



Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023
6:00 pm – 8:15 pm

Place: Guilford Community Center
32 Church Street
Guilford, CT 06437

Re: CTDOT Project No.: 0175-1608
Route 146 Corridor Management Plan
Public Information Meeting #2

Project No.: 42441.08

- › This meeting was conducted as an in-person meeting at the Nathanael B. Green Community Center in Guilford. Approximately 100 people attended the meeting, including staff from CTDOT, VHB, Town of Guilford, DEEP, SHPO and other elected officials. The meeting was recorded by Guilford Community Television and was posted to their YouTube Channel and linked to the project website. The recording of the meeting can be found at <https://route146cmp.com/documents.html>.

- › Karyl Lee Hall, a member of the Corridor Working Group, initiated the meeting and welcomed the public. Matthew Hoey, III, Guilford First Selectman, also welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for their participation. David Elder, Assistant Planning Director and Project Manager at CTDOT read CTDOT's Title VI Notice to the Public and introduced Dan Amstutz of VHB, the project consultant. An overview of the project was provided, noting the goals of the project and the difference between a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) and a conventional corridor study. The CMP will develop strategies to guide the future development of projects and maintenance efforts both within the Route 146 right-of-way as well as municipal planning and policies. Extensive public involvement is another key aspect of the Corridor Management Plan approach.

- › Dan Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner with VHB, introduced the project. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting, identified the overall goals for the plan and the study area boundaries. He highlighted the status of Route 146 as both a designated Scenic Roadway and the location of many National Registered Historic Resources. The next portion of the presentation identified the project purpose and goals and reviewed progress since the previous public meeting on April 25, 2023 including additional traffic data collection at two locations, one of them being the site of a serious bicycle crash in the vicinity of 444 Leete's Island Road in Guilford. Further speed data collection confirmed the significance of speeding issues at several locations in the corridor. The Project Team conducted Corridor Working Group meetings and eight stakeholder interviews over the summer of 2023. The major focus of the presentation was the overview of draft future strategies to address the different elements of the CMP, including:
 - A. Flooding and Sea Level Rise Management;
 - B. Bicycle/Pedestrian Access & Safety;
 - C. Speed Management;

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- D. Roadside Safety;
 - E. Intersection Safety;
 - F. Maintenance Enhancements; and
 - G. Environmental And Historic Preservation.
- › The slides for the presentation are available on the project website, www.route146cmp.com.
- › Mr. Amstutz then opened the meeting for public comments and questions.
- Jonathan Katz, resident of the Sybil Creek Condominiums in Branford, noted that the western end of the project area in Branford is a heavily used corridor for vehicular travel adjacent to the Richlin shopping plaza but does not have continuous sidewalks in multiple locations. He asked: “How can we get this urban piece to the top of the pile?” Mr. Katz also noted from his discussion with local police that they agree that pedestrian safety and speeding are significant issues in this segment of the corridor.
 - David Elder responded that the 13-mile corridor has multiple changes in character each of which will require a different planning approach and cross-section. He reiterated that in the plan recommendations there will not be a “one size fits all” solution.
 - Susan Flynn spoke in support of Mr. Katz’s comments.
 - An attendee to the meeting: asked if there are conflicts between the different elements of the plan and how prioritization of projects will be conducted.
 - David Elder explained that the CMP will not prioritize projects. The prioritization will happen organically as different corridor features are reviewed at the project definition, scoping and design phases within CTDOT.
 - Paul Hermes of Guilford noted that speed cameras will be controversial. He asked, “What’s the possibility of doing something today?” and “Are there interim solutions?”
 - David Elder agreed that speed cameras will indeed be controversial but have proven to be very effective in other states. He suggested that other measures may be available to reduce speed via countermeasures, such as traffic calming, which is now permitted on State roadways.
 - Jeff Carroll of Guilford observed that additional signage would help to change driver behavior towards cyclists.
 - David Elder noted that limited shoulder width is a serious safety concern in many sections of Route 146. One strategy under consideration for the CMP is a reduction in vehicular lane width to 11 feet. He indicated that signage will also be reviewed.
 - Michelle DeLito of Branford asked about the impact on private property of drainage and flooding. She expressed concern that during storms there is a foot of water in her yard that comes across Pine Orchard Road. She noted that she had already spent \$30,000 to enhance her property’s drainage and could not do anything more to avoid flooding on her own property.
 - David Elder suggested that the biggest concerns regarding flooding are: inland flooding; increased storm severity; flooding under and around low railroad overpasses; tidal flooding; and changes to the design flood year elevation for CTDOT’s engineering purposes. He emphasized that CTDOT will make sure that water passes to an outfall from State roads. There may also be more innovative solutions to rising sea levels and inland flooding identified in cooperation with the two municipalities.

