

**Connecticut Department of Transportation
State Project No. 0060-0160
Modern Roundabouts at Route 82 and Route 154**

Town of Haddam

**Virtual Public Informational Meeting
Tuesday, June 8, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
Microsoft Teams Livestream & YouTube Livestream**

Meeting Minutes

Representatives Present:

Connecticut Department of Transportation (DEPARTMENT):

Matthew R. Vail	Principal Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Joseph D. Arsenault	Project Manager – Division of Highway Design
Joseph J. Jazwicz	Project Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Charles J. Grillo	Design Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Salvatore A. Luzzi	Design Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Matthew P. Geanacopoulos	Property Agent – Office of Right of Way

Presentation: The Microsoft Live Meeting went online at 6:45 pm, allowing members of the public to join the livestream 15 minutes before the 7 pm start of the formal public informational presentation. The presentation began with Joseph Arsenault introducing the project, followed by First Selectman Robert McGarry who provided some brief remarks about the project. Joseph Arsenault thanked First Selectman McGarry for his comments and then explained the process for submitting questions and comments before turning the presentation over to the design team. The formal PowerPoint presentation lasted 45 minutes.

The presentation covered the following items:

- Project location and existing conditions, including a review of the substandard intersection conditions, traffic analysis finding, and crash history data.
- The Project purpose was defined as:
 - Increase safety by reducing vehicle speeds, reducing crash frequency and severity, and increase sidewalk connectivity.
 - Improve traffic operations by reducing vehicle backups and delays.
 - Replace Bridge No. 00622, Saybrook Road over Clark Creek.
- The proposed design was discussed next, including basic operations of a modern roundabout, their safety benefits, and specific design considerations at each roundabout.
- Traffic analyses were shown at each intersection for the 2040 design year. In addition, a traffic simulation was shown for the northern intersection.
- Rights-of-way (ROW) impacts and the ROW process were covered as well.
- The presentation concluded by covering environmental permits, project schedule including adjacent construction projects, and project cost.
- Following the formal presentation, the question and answer portion began.

Public Comments and Questions: There were approximately 33 people who attended the

public meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube. Some of the attendees had comments and questions after the presentation and they are summarized below:

⇒ Question: Could the Department consider reducing the speed limit between the two roundabouts to support the speed reduction in the area?

→ Response: The Department can look into that. This is something that can be discussed with the Department's Traffic Office to determine if it is appropriate to lower the posted speed limit in the area between the two proposed roundabouts.

⇒ Question: Will trucks be able to make it through the roundabouts? Right now trucks struggle to make the left from the Route 9 Connector onto Saybrook Road northbound.

→ Response: The Department designs roundabouts to accommodate tractor trailer turning movements. The roundabouts are designed to allow the cab of the truck to stay within the normal paved section of the circulatory roadway while the trailer tires track over the truck apron. The Department uses turning analysis software with standard truck templates to design the circulatory roadway width and truck apron layout.

⇒ Question: Did the DOT completed thorough due diligence at peak traffic with a bridge opening scenario? It appears that the traffic studies conducted to justify this \$7.3 million dollar project were all conducted at less than realistic conditions. i.e. pandemic, rainy cool Monday, etc?

→ Response: The Department collected the Project traffic data in 2017. Traffic counts were taken during a weekday in the Spring of 2017 and then again during the summertime on a weekend midday. The Department takes the traffic data it collects at the start of the Project and projects those volumes out into the future based on anticipated growth in the area. The Department then designs the intersection improvements based on those higher anticipated traffic volumes, which in this case were more than 10% higher than the existing traffic volumes. Regarding backups during peak hour traffic resulting from the swing bridge opening, a minor benefit of installing a roundabout at the Northern Intersection is that it can clear out the large backups faster than a signalized intersection. Ultimately, when the backup from the swing bridge reaches the Northern Intersection it is going to cause gridlock and delays no matter what intersection type is selected. That said, the Department still feels that the Modern Roundabout is the best alternative for the Northern Intersection.

