

Connecticut Department of Transportation Bridge Bundle Rehabilitation Project No. 0171-0431 East Hartford Public Information Meeting Meeting Notes of March 6, 2018

Overview

On March 6, 2018, the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the project team consisting of Middlesex Corporation and Lochner, briefed the East Hartford Town Council on the Bridge Bundle Rehabilitation Project. Hannah Brockhaus of Howard Stein Hudson gave the presentation, which included a project overview, schedule, scope of work, traffic impacts and detour information, as well as ways for the public to stay informed about the project and contact the project team.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the East Hartford Town Council with an overview of the project, its goals, the upcoming traffic impacts and detour routes associated with the closure of Bridge 02369, as well as the anticipated traffic impacts from the replacement of Bridges 02366 and 02367 in 2019.

Beginning April 20, 2018, Bridge 02369 (Route 2 East from the Founder's Bridge over I-84 East) will be closed to traffic while the substructure of the bridge is repaired and the superstructure is replaced. Traffic seeking to remain on Route 2 East will be directed to take the Pitkin Street exit ramp (Exit 3), turn left onto Pitkin Street, then right onto Joyce Street and continue straight onto Route 2 East. A second eastbound travel lane will be added to Pitkin Street to accommodate traffic using the detour route.

The questions raised by the Town Council related primarily to the project schedule and traffic impacts associated with the respective bridge closures, including the possibility of the closure of the Darlin Street off ramp on Route 2 West (Exit 3). The project team encouraged the local town council to spread the word about the project and its associated ramp closures during the 2018 and 2019 construction seasons. The project team expects a meeting in East Hartford in early spring of 2019 in anticipation of the repair and replacement of bridges 02366 and 02367.

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Detailed Meeting Minutes¹

C: Rich Kehoe: We will be starting this meeting today with a presentation by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

C: Greg Kozma: I am with CTDOT, and I'll be your point of contact for this project. This is a Design/Build project, we have the whole team here to answer questions and provide information. Hannah Brockhaus will take over for most of the presentation, she is our consultant for public outreach on this project.

C: Hannah Brockhaus: Hi, everyone. We have some members of the project team here, so I am just going to quickly introduce them. We have some people here from H.W. Lochner, which is the design firm, some representatives from Middlesex Corporation, the General Contractor. I am here from Howard Stein Hudson, we are a subconsultant for the team. There will be a quick presentation, we gave all the councilors a copy. We will go into some additional detail tonight, and we will take questions at the end.

This is a design build project, which is kind of new in Connecticut but well used throughout most of the country. It allows for a faster project delivery and reduced cost. The reason we have a sub-consultant for Public Involvement is to help get comments and feedback to the design team and give regular updates to the public about the project.

¹ Herein “C” stands for comment, “Q” for question and “A” for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1.

There are four bridges that we are looking at, three are in East Hartford, and one is in Willington. We aren't going to go through the Willington Bridge tonight – there will be a separate meeting in May for that community.

This next slide illustrates the bridge components. This is shown to distinguish the superstructure and the substructure of the bridge. These bridges were constructed in the 1960s, they are in bad shape although still safe to use. The purpose of this project is to repair and replace some of the components of the four bridges as necessary. The superstructure on all the bridges will be replaced. The substructure in two of the bridges will need to be replaced, and the other two will be repaired. All this work will be done using Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) techniques. The PBUS won't be used on the bridges in East Hartford, but we will be using GRS-IBS abutments, which have been used on other projects in Connecticut. The abutments allow the roadway to stay operational during construction.

These projects are scheduled to take place over the next two summers. Two of the bridges will have work done this summer, and the other two next summer. All the work that would limit access to the bridges will be done before the Hartford Marathon, and we have added a disincentive to the contract if that deadline is not met as it is a key piece of the schedule.

Work is starting out on the site soon, although it will be offline for a few weeks and won't start to impact traffic. Work will go until November though all traffic impacts will be finished by October. These are the routes that will be affected. This first bridge is the Founder's Bridge, work is starting here now. For this to work to be done we're going to have to close the ramp that is coming from the Founder's Bridge and connecting to Route 2. There will be some traffic mitigation associated with that closure that I will go through. What is shown in red on this map are traffic impacts, blue indicates the detours associated with it. To get around that ramp detour you must get off earlier and to the right, as opposed to the normal left exit, to take the Pitkin Street off ramp which will be modified to have two lanes, to go through the next intersection to then take a right onto Jayce Street. The mainline of Route 2 will remain open, but shoulders will be closed to allow for a safe work zone. Traffic will be moving but reduced to one lane that will switch off, sort of dancing across the bridge.

Now we will look at some of the work planned for next summer.

C: Rich Kehoe: It might be easier to take some questions about this bridge now. The traffic that gets impacted is traffic that is starting in Downtown Hartford and coming over the Founders Bridge to Route 2 East. Will it also have impacts at the Buckley Bridge going to Route 2 East?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: No, it does not.

