

**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAY DESIGN – PROJECT DEVELOPMENT UNIT
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING - REPORT OF MEETING**

PROJECT NO.: PP-102-020

ROUTE: U.S. Route 7 and SR 719

TOWN: City of Norwalk and Town of Wilton

DATE: September 10, 2024

LOCATION OF MEETING: Cranbury Elementary School, 10 Knowalot Ln, Norwalk, CT 06851

TIME OF MEETING: 6:00pm to 8:00pm

SUBJECT OF MEETING: Proposed Improvements on Route 7 from Grist Mill Road to Kent Road

CTDOT REPRESENTATION

Marissa L. Pfaffinger, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit

Edward B. Sabourin, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit

Andrew J. Correia, P.E. – Office of Engineering - Project Development Unit

Matthew Geanacopoulos – Office of Rights of Way

Shannon Burnham – Office of Policy & Intergovernmental Affairs – Public Involvement Unit

CITY OF NORWALK REPRESENTATION

Mayor Harry Rilling

Jim Travers, P.E. – Director of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking

Kyle Benjamin – Transportation, Mobility, and Parking

TOWN OF WILTON REPRESENTATION

First Selectman Toni Boucher

Thomas Reese – Department of Public Works

State Representative Tracy Marra

Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) Members

SUMMARY OF MEETING

An in-person public information meeting for Proposed Project PP-102-020 was held Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 6:00pm at the Cranbury Elementary School in the City of Norwalk. The meeting was held to solicit feedback and comments regarding conceptual designs to address traffic congestion and multi-modal needs on Route 7 from Grist Mill Road to Kent Road in the City of Norwalk and Town of Wilton. A conceptual design was presented that proposes a second southbound right turn lane on Route 7 at Grist Mill Road and a second left turn lane on West Rocks Road at Route 7. The concept also includes constructing sidewalk to create a continuous pedestrian network on both sides of the road throughout the project limits. Two total acquisitions (gas station & instrument shop) are anticipated in order to support the changes along the northern curblin of Main Avenue at the Grist Mill Road. The concept also proposes modification to pavement markings within the existing roadway width to align with traffic volumes and travel patterns. Planning level discussions on how to best accommodate bicycle travel and transit users through the project limits were also part of the presentation.

Marissa Pfaffinger, Ed Sabourin, and Andrew Correia represented CTDOT as the project team from the Division of Highway Design, with Matt Geanacopoulos from the Division of Rights-of-Way also present. The presentation was approximately 40 minutes long which included supportive opening remarks from the City of Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling, and Town of Wilton First Selectman Toni Boucher. An hour-long comment, question and feedback session

followed the formal presentation. Approximately 40 people were in attendance from the general public, and five more official representatives from the City of Norwalk and Town of Wilton.

There was a consensus of support by the City of Norwalk, Town of Wilton, and the public for the proposed continuous pedestrian network, with most calling for further improvement to include multi-use paths wherever possible and connections across the Norwalk River to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel in the area. The two additional turn lanes were seen as a positive to help improve traffic operations through the corridor. The two property owners of the parcels that may be acquired were in attendance. Their questions were more focused on process, and did not display opposition to the project. There was overall support for the project with no opposition voiced during the meeting.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS FOLLOWING PRESENTATION

What is the proposed level of service (LOS)?

LOS was noted for the Grist Mill Road at Main Ave intersection; that an existing LOS E for the intersection as a whole would be improved to a LOS D for design year 2048. The change for the most deficient movement, the southbound right turn, would go from a LOS F to a LOS A with the additional proposed southbound right turn lane.

Multiple questions were raised regarding the possibility for a pedestrian bridge across the Norwalk River, either on the existing structure or as a separate structure.

Providing a sidewalk connection across the existing Grist Mill Road bridge over the Norwalk River is proposed as part of this project. Further planning or preliminary engineering work would be needed to determine feasibility of additional multi-modal facilities on the existing structure or on a separate structure.

Multiple questions and comments regarding possibility of widening the Kent Road bridge for multi-modal accommodations?

As mentioned in the presentation, a floodway analysis for the Norwalk River was performed to determine planning level feasibility for widening the Kent Road bridge. Widening of the Kent Rd bridge is not proposed at this time, but could be explored further in design.

Concerns regarding existing driveways and their interaction with pedestrians (Bank and new Subaru dealership driveway was called out specifically)

Driveway density was acknowledged as a known concern. Coordination between the CTDOT, municipalities, and the property owners will need to be ongoing during a potential design phase to discuss improved access configurations.

The owners of the gas station parcel that could possibly be acquired asked a question regarding the acquisition process and the estimates.

A general overview of the Rights of Way acquisition process was explained that identified a basic timeline and major milestones. It was noted that the estimated costs for property acquisitions in the project cost estimate were assumed costs and no detailed analysis has been performed at this time.