⇒ Question: What type of structures can be built in the middle of the roundabout center island?

→ Response: The Department usually allows the local town representatives to decide what type of aesthetic treatments get selected for the roundabout center islands. It is common to install signs, plantings or other decorative features.

⇒ Question: Will the Department be using native plants when they landscape?

→ Response: The Department's Landscape Design Unit will typically include native, non-invasive, plants in their proposed planting plans. In this case the Department also plans to coordinate with the local gardening club to obtain their input on planting selections as well.

⇒ Question: How about just a stop light in the area of the proposed southern roundabout?

Seems cheaper than relocating a bridge and developing all the property.

- Response: The Department did consider installing a signal at the Southern Intersection during our alternative analysis phase of the project. The signalized intersection alternative was dismissed primarily because it provided inferior congestion relief compared to the roundabout alternative. Also, the signalized intersection alternative did not provide the safety benefits seen with the roundabout alternative. Bridge No. 00622 is 90 years old, functionally obsolete, and hydraulically inadequate. For these reasons Bridge No. 00622 needs to be replaced regardless of what intersection alternative is selected.
- ⇒ Question: The Middlesex Chamber would like to play a constructive role in this process. Is DOT willing to participate in a standing chamber committee which will include the contractor and local stakeholders including businesses? We would like to have the committee be charged with minimizing the economic impact resulting from all projects in the area. This model has worked well in the area surrounding the Arrigoni Bridge.
 - Response: The Department has no objection and would be willing to participate in such a committee if they were invited to do so.
- ⇒ Question: The reason for this question is to ensure, that there will be an actual improvement at all points of entry during a bridge opening event.
 - Response: The purpose of this project is not necessarily to address all the issues arising from the swing bridge. There is another State project (Project No. 40-141) which will be improving the mechanics of the swing bridge. When that project is complete the swing bridge is expected to open and close about 20% faster, reducing the average time the bridge is open from 10 minutes to 7-8 minutes.
- ⇒ Question: When were bridge opening scenarios tested with the roundabout scenario?
 - Response: The Department did consult with a roundabout expert from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and reviewed some literature on the impact of railroad crossing within close proximity to roundabouts, which is a similar scenario. The general consensus is that the roundabout will be able to clear out the queue efficiently once traffic is allowed to move.
- ⇒ Question: This project will solve major operational problems at the intersections without the need for traffic signals. Nice work. Cost seems appropriate given two roundabouts, roadway work, and a new bridge.
 - Response: Thank you for your comment.
- ⇒ Question: Has anybody come to the project site at night to physically see how the traffic operates/flows at night? Has the DOT considered reconfiguring the roadway to function as a four lane highway? I am concerned that people will not know how to navigate a roundabout leading to more dangerous conditions.
 - Response: Traffic volume data was collected over the course of a 24-hour period at each intersection. In addition, turning movements were collected in the morning and in the evening during the peak traffic volume timeframes. The Department is not considering reconfiguring Saybrook road to a four-lane highway, mainly because the roadway widening required to do so would result in significant rights-of-way impacts. Also, vehicle speed would likely increase on the wider roadway, which would

negatively impact safety at the intersection. Finally, in regard to drivers navigating through the roundabouts, while there may be a learning curve when it comes to navigating a roundabout it has been the Department's experience that roundabouts always improve intersection safety in the long run.

⇒ Question: Can there be solid structures that don't breakaway like a stone wall or small building in the roundabout center island?

→ Response: This is a possibility that the Department would consider.

⇒ Question: Will vehicles traveling northbound on Route 154 be able to travel through the roundabout during a bridge opening?

→ Response: Traffic will be able to move through the intersection until the backup on Bridge Road reaches the intersection, at which point the intersection will lock up. A signalized intersection would provide some additional storage to delay the point at which it would lockup, but eventually the storage would run out and it would perform similarly to the roundabout alternative. Again, the benefit of the roundabout is that it can clear out the backup more efficiently than a signal, so there are some pros and cons for both scenarios.

