac649469b740196163d1bd5/#data_s=id%3AdataSource_1-f4b3f1feb50247429760f5a5d63bcad3%3A9384

Priority Funding Area factors:

- Designated as a Priority Funding Area, including Balanced, or Village PFA;
- Urban Area or Urban Cluster, as designated by the most recent US Census Data;
- Public Transit, defined as being within a ½ mile buffer surrounding existing or planned mass transit;
- Existing or planned sewer service from an adopted Wastewater Facility Plan;
- Existing or planned water service from an adopted Public Drinking Water Supply Plan;
- Existing local bus service provided 7 days a week.

Conservation Area factors:

- Core Forest Area(s), defined as greater than 250 acres based on the 2006 Land Cover Dataset;
- Existing or potential drinking water supply watershed(s);
- Aquifer Protection Area(s);
- Wetland Soils greater than 25 acres;
- Undeveloped Prime, Statewide Important and/or locally important agricultural soils greater than 25 acres;
- Storm Surge Inundation Zone(s);
- 100 year Flood Zone(s);
- Critical Habitat;
- Locally Important Conservation Area(s),
- Protected Land (list type): West Rock Ridge State Park
- Local, State, or National Historic District(s).

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA) Section 22a-1a-3 Determination of Environmental Significance (Direct/Indirect)**1. Impact on water quality, including surface water and groundwater**

Water Quality – No negative impacts are anticipated. All CTDOT projects must conform to the CTDOT Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities, and Incidental Construction Form 819. Section 1.10.03, Environmental Compliance, specifically deals with water pollution control and Best Management Practices (BMP).

No comments were received from the CTDEEP Watershed Program.

Surface Water – No negative impacts are anticipated.

Stormwater – No negative impacts are anticipated as Best Management Practices will be employed regarding stormwater management. Registration under *CTDEEP's General Permit for Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters Associated with Construction Activities* will be completed if needed. Any CTDOT project that changes impervious area, stormwater drainage or drainage patterns pre to post construction shall meet the requirements of the

CTDEEP's General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Department of Transportation Separate Storm Sewer Systems (DOT MS4 Permit) and submit a CTDOT MS4 Designer Worksheet.

Groundwater – No negative impacts are anticipated. All CTDOT projects conform to the CTDOT Standards Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 819. Section 1.10.03, Environmental Compliance, specifically deals with water pollution control and Best Management Practices. As design progresses, a testing plan will be developed to assess soil and groundwater in any moderate- to high-risk areas within which intrusive construction activities are proposed. Remediation measures will be put in place to mitigate potential impacts if contaminated soils or groundwater is confirmed by the testing.

- 2. Effect on a public water supply system** - No negative impacts are anticipated. The project is not located within a source of public drinking water. The proposed construction site is not located in an Aquifer Protection Area nor is it located in an area of coarse-grained deposits as shown on the CT Surficial Aquifer Potential Map indicating that it is not a current or future source for groundwater. Per CTDEEP, there are no concerns related to the Aquifer Protection Area Program.

- 3. Effect on flooding, in-stream flows, erosion or sedimentation:**

Flooding – No negative impacts are anticipated. A small portion of Route 15 in the project area, located to the north of the Tunnel's northern terminus, lies within a Special Flood Hazard area without Base Flood Elevation and is identified as Zone A on the 2024 FEMA Flood Map. Zone A traverses Route 15 in a south, southeasterly direction. A Flood Management General Permit will be required for this project and will be prepared and internally reviewed at CTDOT.

In-stream flows – No negative impacts are anticipated.

Erosion or Sedimentation – No negative impacts are anticipated. All work will be consistent with the 2024 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control.

- 4. Disruption or alteration of an historic, archaeological, cultural, or recreational building, object, district, site or its surroundings** – The Heroes Tunnel is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has begun in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Preliminary field assessments and archaeological surveys were previously completed by CTDOT and identified archaeological resources in the project area.

Pursuant to Section 106, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) was executed between CTDOT, FHWA, and the SHPO on March 25, 2026. This PA outlines the procedures that will be followed to conduct supplemental archaeology reconnaissance survey of the access road area as design progresses for the project. Final Section 106 determination of effect to archaeological resources and the tunnel itself will be reached among the consulting parties after survey work is completed and final design plans are drafted.

- 5. Effect on natural communities and upon critical species of animal or plant and their habitat; interference with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species** – This

project is located within a mapped Natural Diversity Database Area (NDDB) indicating the potential presence of protected species. As a result of consultation with CTDEEP prior to construction, a survey for state listed species will be performed to identify protected plant and animal species in the project area. Species specific mitigation measures will be implemented depending upon the presence and location of each species and direction from CTDEEP.