Q: Rich Kehoe: So, folks traveling down to East Hartford on I-84 will see no difference. For those coming from Downtown Hartford, instead of taking the left exit to Route 2 they must take the Pitkin exit. That will be widened to two left-turn lanes?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Yes, it will be widened so one lane is left only, and the other will allow left and right turns.

Q: Rich Kehoe: Thank you. Are you going to address the lights at all? The light on Darlin Street is always red. That will be a problem.

A: Greg Kozma: The timing of the lights will be adjusted to account for the new flow of traffic.

C: Rich Kehoe: Primary flow right now is off the Pitkin Street ramp. The intersection at Darlin Street should be retimed so it's green at the same time at the base of the ramp.

A: Tom Borden: It will be modified to fit that flow. You are right that the flow through Pitkin Street is the main flow at this time, but it will be modified to accommodate the future heavy flow.

Q: Rich Kehoe: Will Jayce Street remain one-way both ways?

A: Tom Borden: There will be a two-lane approach eastbound on Pitkin Street towards the approach, and then an exclusive right turn lane onto Jayce St. But Jayce St will remain one lane of travel in either direction.

Q: Linda Russo: Across from the Pitkin Street ramp there is a driveway for the Founder's Plaza office complex parking. Is the light coming off the ramp going to be green arrows so that vehicles from the off ramp don't conflict with the plaza traffic?

A: Tom Borden: I'm sorry, my name is Tom Borden, I work for Lochner. To answer your concern, that driveway from Founder's Plaza will be on a separate phase. So, this area will operate with both directions of Pitkin Street traffic proceeding on phase one, then exit ramp has the phase two, followed by the driveway from Founder's Plaza as the final phase. That last phase will be significantly shorter, because the demand is less.

Q: Rich Kehoe: Are there any other questions on this bridge?

Q: Linda Russo: What is the timeframe of this part of the project?

A: Greg Kozma: Around mid-April is when we will likely be closing that ramp, dependent on the widening of the Pitkin Street ramp. That all depends on getting the plans to get the concrete in there. We will be putting out press releases when more information becomes available about this.

C: Linda Russo: I've noticed they've already done some work there, I take that exit every day. It looks like they've cut out to the left where that extra lane will be.

A: Greg Kozma: There are other contractors out there working in that area. I'm not sure if what you've seen is associated with this work. But if it has to do with that lane to the left it's likely they are preparing that area where they have to do work, so they can get it all done as quickly as possible.

Q: Rich Kehoe: So again, just to confirm, this work will be from Mid-April to sometime in October.

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Yes.

C: Hannah Brockhaus: So, the next bridge to go through is the Route 2 westbound bridge. This is the bridge you approach when you are coming from Governor Street from the north or Route 2 from the South and headed Northwest. Since these are two single-lane ramps meeting here at this bridge, we must close both ramps entirely to reconstruct the bridge. We have a list of traffic mitigation procedures, but this closure will be no more than 91 days. On the map the two ramps in red will have to be closed. Pitkin Street will be the detour if you're heading north from Route 2. That new double left lane is available and two lanes westbound on Pitkin Street. Then you can turn to use that Darlin Street on ramp. Coming from the north on Connecticut Boulevard you turn left at Thomas Street, which turns into Ash Street and then East River Drive. You can take a left onto Darlin Street to merge towards the Founder's Bridge as well. This area is what will be closed during stage three.

Q: Rich Kehoe: So, I'm just trying to understand exactly where everyone is coming from here. Coming from Governor Street to the Founders Bridge will close? And obviously the other closure is Route 2 coming into the Founder's Bridge. Ok. This will be happening sometime in 2019?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Yes, this is March to September, but the closure is no longer than 91 days.

Q: Rich Kehoe: Was there another bridge you mentioned?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Yes, right next to it. Its I-84 to Hartford via the Founders Bridge, Exit 54. Since this is more of a mainline bridge traffic will just be reduced to two lanes and the work zone will dance across the bridge.

C: Rich Kehoe: When taking I-84 heading into downtown, that bridge won't be closed, just narrowed down to two lanes?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Correct, we will be opening the HOV lane to general traffic.

C: Rich Kehoe: The HOV lane is useless and should be used as a general traffic lane anyways. I take that route every day to get to work, and people basically use it as a third general lane. How is the work going to happen?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: We are starting work on the south side of the bridge, just extending the work zone of the adjacent bridge that will be having work done, and then keeping traffic on the northern side. When that work is finished we will shift things over to the northern side of the bridge.

Q: Linda Russo: So, the two lanes on the south will be closed first, and then the two lanes on the northern side after that. How long will each phase of construction be?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: Each phase will be a 91-day closure.

Q: Linda Russo: There's a right-side exit for Darlin Street, will that also be closed?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: We are still looking into it. We know at the very least the deceleration lane will be shortened but we're still trying to figure out what the safest way to handle that traffic will be.

A: Greg Kozma: As it stands it currently will remain open but we're ironing that out as there are safety concerns that need to be addressed.

C: Rich Kehoe: Are there any other questions? No.

