



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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### Determination of Effect on Historic Properties

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**Project:** State No.: 82-316  
F.A.P. No.:  
Project Title: Reconfiguration of Route 17 On-Ramp to Route 9  
Town: Middletown

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**Finding of Effect:** No Historic Properties Affected

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#### *Project Description:*

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), with financial assistance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes reconfiguration of the interchange ramps that connect Route 17 with Route 9 in the City of Middletown. The proposed work includes providing a full-length acceleration lane for Route 17 northbound traffic to merge onto Route 9 north. A full replacement of Bridge 00638 which carries Route 9 over Union Street will enable widening to the west and address maintenance concerns while allowing flexibility in pier placement. The proposed acceleration lane will require realignment of Route 9 as well as the closure of the Harbor Drive on-ramp onto Route 9.

The proposed improvements include reconfiguring the interchange and signaling the northern intersection between Main Street Extension and Route 17. Dedicated turn lanes will be added on Main Street Extension and the Route 17 off-ramps to increase traffic capacity. The Route 17 southbound on-ramp will be realigned with the Route 17 southbound off-ramp to create a more typical intersection configuration and will be signaled. A noise wall has also been added to the project along the Route 17 northbound on-ramp from Main Street Extension.

Widening Bridge No. 00638 to the west requires a land-only sliver acquisition (~2,975 sf which is 4.3% of the parcel) from Klutch, LLC located at 60 deKoven Drive. This sliver will be required to maintain a proposed retaining wall

supporting Route 9. Temporary construction easements may be required for this project, however their location has not yet been determined. Potential locations are being evaluated along Route 9 within the State ROW. Temporary private property impacts will be determined once Bridge No. 00638 is further designed.

This project was initially reviewed for historic property impacts in November of 2016, under the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) concluded in October of 2012 among CTDOT, FHWA, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer (CT SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for minor transportation projects<sup>1</sup>. At that time a determination was issued that the undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties, conditional upon avoidance of vibration impacts to adjacent potentially historic structures. The CTDOT Office of Environmental Planning (OEP) now intends to revisit the 2016 determination of effect for the described undertaking given time elapsed and changes in scope.

#### ***Resources Potentially Affected:***

Online resources maintained by the National Park Service were consulted for the purpose of identifying any National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed historic properties located in the project vicinity. At least 6 National Register historic districts were found to exist within a mile of the project limits, as well as several National Historic Landmarks and buildings independently listed on the NRHP. None of these resources, however, fall in close enough proximity to the project limits to be foreseeably affected by the undertaking. The nearest is the South Green Historic District, which approaches to within about 300 feet of the project limits at the intersection of Crescent Street, Macdonough Place and Main Street.

A series of historic maps and photographs obtained from the University of Connecticut Map and Geographical Information Center were examined to assess the potential for previously unidentified historic properties to be located within the project area of potential effect (APE). The 1930 Griswold-Spiess Map of reconstructed Native settlement in Connecticut circa 1625 presents no concentrations of population within the immediate project vicinity, though the Wangunk village of Mattabesec was about a mile to the north along the Coginchaug River and Pocowset was about the same distance to the northeast across the Connecticut River in present day Portland. The 1811 Warren Map of Connecticut reveals that early Middletown encroached upon the northernmost area of the project limits, though little detail is available from that document. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Implementation of Minor Transportation Projects, signed October 26, 2012 and revised May 4th, 2018. Accessible online at: [www.ct.gov/culturalresources](http://www.ct.gov/culturalresources)*

precursor of Main Street appears to have been in place by that time, exiting the settlement to the south through the current project APE. The 1859 Walling Map of Middlesex County reveals that urban settlement had pervaded the project APE by the middle of the 19th Century; a considerable amount of both residential and industrial architecture stood along Main Street, Water Street (present day Harbor Drive), and South Street (where the present Route 17 ramps are now situated) in that document.

Fairchild Series aerial photographs from 1934 show that much of the area to which the Union Street intersection will be relocated formerly consisted of industrial development for fuel storage. Disturbance here is likely deep and contamination is likely a concern. The central part of the APE where the Route 17 / Main Street intersection lies was formerly wetland along Sumner Brook. An examination of Sanborn Insurance maps from the early 20th Century confirm a range of land use in this area from heavy industrial to light commercial to residential. No evidence was found of particularly significant or distinctive past activities within the project limits, however.

One bridge structure is slated for removal as part of this undertaking. State Bridge Number 638 carries Route 9 over the P & W Railroad and Union Street. Originally constructed in 1950 and rebuilt in 1986, this structure comprised primarily of steel stringers is not presently considered eligible for the NRHP by CTDOT.

Digital site records maintained by the Office of the State Archaeologist were consulted for the purpose of identifying any previously known archaeological sites within the APE. There are five documented archaeological resources within a mile of the APE. One is pre-European Contact in chronology while the remaining four are post-Contact in nature. None of these sites fall within 1000 feet of the anticipated project limits and none will be foreseeably affected by the undertaking.

