

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

Date: August 16, 2022

Project Name: Reconfiguration of Route 17 On-Ramp to Route 9 NB / State Project Number 82-316

Municipality: Middletown

Staff Contact: Kevin Fleming

This assessment is being conducted in conformance to the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Environmental Classification Document (ECD) to determine Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) obligations.

Project Description:

The purpose of the project is to reduce rear-end crashes at the Route 9 Northbound and Route 17 Northbound interchange. The project is needed because the existing stop-controlled on-ramp from Route 17 onto Route 9 Northbound has a crash rate significantly higher than similar adjacent freeway segments.

The proposed work includes providing a full-length acceleration lane for Route 17 Northbound traffic to merge onto Route 9 north. Reconstruction of Bridge No. 00638, which carries Route 9 over Union Street, will enable widening the structure to the west as well as addressing maintenance concerns. The proposed acceleration lane will require realignment of Route 9 as well as the closure of the Harbor Drive on-ramp onto Route 9.

After closure of the Harbor Drive on-ramp, the Main Street Extension and Route 17 interchange will serve as primary access to Route 9 for the southern section of downtown Middletown. Proposed improvements at Route 17 and Main Street Extension include adding dedicated turn lanes to Main Street Extension and the Route 17 off-ramps. The Route 17 Southbound off-ramp will be realigned and signalized to create a more typical intersection configuration. New sidewalks will be added to the east side of Main Street Extension to increase pedestrian connectivity. Additionally, a noise wall is anticipated along the Route 17 Northbound on-ramp from Main Street Extension.

This project was scoped in the *Environmental Monitor* on January 18, 2022, and the public comment period remained open until the close of business on February 18, 2022. CTDOT received comments from one State agency – CTDEEP, and one comment from a member of the public during the public comment period. CTDOT received 8 requests to hold a public scoping meeting, however, one was not held since the minimum threshold of 25 requests was not met.

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| The proposed action is non-site specific, or encompasses multiple sites; | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Current site ownership: | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State; <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal, <input type="checkbox"/> Private, <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please Explain. |
| Anticipated ownership upon project completion: | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State; <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal, <input type="checkbox"/> Private, <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please Explain. |

Locational Guide Map Criteria:

<http://ctmaps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ba47efccdb304e02893b7b8e8cff556a>

Priority Funding Area factors:

- Designated as a Priority Funding Area, including Balanced, or Village PFA;
- Urban Area or Urban Cluster, as designated by the most recent US Census Data;
- Public Transit, defined as being within a ½ mile buffer surrounding existing or planned mass transit;
- Existing or planned sewer service from an adopted Wastewater Facility Plan;
- Existing or planned water service from an adopted Public Drinking Water Supply Plan;
- Existing local bus service provided 7 days a week.

Conservation Area factors:

- Core Forest Area(s), defined as greater than 250 acres based on the 2006 Land Cover Dataset;
- Existing or potential drinking water supply watershed(s);
- Aquifer Protection Area(s);
- Wetland Soils greater than 25 acres;
- Undeveloped Prime, Statewide Important and/or locally important agricultural soils greater than 25 acres;
- Storm Surge Inundation Zone(s);
- 100 year Flood Zone(s);
- Critical Habitat;
- Locally Important Conservation Area(s),
- Protected Land (list type): Enter text.
- Local, State, or National Historic District(s).

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA) Section 22a-1a-3 Determination of Environmental Significance (Direct/Indirect)

1. Impact on water quality, including surface water and groundwater

Water Quality – No negative impacts are anticipated. All CTDOT projects must conform to the CTDOT Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities, and Incidental Construction Form

818. Section 1.10.03, Environmental Compliance, specifically deals with water pollution control and Best Management Practices (BMP). No in-water work is proposed for this project.

Surface Water – No negative impacts are anticipated.

Stormwater -No negative impacts are anticipated as Best Management Practices will be employed regarding stormwater management. Any CTDOT project that changes impervious area, stormwater drainage patterns pre to post construction shall meet the requirements of the CTDEEP's General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Department of Transportation Separate Storm Sewer Systems (DOT MS4 Permit) and submit a CTDOT MS4 Designer Worksheet.

Groundwater – No negative impacts are anticipated. All CTDOT projects conform to the CTDOT Standards Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 818. Section 1.10.03, Environmental Compliance, specifically deals with water pollution control and Best Management Practices.

2. Effect on a public water supply system - No negative impacts are anticipated. The project is not located within a source of public drinking water.

3. Effect on flooding, in-stream flows, erosion or sedimentation:

Flooding – No negative impacts are anticipated. Although the project is located within a FEMA-mapped flood zone, the work proposed within the flood zone is considered minor, and Flood Management General Certification was obtained on March 24, 2022.