- 6. Use of pesticides, toxic or hazardous materials or any other substance in such quantities as to create extensive detrimental environmental impact** – No negative impacts are anticipated. Land use in the vicinity of the project limits and the potential for excess soil as a result of construction will be considered during project design. Should there be any sites with known contamination issues in the vicinity of the project, additional study will be performed within the project area and/or adjacent right-of-way. As design progresses, a testing plan will be developed to assess soil and groundwater in any high-risk areas within which intrusive construction activities are proposed. Remediation measures will be put in place to mitigate potential impacts if contaminated soils or groundwater is confirmed by the testing. If needed, registration under CTDEEP's *General Permit for Contaminated Soil and/or Sediment Management* (Staging & Transfer) will be obtained, and soil management will be conducted in accordance with the General Permit.
- 7. Substantial aesthetic or visual effects** – No negative impacts are anticipated.
- 8. Inconsistency with (a) the policies of the State Plan of Conservation and Development developed in accordance with Section 16a-30 of the CT General Statutes, (b) other relevant state agency plans, and (c) applicable regional or municipal land use plans** – The proposed project is consistent with the 2025-2030 Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan principles and visions.
- 9. Disruption or division of an established community or inconsistency with adopted municipal and regional plans, including impacts on existing housing where sections 22a-1b(c) and 8-37t of the CGS require additional analysis** – No negative impacts are anticipated. This project is not in conflict with any municipal or regional plans.
- 10. Displacement or addition of substantial numbers of people** – No displacements would be associated with this project.
- 11. Substantial increase in congestion (traffic, recreational, other)** –Maintenance and Protection of Traffic Measures will be used during construction to minimize impacts to traffic. Measures include the following. Improving existing crossovers to increase the design speed from 15 mph to 40 mph. Crossovers are used to redirect traffic into one barrel during times of construction or maintenance and would be improved before work on the barrels begins. Construction would be limited to off-peak hours between 10pm and 6am and two operational lanes would be maintained through construction with bidirectional traffic in one tunnel.

There would be no detours of Route 15. Ramp detours, however, may be required pending future coordination with the project for Exit 46 (formerly Exit 59).

- 12. A substantial increase in the type or rate of energy use as a direct or indirect result of this action**
No negative impacts are anticipated.

The creation of a hazard to human health or safety – No negative impacts are anticipated. Prior to construction, the project will be reviewed for the potential of having hazardous material constituents in existing infrastructure components. Testing will be performed on any suspect materials. Should the presence of hazardous materials be confirmed through the testing, specifications to properly handle and dispose of the hazardous materials will be incorporated into the design to mitigate potential health or safety.

Life Safety and Fire Protection upgrades would be installed to comply with National Fire Protection Association NFP 502 requirements and include upgrades to the ventilation system, emergency detection systems, electrical systems, traffic control systems and signage, and the fire protection system. The existing ventilation system is nonfunctioning. The new system would provide ventilation for both normal and emergency operations. Other upgrades include Incident command posts for emergency response coordination, installing fire hydrants, installing a fire detection system, and providing radio frequency boosters to provide cell service inside the tunnel.

13. Effect on air quality - No negative impacts are anticipated. Any potential temporary impacts during construction can be avoided or limited by proper operation of construction equipment and adherence to regulations limiting idling of engines.

14. Effect on ambient noise levels - No negative impacts are anticipated, and a noise analysis is not required. Any noise impacts during construction will be temporary and will be minimized to the best extent practicable by compliance with CTDOT Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 819 regarding construction noise pollution:

“1.10.05 – Noise Pollution: The contractor shall take measures to control noise intensity caused by his construction operations and equipment, including but not limited to equipment used for drilling, pile driving, blasting, and excavating or hauling. All methods and devices employed to minimize noise shall be subject to continuing approval of the Engineer. The maximum allowable level of noise at the nearest residence or occupied building shall be 90 decibels on the “A” weighted scale (dB(A)). Any operation that exceeds this standard will cease until a different construction methodology is developed to allow work to proceed within the 90-dB(A) limit.”

15. Effect on existing land resources and landscapes, including coastal and inland wetlands – Per CTDEEP, the project would not affect any watercourses or wetlands and no federal or state permits or certifications are anticipated.

16. Effect on agricultural resources – No negative impacts are anticipated.

17. Adequacy of existing or proposed utilities and infrastructure – No negative impacts are anticipated. Coordination with utility companies will take place as needed.

18. Effect on greenhouse gas emissions as a direct or indirect result of the action – No negative impacts are anticipated. Construction phase impacts on greenhouse gas emissions will be limited. Any potential temporary impacts during construction can be avoided or limited by adherence to regulations limiting idling of engines.

19. Effect of a changing climate on the action, including any resiliency measures incorporated into the action – No negative impact is anticipated. The project is located outside of the coastal boundary and will not be uniquely exposed to climate change hazards.

20. Any other substantial effect on natural, cultural, recreational, or scenic resources- Rehabilitation of Heroes Tunnel would require the use of land from West Rock Ridge State Park, a 1600 acre passive and active recreational park. Coordination with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), the West Rock Advisory Council and the City of New Haven (City) has taken place. There would be no adverse effects on park resources.

Within West Rock Ridge State Park, drainage rights-of-way on CTDEEP property are anticipated at the northwest and southwest corners of the tunnel to accommodate catch basin installation and future maintenance. On the top of the ridge, a temporary access road is proposed to access the ventilation building and for central shaft repairs. A temporary construction easement is proposed for the construction of this road that would connect to Baldwin Drive. Construction equipment will need access to drive along Baldwin Drive from the West Rock Ridge State Park entrance at Wintergreen Avenue to the temporary access road on top of the ridge.

Within the area under the jurisdiction of the City, a temporary construction easement for access through this property will be needed to perform masonry repairs to the tunnel north portal face. A new catch basin is proposed at the tunnel north portal to collect Route 15 Northbound drainage before it enters the tunnel barrels. A drainage right-of-way is also proposed to install the catch basin and allow for future maintenance.

Coordination with CTDEEP and the City of New Haven will continue as the project progresses.

21. Cumulative effects – This project does not involve any cumulative effects that have the potential for significant effects on the environment.

Conclusion:

After examining any potential environmental impacts and reviewing all comments received, CTDOT has concluded that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) will not be required for the Rehabilitation of Heroes Tunnel project. Publication of this document to the Environmental Monitor shall satisfy the agency's responsibilities under Section 22a-1a-7 of the RCSA. Coordination with CTDEEP will continue, to address comments received, as appropriate.