

**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
REPORT OF PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

**State Project No. 0103-0274  
Safety Improvements on Route 82 in Norwich**

**January 18, 2024 – 6:00 p.m. Open Forum - 7:00 p.m. Presentation  
Kelly STEAM Magnet Middle School – 25 Mahan Drive, Norwich, Connecticut**

**In Attendance:**

Connecticut Department of Transportation

Scott Bushee	Highway Design – Principal Engineer ( <i>Introductions</i> )
Salvatore Aresco	Highway Design – Project Manager ( <i>Presenter</i> )
Michael Laurice	Highway Design – Project Engineer ( <i>Presenter</i> )
Matthew Geanacopoulos	Rights-of-Way – Coordinator ( <i>Presenter</i> )
Mark Lenters	Kimley-Horn (Consultant Firm) ( <i>Presenter</i> )
Michael Calabrese	Highway Design – Division Chief
Shannon Burnham	Public Involvement Manager
Colin Baummer	Traffic Design – Project Manager
Jared Newton	Traffic Design – Engineer
Jason Burgess	District 2 Construction – Supervising Engineer
Michael Julian	Highway Design – Project Designer
Stephen Nahorney	Highway Design – Project Designer
William Strong	Highway Design – Project Designer

Additional Notable Attendees

Peter Nystrom	City of Norwich – Mayor
Patrick McLaughlin	City of Norwich – Public Works Director
Joseph A. DeLucia	City of Norwich – President Pro-Tempore
Swarnjit Singh	City of Norwich – Council Member
Shiela Hayes	City of Norwich – Council Member
Mark M. Bettencourt	City of Norwich – Council Member
Christopher LaRose	Norwich Public Utilities – General Manager
Kate Rattan	Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECCOG)
Derell Wilson	State Representative

**PURPOSE/HISTORY:**

The purpose of this meeting was to present the updated design plans for State Project No. 0103-0274, *Safety Improvements on Route 82 in Norwich (Phase 1)*. This project is the first of two planned corridor safety improvement projects on Route 82 in Norwich. This meeting was held in person and live streamed to YouTube.

A public informational meeting was previously held for this project on June 23, 2022. Following feedback from the public and local leadership, the project scope was revised to have fewer roundabouts and reduced rights-of-way impacts. Information on the June 23, 2022 presentation is available on the project website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/Projects/0103-0274-Norwich>.

**OPEN FORUM:**

An open forum began at 5:30 p.m. in a large conference room adjacent to the auditorium to provide the public an opportunity to speak with the project team, consisting of representatives of State Highway Design, Division of Rights-of-Way, Traffic Design, and roundabout expert Mr. Mark Lenters. During this time, members of the project team spoke with the public one-on-one to answer questions and explain the changes in the updated design plans. The open forum was well attended, and Channel 3 WFSB Eyewitness News was also present to broadcast the forum and interview attendees.

**FORMAL PRESENTATION:**

The formal presentation began at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Project handouts with comment sheets were provided to attendees as they entered – available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting, including: residents, City/State government representatives, local business owners, and Channel 3 WFSB Eyewitness News.

The presentation was initiated by Mr. Scott Bushee, Principal Engineer, who provided a brief history of the public involvement for this project. A technical presentation was then delivered by Mr. Salvatore Aresco, Project Manager, and Mr. Michael Laurice, Project Engineer, which covered Title VI civil rights information, project location/history, purpose and need, existing conditions with crash data, the proposed design solution, construction considerations, project cost, and project schedule. Temporary closures of local side streets with potential detours were presented. Rights-of-way (ROW) information was provided by ROW Coordinator Mr. Matthew Geanacopoulos. Mr. Lenters, a roundabout expert with Kimley-Horn, provided a technical review on the success of roundabout corridors on a national level. The formal presentation concluded around 8:00 p.m. Special thanks were given to Kelly STEAM Magnet school for providing their facilities and IT support for the meeting.

**DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS & COMMENTS):**

Following the presentation, a question-and-answer session was held for meeting attendees to communicate their questions, concerns, and feedback to the project team. Some attendees expressed their support and recognized the need for the project, while others expressed concern and were in opposition.

- Many concerns were related to the impact to businesses: loss of business and tax revenue during the construction period, total acquisitions associated with the proposed design, potential relocation of businesses outside of Norwich. It was requested to consider a longer duration between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects.
- Multiple requests for a smaller scale project and considering alternative safety measures. Suggestions included dedicated left-turn lanes, two-way left-turn lanes, only reconstructing the driveway aprons, installation of red-light cameras and increased police enforcement. The Department of Transportation (Department) clarified that the State statute only allows the installation of red-light cameras by a municipality and alternate project scopes have been reviewed, but would not adequately address safety and still involved substantial reconstruction.
- There was concern as to why the Osgood Street roundabout was kept in favor of the Mount Pleasant Street roundabout under the 4 roundabout corridor proposal, because of its low traffic volume. There was also concern with loss of business at the Willow Tree Plaza as a result of the driveway becoming right-in-right-out only access. The concept of bookends with the roundabouts at Osgood Street and Asylum Street was detailed for speed reduction and safety and how the distance between the two allow for better access

management, providing consideration for other area curb cuts. The Department clarified that access for customers exiting Willow Tree Plaza with eastbound travel in mind (currently a left turn, sometimes with a long delay at the signal), would become an easy right turn followed by a U-turn at the Osgood Street roundabout. It was suggested by Department staff that the converted left turn movement would be safer and more efficient converted to a right turn out of the driveway and a U-turn at the next roundabout.

- Although the presentation focused on Phase 1, the removal of the roundabout at New London Turnpike was questioned. It was noted that Phase 2 is still at a conceptual level, but additional engineering was performed following local leadership requesting a smaller scale project. The roundabout at New London Turnpike was found to require two full circulating lanes, which would not have the same level of safety benefits in terms of crash reduction as the single lane and hybrid roundabouts planned to the east. In reducing the scope of the project, that was the best roundabout to remove from the plans when considering overall safety within the corridor.
- Traffic volumes were discussed as a result of concerns with the proposed road diet's capability of handling existing and future traffic volumes. It was noted that growth rates are included in design year traffic volumes, as well as any potential major traffic generators. The increased efficiency of the roundabouts in comparison to the traffic signals allows traffic to flow continuously and still function adequately with the road diet. It was also stated that The Department has performed a full traffic analysis to properly vet the concept.
- Concerns were mentioned related to City resources required to take on maintenance responsibilities including plantings. The Department responded by confirming they would still be plowing Route 82 including the crosswalks and all plantings require maintenance infrequently (every 5 years).
- It was noted that all utilities owned by Norwich Public Utilities requiring relocation as a result of the project would be 100-percent funded through the use of State and Federal sources, not City dollars. The Department stated there would likely be a need to relocate and replace a significant portion of the aging water main with the project.
- Concerns were raised with pedestrian accessibility without phased walk signals. The Department explained during the presentation the safety benefits of only having to cross two lanes within the road diet planned for phase 1, as opposed to the 4 and 5 lanes to cross today. The ease and safety benefits of performing these street crossings with speeds closer to 25 m.p.h. and having an island of refuge midway during the crossing where only one lane at a time needs to be crossed, was further clarified.
- Concerns were brought forth with emergency vehicles passing a disabled car with the road diet. The Department explained that there would be enough space to pass if the vehicle pulled to the right. If not, the median island would be designed with 4-inch mountable curb and adequate space between street trees to cross the median if necessary.
- A number of residents stated support for the project and recognized the need for safety improvements the proposed design will provide.

The Q&A ended around 9:45 p.m.. The Department again thanked Kelly STEAM Magnet school and all of the residents for coming in and participating.