In-stream flows – No negative impacts are anticipated.

Erosion or Sedimentation – No negative impacts are anticipated. All work will be consistent with the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control.

4. Disruption or alteration of an historic, archaeological, cultural, or recreational building, object, district, site or its surroundings – No negative impacts are anticipated. After coordination with the CT State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO), qualified staff at CTDOT determined, in a letter dated January 3, 2022, that the project would result in No Historic Properties Affected.

5. Effect on natural communities and upon critical species of animal or plant and their habitat; interference with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species – No negative impacts are anticipated. The project does not occur in a Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB) area, and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP) issued a letter on February 24, 2022, stating that the project will not result in negative impacts to State-listed species. CTDEEP's initial comments dated February 17, 2022, referenced potential impacts to fish species, however, since the project does not involve any watercourse impacts, those comments are no longer applicable.

6. Use of pesticides, toxic or hazardous materials or any other substance in such quantities as to create extensive detrimental environmental impact – No negative impacts are anticipated.

7. **Substantial aesthetic or visual effects** – No negative impacts are anticipated.
8. **Inconsistency with (a) the policies of the State Plan of Conservation and Development developed in accordance with Section 16a-30 of the CT General Statutes, (b) other relevant state agency plans, and (c) applicable regional or municipal land use plans** – This project is consistent with the Statewide Plan of Conservation and Development. CTDOT has adopted a programmatic approach for meeting the requirements of CGS Chapter 297 Section 16a-31(a) and Chapter 297 Section 16a-35(c) and 16a-35(d) for determining consistency of proposed actions with the Statewide Plan of Conservation and Development, as indicated in a memo from CTDOT to OPM. As indicated in that memo, CTDOT has characterized this project type under the category: “Renovations for Safety, No Significant Capacity improvements,” an activity type which is consistent with Growth Management Principle #1: “Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure”, and Growth Management Principle #5: “Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety”. This category of projects constitutes an exception to the definition of a Growth-Related Project as defined in Sec. 16a-35c, Item (2), Subsection (D), Sub-Subsection (i) “Projects for maintenance, repair, additions, or renovations to existing facilities”.
9. **Disruption or division of an established community or inconsistency with adopted municipal and regional plans, including impacts on existing housing where sections 22a-1b(c) and 8-37t of the CGS require additional analysis** – No negative impacts are anticipated. This project is not in conflict with any municipal or regional plans. CTDOT has been holding regular status meetings with the City of Middletown. These regular meetings would also include emergency services representatives to ensure no impacts to service as a result of the project either on a permanent or temporary basis. Coordination is also ongoing with public transit regarding the temporary relocation of a bus stop on Main Street Extension during construction.
10. **Displacement or addition of substantial numbers of people** – No negative impacts are anticipated. This project does not involve the displacement or addition of people.
11. **Substantial increase in congestion (traffic, recreational, other)** – No negative impacts are anticipated. If needed, CTDOT will coordinate with the City of Middletown as the project progresses regarding any potential vehicular or pedestrian detours during construction.
12. **A substantial increase in the type or rate of energy use as a direct or indirect result of this action** – No negative impacts are anticipated. No new construction of any buildings is proposed. The project is safety related and is not anticipated to result in any change to land use or traffic conditions that would impact energy use.
13. **The creation of a hazard to human health or safety** – No negative impacts are anticipated. CTDOT’s Environmental Compliance Office conducted a Contaminated Materials Screening Evaluation. A Task 210 (subsurface site investigation) and a Task 710 (hazardous/regulated materials investigation) will take place. Should the presence of hazardous materials be confirmed through the testing, specifications to properly handle and dispose the hazardous materials will be incorporated to mitigate potential health or safety. Therefore, significant impacts associated with hazardous materials or waste sites are not anticipated.

14. Effect on air quality - No negative impacts are anticipated. The project is located within the boundaries of the portion of the state that has been classified as attainment for carbon monoxide (CO), attainment for PM 2.5, non-attainment for Ozone, and attainment for PM 10. An Air Quality Assessment was completed on April 13, 2021, and the proposed action was determined to be in conformity with the Clean Air Act. Any potential temporary impacts during construction can be avoided or limited by proper operation of construction equipment and adherence to regulations limiting idling of engines.