⇒ Question: Can you please compare the diameter of the proposed northern roundabout (115 ft) to the roundabout at the intersection of Routes 80 and 81, which, in my opinion, is kind of small and causes unnecessary stoppages. Are you proposing closing Old Chester Rd and displacing all residents, or opening a new access to this road?

→ Response: The roundabout in question is located in Killingworth CT and has a 150 ft inscribed circular diameter. This roundabout is a four legged roundabout with significant skew between approach legs, requiring some vehicles to make sharp turns to enter and exit the roundabout. The three legged roundabouts proposed in Project 60-160 do not have these same operational challenges. All the property owners on Old Chester road have access to Saybrook Road by other means. Any property that requires access to Old Chester Road will be allowed to maintain that access even if the road is closed.

⇒ Question: Have you factored in all the new apartments proposed?

→ Response: The Department is not aware of the apartment development being referenced. The Department will coordinate with the Town of Haddam and discuss what, if any, impact this will have on the Project.

→ *Subsequent to the meeting The Department obtained information about the 80 unit apartment complex being proposed just north of the project limits. At this time, the Department does not believe that these apartments will have any adverse effect on the current project design.*

⇒ Question: I live right in the project area. When the bridge is open for an extended period of time, you can't get through the intersections now. I don't see much difference with the roundabouts.

→ Response: Unfortunately, those backup are unavoidable when the swing bridge is open. Hopefully we will see a reduction in these backups once the swing bridge rehabilitation project is completed.

⇒ Question: How will the comments and questions from this virtual meeting affect the project

proposal?

→ Response: After all comments have been submitted the Department will discuss them internally with upper management. The Department will then discuss the comments with Town officials. Based on those discussions we will determine which comments should get incorporated into the project and what elements of the design can be altered to address those comments.

⇒ Question: Why not two lanes through the roundabouts like in Salem?

→ Response: The Department follows roundabout design guidance provided in the Federal Highway Administration's NCHRP Report 672. Based on the project's design year traffic volumes a dual lane roundabout was not warranted at the Northern or Southern intersection.

⇒ Question: I want to thank you all for your time. We all truly want to see an improvement with the ability to adapt to the future. As taxpayers and stakeholders in the area that is our main concern.

→ Response: Thank you for your comment.

⇒ Question: First, I encourage a parking area near the falls that you mentioned during the presentation. However, I still think all the Tylerville stores may generate a number of pedestrians who would walk to the falls if a sidewalk is provided.

→ Response: Currently the design does not include a sidewalk between the two roundabouts, but it is something the Department is strongly considering.

⇒ Question: Are the two roundabouts designed such that they could be relatively easily expanded to two lanes without completely redesigning them in the future?

→ Response: Future expansion of the roundabouts from single lane to two lanes would be difficult, mainly because of the additional right-of-way that would need to be acquired. Based on the projected traffic volumes the Department believes that the proposed single lane roundabouts will perform sufficiently now and well into the future.

The following comment was received shortly after the live event was adjourned. Please note that the video recording does not reflect the comment being received or the Department's response.

⇒ Question: If Old Chester Road is closed as the project team proposed, will access still be possible through the Haddam Pizza parking lot and an entrance approximately half a mile from Exit 7? Are these roundabouts similar to ones built in Killingworth and Madison?

→ Response: The Haddam Pizza parking lot is private property and should not be considered a public access point to Old Chester Road. Access to Old Chester Road will be provided where the Old Chester Road ROW ties into Saybrook Road for any otherwise landlocked properties. The Killingworth and Madison roundabouts are both 4 legged roundabouts with significant skew between approach legs. The proposed 3-legged roundabouts will have smaller inscribed circular diameters, longer splitter islands and more curvature on the approach legs to help reduce vehicle speeds, and sidewalks and crosswalk facilities to improve pedestrian safety.

The comment period concluded at approximately 8:15 pm and the meeting was adjourned.