- Leslie Johnson of Branford observed that, as a bicyclist and runner along Route 146, the narrow road does not give enough room to avoid the guiderail when vehicles are too close to the shoulder. The CMP recommendations should be balanced to enhance the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians. Specifically, the intersection of Indian Neck Avenue with Route 146 in Branford adjacent to the Indian Neck School has very poor sightlines and is dangerous.
 - David Elder responded that there has already been substantial discussion of guide rails within the Corridor Working Group. He noted CTDOT's policy to include pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in all projects with very limited exceptions. He also observed that within the scope of the CMP it will be possible to evaluate where we can give cyclists and pedestrians adequate sightlines and safer crosswalks. The study team will identify pinch-points so that the narrowest segments can be prioritized. He discussed the increase in traffic fatalities across the US and within Connecticut as the broader context for these potential improvements.
- Tricia Bowen of Branford suggested that vehicular travel lanes are too wide adjacent to Kirkham Street and the Richlin shopping plaza and that there should be continuous sidewalks in this area.
- Perry Maresca, Economic Development Director for the Town of Branford agreed with Ms. Bowen's comments.
- Louis Mackall of Guilford shared that a Johns Hopkins University study had concluded that narrower lanes were safer for both vehicles and pedestrians. He asks if the lanes within the corridor can be narrowed to 10 feet.
 - David Elder replied that federal regulations require a minimum of 11-foot lanes in order to accommodate truck traffic. CTDOT must comply with these standards in order to receive federal funding and avoid liability for non-standard design.
- Mr. Mackall added that he would like to see less roadway area and more sidewalk space in the section of Whitfield Street (Route 77) near the intersection with Water Street (Route 146) adjacent to the Guilford Green which would allow expanded outdoor seating for adjacent restaurants and cafés. In his view, the recently expanded striping of Whitfield Street near this intersection is wasteful and created too much pavement. He stated that in some areas bicyclists might be safer without guiderails.
 - David Elder indicated that Janice Plaziak, Guilford Town Engineer, will be undertaking a traffic study of the Guilford Center area in the coming months.
- Nick Rawlings of Guilford suggested that with a 20-inch rise in sea level happening so quickly, we may be running out of time and money.
 - David Elder responded that while it is hard to predict the exact pace of sea level rise, CTDOT is developing new storm surge models every year.
- John Grathwol of Branford asked "How do we prioritize resiliency in areas that already have regular flooding?" "Does repeated flooding cause damage to roadway integrity." He questioned whether it is possible to have variable message signage for road closures when flooding events occur.
 - David Elder offered that through partnership with towns, CTDOT is trying to address frequent nuisance flooding, as well as more severe issues with storm surge and emergency evacuation routes. He noted that roads along the shoreline were not designed to be levees or dams, and that much of the coastal flooding is tide-driven.