15. Effect on ambient noise levels - No negative impacts are anticipated. A noise study was completed for the project and the findings were documented in a December 2021 technical report. A noise wall to abate noise impact in the Flower Street area was determined to be both reasonable and feasible and therefore has been added to the project. Via mailer packages, CTDOT solicited the viewpoints of the owners of the eight properties that are benefitted receptors of the noise abatement measures proposed adjacent to Flower Street. All eight were returned and all were in favor of the proposed noise abatement measure. Any noise impacts during construction will be temporary and will be minimized to the best extent practicable by compliance with CTDOT Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges, Facilities and Incidental Construction Form 818 regarding construction noise pollution:

“1.10.05 – Noise Pollution: The contractor shall take measures to control noise intensity caused by his construction operations and equipment, including but not limited to equipment used for drilling, pile driving, blasting, and excavating or hauling. All methods and devices employed to minimize noise shall be subject to continuing approval of the Engineer. The maximum allowable level of noise at the nearest residence or occupied building shall be 90 decibels on the “A” weighted scale (dB(A)). Any operation that exceeds this standard will cease until a different construction methodology is developed to allow work to proceed within the 90-dB(A) limit.”

16. Effect on existing land resources and landscapes, including coastal and inland wetlands – No impacts to wetlands are anticipated.

17. Effect on agricultural resources – No impacts.

18. Adequacy of existing or proposed utilities and infrastructure – No negative impacts are anticipated. Eversource Gas will require underground relocation due to possible conflicts with the proposed southwest abutment. The existing overhead electric that is attached to the underside of Bridge No. 00638 will be relocated underground. Coordination with all relevant utility companies have taken place and follow-up coordination is expected as the project progresses.

19. Effect on greenhouse gas emissions as a direct or indirect result of the action – No negative impacts are anticipated. Construction phase impacts on greenhouse gas emissions will be limited. Any potential temporary impacts during construction can be avoided or limited by adherence to regulations limiting idling of engines.

- 20. Effect of a changing climate on the action, including any resiliency measures incorporated into the action** – No negative impact is anticipated. The project is located outside of the coastal boundary and will not be exposed to climate change hazards.
- 21. Any other substantial effect on natural, cultural, recreational, or scenic resources-** No other substantial effects are anticipated.
- 22. Cumulative effects** – This project does not involve any cumulative effects that have the potential for significant effects on the environment.

Conclusion:

After examining any potential environmental impacts and reviewing all comments received, CTDOT has concluded that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) will not be required for the Reconfiguration of Route 17 On-Ramp to Route 9 NB project. Publication of this document to the Environmental Monitor shall satisfy the agency's responsibilities under Section 22a-1a-7 of the RCSA.

During the comment period, CTDOT received comments from one State agency (CTDEEP), and one comment from the public. Below is a synopsis of the relevant comments received; comments are addressed in the appropriate sections above where needed. CTDEEP's comments originally referenced potential impacts to fish species, however, since the project does not involve any watercourse impacts, those comments are no longer applicable and are not included below.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Land and Water Resources

If the reconnaissance of the site by a certified soil scientist identifies regulated areas, they should be clearly delineated. Any activity within federally regulated wetland areas or watercourses at the site may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act. If a permit is required from the USACOE, a Water Quality Certificate will also be required from CTDEEP pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

Air Management

CTDEEP typically encourages the use of newer off-road construction equipment that meets the latest (EPA) or California Air Resources Board (CARB) standards. If that newer equipment cannot be used, equipment with the best available controls on diesel emissions including retrofitting with diesel oxidation catalysts or particulate filters in addition to the use of ultra-low sulfur fuel would be the second choice that can be effective in reducing exhaust emissions. The use of newer equipment that meets EPA standards would obviate the need for retrofits.

DEEP also encourages the use of newer on-road vehicles that meet either the latest EPA or CARB standards for construction projects. These on-road vehicles include dump trucks, fuel delivery trucks and other vehicles typically found at construction sites. On-road vehicles older than the 2007-model year typically should be retrofitted with diesel oxidation catalysts or diesel particulate filters for projects. Again, the use of newer vehicles that meet EPA standards would eliminate the need for retrofits.

Additionally, section 22a-174-18(b)(3)(C) of the RCSA limits the idling of mobile sources to three (3) minutes. This regulation applies to most vehicles such as trucks and other diesel engine-powered vehicles commonly used on construction sites. Adhering to the regulation will reduce unnecessary idling at truck staging zones, delivery or truck dumping areas and further reduce on-road and construction equipment emissions. Use of posted signs indicating the three-minute idling limit is recommended. It should be noted that only DEEP can enforce section 22a-174-18(b)(3)(C) of the RCSA. Therefore, it is recommended that the project sponsor include language similar to the anti-idling regulations in the contract specifications for construction in order to allow them to enforce idling restrictions at the project site without the involvement of DEEP.

Public Comments

During the public comment period, CTDOT received just one comment from the public regarding the project. The commenter suggested reducing the project to only include repair work to the bridge over Union Street. The commenter also suggested CTDOT cancel the project as currently proposed and investigate alternative solutions such as constructing a conventional diamond interchange.