C: Hannah Brockhaus: Let's wrap up some of the key points. Just a reminder, there is a disincentive for work continuing beyond the Hartford Marathon – we are taking that seriously. We will be disseminating detour information and maps as they become available online. We will be monitoring traffic on Pitkin Street, we know it will be a pain, but we'll be doing our best to keep that moving well. Ongoing work in the project area is starting now. We have a project

website coming where you will be able to access detour sheets, and the construction look-ahead every two weeks. We can provide briefings on request, and we can address any questions you might have about the project.

Q: Rich Kehoe: Does anyone have questions? I have some follow up. When the DOT first announced the original closure of I-84 to Route 2, I thought it would be a disaster. It seems to be working out okay, though. When you studied that, did people change their driving habits and go over the Putnam Bridge instead?

A: Tom Borden: It's typical to see that slight decrease when we are doing studies. It varies by a few percent typically, but it does happen.

C: Hannah Brockhaus: My goal for public involvement is to make sure the public knows all the information they need so that they can make that choice to get where they need to go easily.

Q: Esther Clarke: How well attended was the Public Information Meeting that you recently held at Hilltop House (also known as the Veterans Memorial Clubhouse)?

A: Hannah Brockhaus: It was not well attended. I run a lot of public meetings in Massachusetts, and I would generally say that construction meetings are the least attended of meetings once the design has been finalized. Generally, people feel like they can get all the information they need online. We wish the meeting was better attended, but we thank you for letting us come speak here tonight.

C: Esther Clarke: There was also a public meeting like this one at the library around a year ago when there was work being done on Route 15. That was well attended, so I wonder if Hilltop House was the deterrent because it is less centrally located.

C: Greg Kozma: We can consider that for future meetings. We would love the councilors recommendations for meeting locations.

C: Rich Kehoe: I think in all honestly there was a lack of notice for that meeting. I stopped by there late and the place was already closed. That's why I asked you to come here.

C: Hannah Brockhaus: We really appreciate any help you can extend to get the word out about these project updates.

C: Rich Kehoe: If there are significant changes you're very welcome to come back. Otherwise we should try to send all the notices to Angela. We can put that in our public communications packets that go out.

C: Greg Kozma: All my contact information is here on this last slide. Please feel free to reach out with questions and concerns you might have.

Next Steps

Construction on the site began in April 2018. The project website will act as the online dashboard for project updates and detour information for interested parties. That website can be accessed at: <http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=4453&q=601558>. In anticipation of the 2019 construction season, more detailed information about those bridge closures will be released; follow the project website for further details.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation/ Town
Ram	Aberasturia	East Hartford Town Council
Angela	Attenello	Town Council Clerk
Jacob	Booth	Resident
Tom	Borden	H. W. Lochner
Hannah	Brockhaus	Howard Stein Hudson
Shelby	Brown	East Hartford Town Council
Brian	Byrne	H.W. Lochner
Andrew	Cardinali	CTDOT
Joseph	Carlson	East Hartford Town Council
Esther	Clarke	East Hartford Town Council
Patricia	Harmon	East Hartford Town Council
Doug	Johnson	Howard Stein Hudson
Rich	Kehoe	East Hartford Town Council, Chair
Greg	Kozma	CTDOT
Linda	Russo	East Hartford Town Council, Vice Chair
Mark	St. Germain	CTDOT
Caroline	Torres	East Hartford Town Council
Marc	Weinberg	East Hartford Town Council
Steve	Wexell	Lochner

Appendix 2: Project Fact Sheet

Connecticut Department of Transportation bridge bundle rehabilitation



The Connecticut Department of Transportation has retained a consultant team led by Middlesex Corporation to replace and repair 3 bridges in East Hartford and one bridge in Willington, including:

1. **Potter School Road over I-84 EB and WB in Willington**
2. **Route 2 EB (towards Norwich and New London) over I-84 in East Hartford**
3. **Route 2 WB (to Downtown Hartford) over I-84 EB in East Hartford**
4. **I-84 WB and HOV (Exit 54 to Downtown Hartford) over I-84 EB in East Hartford**



Project Status

Work on the Route 2 EB bridge will begin in March 2018 and end in November 2018. Work on the Potter School road bridge will begin in June 2018 and end in October 2018. Work on the Route 2 WB and I-84 WB bridges will begin in March 2019 and end in September and November 2019, respectively. Accelerated Bridge Construction techniques will be used in this project to minimize construction time and traffic impacts on the community.

Stay Informed

For questions or concerns, please contact:
Greg Kozma, Connecticut Department of Transportation
(860) 258-4615 | Greg.Kozma@ct.gov

Outreach

A public meeting will be held in February in East Hartford prior to the start of construction. A public meeting will be held in Willington in May before construction begins on Potter School Road. Additional community briefings may be held for interested community groups.

During the project, construction look-aheads, which provide a two-week snapshot of construction activities, will be provided to abutters, stakeholders and the public. These look-aheads will help members of the public plan for changes in construction activities and any detours that may be necessary as a result of these changes. Quarterly newsletters will also be made available and will include updates on the project's progress.

Additionally, a project website containing meeting presentations and minutes, detour information and contact information for the project team will be maintained for the duration of the project.