



Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2024
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Place: Branford Fire Headquarters
45 North Main Street
Branford, CT 06405

Re: CTDOT Project No.: 0175-1608
Route 146 Corridor Management Plan
Public Information Meeting #3

Project No.: 42441.08

- › This meeting was conducted as an in-person meeting at the Branford Fire Headquarters in Branford, CT. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting, including staff from CTDOT, SCRCOG, VHB, Town of Guilford, and the First Selectmen of Branford and Guilford. The meeting was recorded by Branford 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/get-involved.html> and <https://www.youtube.com/live/DKoYMJKxCmE>.
- › David Elder, Assistant Planning Director and Project Manager at CTDOT, opened the meeting. He recognized the First Selectmen of Branford and Guilford and welcomed them to make initial remarks.
 - Jaime Cosgrove, First Selectman of the Town of Branford, welcomed attendees to the meeting. He noted that Route 146 defines the two towns in many ways and connects the two Greens of the towns. He thanked those who had participated in the Corridor Management Plan process and acknowledged that there are many issues to be addressed on Route 146.
 - Matt Hoey, First Selectman of the Town of Guilford, said he heard a lot of optimism about how the project is going. The things that people care about will be considered in the plan and things are going in the right direction. He thanked everyone for their efforts and encouraged the audience to speak up.
- › Elder noted the members of the Corridor Working Group who have been advising the project and introduced the consultant team from VHB and CTDOT staff. Elder also read the CTDOT Title VI – Civil Rights notice to the public. He also introduced Bob Yaro, a member of the Corridor Working Group, to say a few words.
 - Yaro thanked CTDOT for paying attention to the public and noted the strategies reflect many conversations with stakeholders and the public over the past year. He said it is important for people to consider and make sure the strategies presented match with what people want for the corridor. Public safety and quality of life are critical for people in the corridor, as well as dealing with flooding issues. The plan will guide future actions taken by CTDOT and will offer non-binding recommendations to the towns as well. There will be opportunities for additional input as the process wraps up.
- › Dan Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner with VHB, provided a presentation regarding the project strategies and the outline for the upcoming plan document. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting and the broader context of the project, as well as the overall goals for the plan and the study area boundaries. The next portion of the presentation

identified the project purpose and goals and reviewed progress since the previous public meeting on November 14, 2023 including additional Corridor Working Group meetings and a public survey on the draft strategies for the plan. More than 800 comments on the strategies were collected through the public survey. The major focus of the presentation was the overview of the future strategies to address the different elements of the CMP, and any changes since the November public meeting. The strategy areas identified include:

- A. Flooding and Sea Level Rise Management;
 - B. Bicycle/Pedestrian Access & Safety;
 - C. Speed Management;
 - D. Roadside Safety;
 - E. Intersection Safety;
 - F. Maintenance Enhancements; and
 - G. Environmental And Historic Preservation.
- › Changes to these strategies as a result of the public comments and consultation with the Corridor Working Group include:
- Updates to the Speed Management Theme to provide more speed limit information, more information on traffic calming, updated text about speed camera enforcement, and areas of persistent speeding identified in the Existing Conditions.
 - Added intersections called out in public comment.
 - Minor updates to some sections to capture different comments.
 - Added two new strategies to Environmental and Historic Preservation: G.3, Enhance intrinsic qualities, and G.4 Collaborate to preserve key open spaces.
- › Amstutz went over the changes to the strategies in more detail.
- › Joe Balskus (VHB) shared a summary of traffic calming strategies which are applicable and contextual to the corridor. He emphasized strategies to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety, particularly the extension of sidewalks on South Montowese Street in Branford, as well as options for speed tables and raised crosswalks.
- › Amstutz completed the presentation by reviewing the main components of the Corridor Management Plan document and the next steps for completing the plan. An additional 45-day public comment period will be available once the draft document has been released. The goal is to publish the final document by late summer.
- › The slides for the presentation are available on the project website, www.route146cmp.com.
- › David Elder then opened the meeting for public comments and questions.
- John Prince of Branford asked about dynamic signage, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's), variable speed signs, "something more in your face" especially for bicycle and pedestrian safety. Balskus responded that these strategies are part of speed management.
 - John Harwell of Branford's Representative Town Meeting (RTM) asked about the role of the Local Traffic Authority (LTA) for changes to speed limits on State roads. Elder noted that the State DOT maintains signage and speed limits but also listens to input from the LTA.