- Penny Bellamy of Branford asked, “Is there a conflict between historic designation and roadway standards?”
 - Catherine Labadia of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) noted that historic designation does not come with automatic protection except when federal money is being spent. She highlighted the importance of federal requirements under Section 106 and Section 4F to avoid, minimize or mitigate the impact of roadway projects on historic sites and districts. Specifically, Section 4F requires that there be no prudent and feasible alternative to avoid impact on these properties and areas.
 - David Elder added that all projects on State-designated scenic roadways go to the Scenic Roadway Committee which allows for further review from SHPO for impact to historic properties.
- Sid Gayle noted that sea level rise is an independent variable. He asked, “What is the time horizon for improvements within the corridor?” “What is the likely useful life?” “How is CTDOT working with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)?”
 - David Elder recognized the attendance of a DEEP staff member at the meeting. He responded that the useful life for different roadway features ranges from 75-100 years for bridges to 25 years for pavement. CTDOT planning and design incorporates a projected rise in sea level over the design life of current projects.
- Joe Pandolfi of Stony Creek Road in Branford mentioned concerns about guiderail safety, washout of riprap along the shoreline and corrosion of corrugated metal pipes used for drainage. He asked if a drainage project is coming out. He also observed that roadway safety is a big concern especially in bad weather.
 - David Elder noted that there is a statewide pipe re-lining and replacement effort underway.
- Jay Medlyn of Branford expressed concern about flooding at high tide adjacent to the Medlyn farm property. He observed that both Stony Creek Road and Leete’s Island Road (Route 146) get flooded too. He added that maintenance is hampered by flooding that several areas of Route 146 have experienced erosion and structural failure.
- Jenny Glass of Branford shared that her husband had been hit by a car while bicycling on Route 146. She stated, “Speed is so bad. We need signs ASAP.”
 - David Elder responded that throughout the CMP process, “low hanging fruit” can be addressed.
- Erin Aluey of Guilford agreed that it was critical to reduce speed for bicyclist safety. She noted that it is hard to get out of the way with so many blind spots and suggested that there is a need to separate bicycles from vehicular traffic. She observed that there are an enormous number of near-misses along Route 146 every day.
 - David Elder acknowledged that we don’t have data for near-miss crashes. He added that some options will cost more but have long term benefits for tourism and the environment.
- Perry Maresca of Branford observed that CTDOT does pay attention to public input. He recommended sidewalks in Branford adjacent to Lenny’s restaurant and Limewood Avenue, as well as the potential for separation of bicycle and pedestrian travel with a bikeway or multi-use path.
 - David Elder replied that CTDOT is looking at off-road options too.
- An attendee asked if there will be a review of feedback for priority.

- David Elder responded that priorities would come as projects are developed. The CMP will be incorporated into CTDOT's regular needs-based approach. The CMP will focus on areas with high levels of existing bicycle and pedestrian activity and conflict.
 - Eunice Mahler of Branford noted that there have been more pedestrian fatalities since COVID and asked whether it was possible to reduce speed limits below 25 mph. She suggested the separation of bicycle and pedestrian travel and potentially reduced speed limits to 15 or 20 mph in some segments of the corridor.
 - Kim Granbury of Guilford asked if federal funding is so important and whether it would be possible to return segments of Route 146 to local jurisdiction.
 - David Elder stated that the road can go back to local control if that is the community's wish. Transfers of this type have happened in other locations within Connecticut.
 - Paul Vincenzo of Guilford asked if there was no way to reduce truck traffic. He suggested that if the bridge clearances can't be changed that perhaps the road could be raised and that would eliminate or reduce through truck travel. He supported the investigation of expanding the road for bicycle and pedestrian safety.
 - David Elder responded that it is important to identify where the right-of-way boundaries are. He noted that he understands the sentiment against widening the road.
 - Paul Vincenzo asked: "How much input do we have?"
 - David Elder replied that the public review and discussion of the strategies will carry through until the spring of 2024. He stated that the plan will be a guide for every future CTDOT project in the corridor.
 - Beth Mariotti of Guilford suggested that while it is hard to maintain the character of a historic road and fit bicycles, nonetheless, bicycle safety is critical. She noted that the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) has been studying bicycle safety on Route 146 since at least 2017 and has included it in its regional bicycle plan.
 - David Elder replied that he had bicycled the entire corridor during the summer of 2023 and found it a nice ride but a scary one.
 - Martha Buck of Guilford shared that she has a blind driveway at 780 Leete's Island Road and is very concerned that speeds on this segment of Route 146 are too high to be safe for access in and out of abutting properties. She mentioned her desire to see safety improved for the people who fish for crab at the "crabbing bridge" in Guilford. She also indicated that she would never ride a bicycle on Route 146 due to safety issues.
 - Deborah Levy stated that the road is not wide enough to accommodate both vehicles and bicycles safely and that bicycle traffic should be separated. She noted that there are already sections of the Shoreline Greenway Trail and that some further off-road route was needed for bicyclists. She also suggested additional signage alerting drivers to bicycle activity in the vicinity of the intersection of Stony Creek Road and Leete's Island Road. She urged CTDOT to install signs as soon as possible.
- › David Elder thanked everyone for attending the meeting
- › The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.