

Connecticut Department of Transportation

State Project No. 0027-0130
Federal-Aid Project No. 6027(008)
Replacement of Bridge No. 07013
Town of Clinton

July 17, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes of Public Information Meeting

Present:

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|----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Todd Hajek | Town of Clinton | thajek@clintonct.org |
| Andrew Shields | CTDOT | andrew.shields@ct.gov |
| Malcolm Thomas | CTDOT | malcolm.thomas@ct.gov |
| Sean Laudati | BL Companies | slaudati@blcompanies.com |
| Daniel Pinto | BL Companies | dpinto@blcompanies.com |

2 Public Zoom Attendees

Presentation: A Public Information Meeting was held for this project on July 17, 2025. This meeting was held virtually via Zoom. The formal presentation began at 7:00 p.m.

Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Project Engineer Andrew Shields began the presentation by introducing the project, providing the project email and webpage address, as well as explaining how attendees could participate in the question and answer (Q&A) session following the presentation. He then introduced the Town of Clinton Director of Public Works, Todd Hajek, who gave welcoming remarks. CTDOT Project Engineer Andrew Shields then introduced additional representatives of the CTDOT and representatives from BL Companies (BLC), the Consultant Liaison Engineering firm.

A representative of BLC, Daniel Pinto, described the conditions of the existing structure, Bridge No.07013 carrying Ben Merrill Road over an unnamed brook in the Town of Clinton. He continued to describe the purpose and need of the project, and the proposed replacement of Bridge No. 07013.

The presentation included the following items:

- Bridge No. 07013, constructed in 2000, consists of two (2) 107-foot long corrugated steel arch pipe culverts and one (1) 107-foot long corrugated steel round pipe. The Average Daily Traffic (ADT) over the bridge is estimated at 318 vehicles per day
- Bridge No. 07013 is in poor condition based on the latest inspection report due to condition of the existing structure. The culverts exhibit the follow conditions:
 - The bottom plates shape has significant distortion, reverse curvature and cusped seams. The bottom plate bolted seams cusped up to approximately 5/8 inch. These conditions are present for the full length of the arch pipes.
 - The invert of pipe no. 3 is distorted and hollow sounding for the full length and width and has scattered perforations.

- The arch pipe invert (bottom plates) exhibit areas of light to fairly heavy rust with moderate pitting and slight thinning. This condition is present for the full length of the arch pipes.
- Pipe No. 2 (corrugated steel round pipe) has a 2 square foot by 3 inch deep inward dent on top of pipe at outlet. The circle pipe shape is generally fair with significant distortion in several random locations in the top half of the pipe.
- There are numerous areas of light to heavy laminar rust with deep pitting and moderate thinning. There are also several random areas of heavy laminar rust with pronounced thinning (deflection and penetration when struck with a hammer). These conditions are located above and below the waterline.
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- The project's purpose and need is to address the structural deficiencies of the existing structure.
- The project involves removing all barrels of the existing culvert and replacing them with a 24-foot-span precast concrete three-sided rigid frame. The legs of the rigid frame would be supported on pedestal abutments on spread footings. Wingwalls would be constructed at the ends of the proposed structure.
- Construction will be performed in one stage. Ben Merrill Road will be closed at the bridge and a 2.4-mile-long detour route will be established using James Vincent Drive and Ironworks Road. Access to all driveways would be maintained during construction.
- The project will require the following permits:
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers General Permit (Self Verification)
 - Town of Clinton Inland Wetland Permit
- Right-of-way impacts are anticipated and consist of two (2) partial property takes and two (2) construction easements.
- Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2028 and be completed in fall 2028. The current opinion of probable construction cost is approximately \$4.0 million.

CTDOT Project Engineer Andrew Shields, concluded the presentation and reviewed the question & answer procedures; the formal presentation lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Public Comments and Questions: Following the formal presentation, a live question-and-answer session was opened to attendees. The questions and comments below were provided via voicemail, email, and Zoom Live Event chat:

- Email question: The abutter notification letter notes that the need for the \$4.0 million project is to address structural deficiencies in the existing structure. Could you please elaborate on the specific deficiencies identified? I have walked past the bridge many times including after periods of heavy rain and observed only minimal water flow through the existing pipes and no immediately obvious signs of structural deterioration. That said, I understand there may be issues not apparent from a casual visual inspection and would appreciate a more detailed explanation (perhaps with photos).

CTDOT noted the structural deficiencies outlined in the latest inspection report and provided photographs from the latest inspection report depicting the deficiencies.

- Email question: In addition, the letter mentions the bridge will be replaced with a concrete three-sided rigid frame. Could you please provide examples including visual renderings of what the finished bridge structure will look like, including views from all directions? This would help neighbors better understand how the new design will fit within the character of the area.

CTDOT provided a picture of a bridge in Cromwell, CT that is similar in size and location to the Ben Merrill Road Bridge to help better visualize what is proposed under State Project No. 0027-0130

- Email question: What impact can I expect from the construction as a property owner directly adjacent to the project?

BLC explained Ben Merrill Road is anticipated to be closed to traffic at the project limits and access to driveways will be maintained throughout construction.