- Virginia Corbiere of Guilford suggested that the public should be very clearly notified. She observed that the project has not made headlines and that projects of this size have change orders. She inquired how the public will be notified during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase. She also asked about federal regulations and impacts on wetlands and culvert areas, specifically if there would be a cultural resource evaluation. She noted the subtleties and expertise required by the federal Endangered and Threatened Species Act. She expressed her concern regarding the salt marsh areas and endangered species within and adjacent to the Route 146 corridor.
 - Elder responded that DOT and the consultant team have compiled a large email list for notifications during the project duration. The Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a study that requires as wide a participation as possible. He noted that there will be a 45-day comment period with an ad in local newspapers following the submission of the draft CMP to the DOT.
- John Grathwall of Branford suggested a compendium of federal grant resources, especially to deal with sea level rise and climate change. He noted the importance of access to federal funding following natural disasters. Elder stated that the DOT has added staff to address opportunities to respond to federal Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO's).
- Lauren Brown of Branford emphasized the importance of collaboration with local land conservation trusts in Strategy G.4 and asked for more information on Automated Speed Enforcement. Balskus explained what it is and that it is a new option for towns to use as recently allowed by state law.
- Tony Abbott of Guilford inquired if there had been liaison with the Guilford Land Trust and Branford Land Trust. He noted that the land trusts may be the largest owners of abutting land to the Route 146 corridor. Dave Elder agreed that this was a good idea. Spencer Meyer, of the Guilford Land Trust, noted that Lauren Brown who spoke previously is on the Branford Land Trust and both Trusts had been engaged with the project. Janice Plaziak, Town Engineer of Guilford, also pointed out that having the reference for protection of properties for conservation and for the corridor could help the land trusts with grant writing for land acquisition.
- Steve Wolfson of Guilford expressed concern regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety in the vicinity of Moose Hill Road at westbound Route 146. He had previously mentioned the hazardous condition at this location due to limited sight distance at the April 2023 public meeting and was dismayed that no action had been taken to date. Balskus noted that looking at intersections where safety concerns have been shared was incorporated into the strategies and this intersection is called out as a potential priority.
- Abigail Adams of the Branford Representative Town Meeting (RTM) emphasized the need for enhancement of pedestrian and bicycle safety, specifically the installation of sidewalks on South Montowese Street in Branford. She was interested in speed tables and crosswalks for this area.
- Michael Pascucilla of the East Shore District Health Department, and Guilford resident, suggested that an exclamation point should be put on pedestrian safety and bike paths as these will help protect the public and improve public health. Elder pointed out that CTDOT now has an Engineering Directive that requires bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in new state transportation projects and this will help address pedestrian and bike safety.

- Donna Laich of Branford noted she lives on Route 146 observed that traffic very bad, and is concerned about safety for people biking and walking. She noted the success of the Edgewood Avenue cycle track in New Haven in providing a safer environment for cyclists.
- Kathy from Branford echoed the comments on the need for sidewalks for South Montowese Street. She identified the activity in the Indian Neck area, such as restaurants and beaches, as justifying greater investment in pedestrian facilities around here.
- Janet McClure of Guilford noted that many sections of Route 146 are not currently wide enough to allow safe bicycle use; it is very dangerous. Drivers need to slow down. People should be ticketed more, because they will change their behavior if it costs them money.
- Perry Maresca, Economic Development Director of Branford, is also in favor of preserving open space. He agreed with previous comments that specific attention should be given to improving conditions on South Montowese Street between Indian Neck Ave and Limewood Ave, especially for pedestrians. It's important that people can safely get to the businesses on South Montowese. He also noted that the Atlantic Wharf project near Meadow Street is going ahead.
- Tracy Everson of Branford and Representative Town Meeting member noted that she had originally pushed for the Roadway Safety Audit (RSA) to be undertaken by CTDOT. She asked if the RSA will be included in the CMP. Elder said the countermeasures in strategies such as traffic calming are part of the CMP but not the RSA recommendations directly. She commented that new sidewalks identified in the RSA will make a big difference for South Montowese.
- Louis Mackall of Guilford observed, "anything you do will [to the Route 146 roadway] will make it less charming" and raised concerns about the impact of flood mitigation on the scenic qualities of the road. He also asked if the traffic lanes could be narrowed to 10' and to provide better maintenance of the paved shoulders. Elder noted that the Corridor Working Group had looked into the issue of narrowing lanes and due to the truck traffic on the road the travel lanes should be at least 11' wide.
- Donald Priest of Branford said the Branford Wastewater Treatment facility is right off Route 146 and there are many large trucks going to and from here that need to use Route 146.
- John Herzan of Branford noted that he used to work for the State Historic Preservation Office and noted that the Route 146 Historic District includes historic properties abutting Route 146 but is not shown properly on the map in the presentation. Elder said the district boundaries would be confirmed for the final plan.
- Laura Francis of the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) stated that distracted drivers and other risky driver behaviors were the cause of about 40% of traffic crashes nationally and suggested the importance of warning signage and devices to increase driver awareness. She also noted that SCRCOG is now hiring for a full time safety professional who will promote safety in the region.
- Spencer Meyer of Guilford asked about process for implementing the strategies from the plan. Elder noted there are CTDOT district-wide programs to look at safety countermeasures and Route 146 will be included as part of that review. In addition, it is important to complete the plan and have everyone on the same page before making improvements. CTDOT will also look and see what kinds of projects would be applicable to Route 146 in the future.

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- A resident of Branford stated that it was important to slow down traffic on Route 146 and asked about narrowing lanes. Elder noted that 11' lanes is the CTDOT standard and they would narrow lanes to this width.
 - John Price suggested having a safety campaign to alert people about bicycle and pedestrian safety along the corridor and putting green pavement on the roads for bike lanes.
 - Barbara, a resident of Guilford, said it is important to slow drivers down on Route 146 as they approach Moose Hill Road – they are going much too fast on the straightaway before.
 - A resident said she had seen signs advising drivers that they need to give space to pass bicyclists in Florida and thought those could be used here as well.
- › David Elder thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted people can still comment, and there will be a 45-day public comment period for the draft CMP document.
- › The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.