Soil classification maps developed by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service were examined in conjunction with archaeological predictive models developed within the State of Connecticut to assess the sensitivity of the project area for previously unknown pre-Contact resources. All sediments within the projected APE are classified as Urban Land Complex / Udorthents, predicted to be poor in quality for the preservation of pre-Contact archaeological deposits. A previous archaeological survey was conducted in 2009 over a portion of the APE in preparation for an energy pipeline<sup>2</sup>. No resources were identified within or in the immediate vicinity of the present project limits as part of that investigation.

The project APE was subjected to a walkover field assessment by qualified OEP cultural resource staff on August 6<sup>th</sup> of 2016. The area between Route 9 and

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<sup>2</sup> *Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey for the Buckeye-Kleen Energy ULSD Pipeline Project*, CHPC Report No. 1772, Clements, Joyce M. (2009), Gray & Pape Inc.

Harbor Drive was found to be graded parking lot without apparent archaeological sensitivity. The west bank of Sumner's Creek is artificially stabilized with subsurface drainage utilities, and was the site of early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings no longer in evidence. An auger probe was placed within the median where the Main Street onramp to State Route 17 is slated to be moved. Artificial gravel fill was encountered at about 10cmts. No evidence was found to remain of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century occupation depicted on the historic maps in the vicinity of Union Street and its junction with Sumner Brook. Likewise no evidence of the former South Street neighborhood was observed, and no capped deposits where such might be interred were apparent. In sum, complete walkover of the APE revealed no evidence of archaeological sensitivity. OEP therefore anticipates no effects to archaeological resources in association with this undertaking. This field review determined, however, that a number of potentially historic structures stand in various locations about the APE. These buildings could be subject to proximity effects as a result of this undertaking either through minor ROW actions or vibrations during construction.

The proposed noise wall will be constructed in close proximity to three residential structures located adjacent to the Route 17 northbound on-ramp from Main Street Extension. The two-story wood frame combination Colonial Revival / Cape vernacular style home at 96 Main St Extension contains a built in or around 1900 according to the City's assessment records (Photo 1). Vernacular Cape-style variation homes are very common in Connecticut and New England at large. Two similar Cape-style variation residences occur adjacent to this very property in Middletown. OEP therefore does not see this building as historically significant for its architectural style, and no persons or events of particular historical note were found to be associated with the property in the course of an online records investigation. Though no particular individual historic significance to this structure was found, it could conceivably be considered contributing to the fabric of a group resource consisting of other adjacent residential buildings of a similar early 20<sup>th</sup> Century construction along Main Street Extension and just to the rear (east) along Flower Street.

The second structure adjacent to the proposed noise wall is a three-story rear-facing residential '3-Stack' brick apartment building with bay windows located at 61-67 East Main Street (Photo 2). This structure was built as an attachment to mixed-use commercial/residential front building around 1910 according to the City's property record database. The property is recognized as a Notable Building of local significance in the City historic properties list.



Photo 1: Colonial Revival/Cape-style residence at 96 Main Street Extension.



Photo 2: Image of 61 East Main Street with front building to right, potentially affected rear apartment at center, and Route 17 on-ramp at far left.

A third building in relative proximity to the proposed noise wall is the 2-1/2 story wood frame brick foundation multi-family residential located at 7 Flower Street, built ca 1900 according to the City property record database (Photo 3). No ownership info beyond 2015 was found in said database, in which year it was in the possession of a bank. Though no particular individual historic significance to this structure was immediately apparent, it could conceivably be considered contributing to the fabric of a group resource consisting of 61-67 East Main Street, just across the road, and other buildings of a similar early 20<sup>th</sup> Century construction along Flower Street and further to the south (Photo 4).



Photo 3: 7 Flower Street (at center) view from Route 17 ramp.



Photo 4: View to Flower Street neighborhood from Route 17 ramp

***Determination of Effect:***

Phone and email conversations with CT SHPO staff in December of 2021, however, indicated that the above-described structures do not retain sufficient integrity—either individually or as a group—to be considered eligible for the NRHP. In that agency’s view, though there do appear to be remnants of industrial complexes and housing occupied by workers at one point, the overall integrity of the area is poor in comparison with the rest of Middletown in general. The historic setting has furthermore been altered through demolition, infill, and the existing highway. If there were any rail or water system connections, those have been removed. The original density of the industrial neighborhood is fundamentally altered through replacement of built area with large surface parking.

Consultation was also carried out with Federally-recognized Native American Tribal authorities with ancestral ties to the State of Connecticut for this undertaking in September of 2015. Neither the Mashantucket Pequot nor the Narragansetts ever responded to invitations to consult, and the Mohegan Tribe expressed no concerns with the project.

Given the lack of NRHP-caliber resources found to exist within the project APE in consultation with CT SHPO, OEP hereby determines that there will be *no historic properties affected* in association with the present undertaking. With this determination, FHWA, through OEP, has concluded its responsibility to consider the potential effects of the described project on cultural resources under Section 106 of the NHPA via the provisions of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement referenced above.



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