BLC continued that there are existing drainage easements at the outlet of the culverts. They noted that a construction easement is anticipated to remove the existing culverts, and a permanent take is anticipated to have the full structure within the Town Right-of-Way, which will allow for future maintenance and inspection. They noted that a construction easement and proposed take are proposed similarly at the inlet of the culvert.

BLC explained that construction hours and days will be coordinated with the Town of Clinton and will be based on Town ordinances.

- Email question: Where is the equipment and materials going to be staged during the construction?

BLC explained that the contractor may store equipment and materials within the project limits. The contractor may utilize the approaches of the bridge since the roadway will be closed to traffic and detoured.

- Email question: How will DOT ensure access to driveways adjacent to the construction site?

BLC explained that the contract documents will require the contractor to maintain access to all driveways. They continued that the Town will have a construction inspector on site during construction and will ensure the contractor is following the contract documents. Furthermore, if a short-term closure is required to reconstruct a driveway apron, the contractor and inspection staff will coordinate with the property owner to minimize disruptions.

- Email question: You have stated that the current bridge has structural deficiencies, if so is the current bridge a potential hazard?

BLC explained that CTDOT inspects all structures over 20 feet in span length on a bi-annual basis and compiles a report highlighting any structural concerns. In the case of Ben Merrill Road Bridge, the culverts (pipes) are rated a 4, classifying

them as being in “poor” condition. BLC then noted the structural deficiencies noted in the latest inspection report. They summarized that the current bridge is not a hazard to the travelling public.

- Email question: You anticipate right-of-way impacts. Can you please explain these impacts more fully and which property owners are impacted?

BLC explained that one permanent take and one construction easement are anticipated for both 24 and 27 Ben Merrill Road. They continued that the construction easement is anticipated to provide space for the contractor to remove and replace the existing culverts, and the permanent takes will encompass the full structure within the Town right-of-way to allow for future maintenance and inspection.

CTDOT continued that once the project has reached a development milestone and property maps have been finalized for all impacted property owners, CTDOT Rights-of-Way (ROW) will initiate their process by mailing a Letter of Intent to Acquire which will include a copy of the property map detailing the property rights being acquired, as well as contact information for the project coordinator if the property owner was to have any questions regarding the acquisition.

- Email question: What is the process for compensation homeowners for either temporary or permanent easements? Who pays for the property owner legal fees?

CTDOT explained that ROW will determine the fair market value of the property rights being acquired to establish an offer of Just Compensation. That offer will be sent to the property owner via certified mail or hand delivered at the property's owner request. The property owner can then meet with the Acquisitions agent assigned to their file who will answer questions they may have about the project, review the property rights being acquired, and discuss CTDOT's offer. The property owner will then have a reasonable amount of time to consider CTDOT's offer and enter into negotiations. The two outcomes of negotiations are as follows:

- 1. If the property owner decides to accept CTDOT's initial offer, or negotiates a settlement, the property owner will sign an acceptance agreement which moves the file forward to a friendly closing. This is when CTDOT will draft the legal instrument needed to convey the property rights being acquired, and CTDOT will then record the signed deed and property map mylar on the Town of Clinton land records. At the time of closing the agreed upon compensation will be provided via check.*
- 2. If the property owner decides to accept CTDOT's initial offer, or negotiates a settlement, the property owner will sign an acceptance agreement which moves the file forward to a friendly closing. This is when CTDOT will draft the legal instrument needed to convey the property rights being acquired, and CTDOT will then record the signed deed and property map mylar on the Town of Clinton land records. At the time of closing the agreed upon compensation will be provided via check.*

CTDOT noted that the property owner is responsible for their own legal fees if they decide to retain legal counsel, as legal fees cannot be considered as part of CTDOT's initial offer or as part of a negotiated settlement account.

- Email question: Will the project be fully funded at the time of construction? And do you expect that the cost of the project will be the same almost 3 years from now?

BLC explained that the project is funded through the CTDOT Design Managed by State (DMS) program. They noted that funding for design is 80% federally funded and 20% state funded, continuing that construction will be funded with 100% federal funds. They noted that the current anticipated construction cost is four million dollars (\$4,000,000.00), stating that these funds are obligated for the project. They elaborated that the construction costs factors in incidentals, contingencies, minor items, and inflation. They noted that the const is anticipated to be approximately the same, but may change due to environmental permitting or other unforeseen circumstances, noting that if changes arise, CTDOT will coordinate the funding with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to increase the obligated cost.

- Email question: How long will the project take to complete, once construction/demolition begins?

BLC explained that construction is anticipated to occur in one construction season. The duration of specific construction activities will be dependent on the contractor's means and methods. The contract documents will limit the contract to an allowable number of calendar days.

- Email question: What factors can delay either the commencement or completion of the project?

BLC explained that potential risks to the commencement of construction are environmental permits and right-of-way acquisitions. They elaborated that both tasks are started at an early stage in design, to ensure adequate time is available to acquire both. Unforeseen site conditions may delay the project while in construction. CTDOT and their design consultants perform site and geotechnical investigations to help mitigate any delays.

Adjournment: The email address, telephone number, and project webpage address were provided for any additional questions or comments regarding the project following the meeting. Attendees were reminded that any additional comments will be received until July 31, 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.