There were concerns regarding the potential for crashes and injuries for the crossings at Grist Mill Road and Main Avenue. It was stated that pedestrian light at the DMV crossing is non-functional. Vehicles taking right turns present a danger to pedestrians. (Commenter also provided a statement of support for the project)

CTDOT will follow-up in the short term to ensure that the existing pedestrian equipment is operational and in good working order. CTDOT will also coordinate with the Office of Traffic Engineering to determine if there are short term improvements that can be made for the pedestrian crossings in the area. It was also noted that 'No Right Turn on Red' signed can be included as part of this project to lessen the possibility of right turning vehicle conflicts with pedestrians.

Comments that existing bus stops and pedestrian crossings at the Wal-Mart and intersection of West Rocks Road and Main Avenue area need to be improved.

Improvements to sidewalk network and bus stops are proposed in the conceptual design. ADA compliant bus stops, sidewalk connections, and improved pedestrian crossings are proposed for inclusion in this project.

Multiple comments (approximately 10 individual commenters) that would like to see shared-use path to accommodate bicycle travel through the corridor.

Constructing a shared use path would increase the impacts for the project, but the feasibility for providing those facilities can be explored further in a potential design phase.

It was suggested to provide a crossing or connection from Glover Avenue to the NRVT.

It was noted that Glover Avenue is outside of our proposed project limits, and possible connections in that area were not evaluated at this time. CTDOT has been coordinating with the NRVT and will continue to do so in a potential design phase.

Question asking about WestCOG's Regional Bike Plan and coordination with the CTDOT.

It was noted that CTDOT has had multiple coordination points with WestCOG during the conceptual design development of this proposed project and continued coordination during a potential design phase is expected.

Can the project be split into different pieces to shorten the overall timeline for construction?

The project will be funded and administered as one action. The ROW and permitting processes would come into effect for many individual aspects of the overall proposed improvement plan, limiting any potential benefits of piecing together separate actions.

Comment on poor visibility and illumination near the iPark driveway

Illumination upgrades are proposed for all intersections, crossings and bus stops, and the area within the project limits will undergo a complete evaluation as part of the design process.

Comment that the driveway at iPark is more like a street. Can the CTDOT make any improvements to this driveway.

The driveway is privately owned and the CTDOT is limited in what can be done there. CTDOT could work with the City of Norwalk and the property owner during a potential design phase to look for opportunities to improve operations at this intersection.

What are the traffic impacts from planned developments in the corridor? Concerns were brought up with the West Rocks Road intersection and the perceived expansion of the Wal-Mart to a Super Wal-Mart.

All known developments are taken into consideration when developing a reasonable assessment of future growth. The application process for major traffic generators goes through the Office of State Traffic Administration to determine the possible impact to state roads. CTDOT is included in the review of these applications.

An area on Route 7 at the City/Town line was identified that may be prone to localized flooding.

An evaluation of the existing drainage conditions will be part of a preliminary design phase. Any needed repairs or improvements will be included in the scope of the project.

Are roadway signs being updated in the corridor?

Signing will be evaluated during a design phase and any recommended improvements will be incorporated into the scope of the project.

The existing guiderail is close to the edge of road in some sections and has a drop off behind the posts. How will sidewalk fit in these areas?

A proposed 5-foot wide sidewalk is likely to fit within the existing vegetated flat area along the top of the Norwalk River embankment without significant impacts to the embankment or significant fill needed. A short section of retaining wall may be needed to construct the sidewalk. The proposed sidewalk segment along the Norwalk River will be evaluated as part of the overall environmental screening/permitting process.

Are these project limits exact or can they be extended to connect more existing sidewalks? (Jim Travers, Norwalk)

Project limits are approximate at this time, and the limits can be extended to make sidewalk connections to existing facilities.

NRVT coordination is very important to the City of Norwalk and they are interested in expanding the existing trail. Grist Mill Road connections for non-vehicular users is also very important for both the City and developers (Jim Travers, Norwalk)

Comment provided noting that roadway Level of Service is not a good way to grade pedestrian usage, too vehicle centric, and to consider other users. Commenter also provided positive feedback for the potential to add a shared use path to at least one side of the corridor.

There was a concern with pedestrian cross walk lengths with the additional Right turn lanes.

Pedestrian cycle lengths and type of pedestrian crossing phase will be evaluated during a design phase to provide adequate time for pedestrians to cross.

Can both sides of Grist Mill receive sidewalk treatments?

Additional pedestrian connections can be evaluated during a design phase.

Comment providing support for the improvements as presented, but believes that traffic will worsen in the future.

Future traffic volumes and assessment of future growth will continue to be evaluated during a design phase.