



Route 7/15 NORWALK

NEWSLETTER
FALL 2017

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Department of Transportation to Hold Route 7/15 Norwalk Project Public Scoping Meeting!



What is Scoping and Why is It Important?

Project Scoping is an opportunity for the public to help shape the Route 7/15 study and its outcomes.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Route 7/15 Norwalk Project aims to provide missing connections between Route 7 and Route 15 (Merritt Parkway), and improve connectivity, mobility, access, and safety for all users. As the project moves forward, each of the potential roadway redesign concepts under consideration must undergo environmental screening and scoping.

Scoping is a significant part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is the first official step of the environmental process. Under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), CTDOT is required to conduct an early public scoping process for any action whose degree of impact is indeterminate, but could have significant environmental impacts.

Scoping is the gathering and analysis of information that will be used to establish the breadth, or scope, of environmental review of a proposed project. Scoping provides an early opportunity for federal and state agencies and the community to comment on the project's Purpose and Need, preliminary alternatives, and technical studies being performed.

The Importance of Scoping

Scoping allows the public and relevant regulatory agencies to provide feedback early in the environmental process. This helps the project start on the right foot. However, comments and input are welcome throughout the entire project!

Input gathered during the scoping process helps guide the refinement of alternatives. It sets the course for environmental review, ensuring a process that is thorough, comprehensive, and focused on key elements of concern.

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A public scoping meeting will take place on **October 17th** at Norwalk City Hall. Stay tuned for more information!



📍 Alternatives Development

Where We Are Now

Planning for the 7/15 Interchange system began in the late 1990s. During this time, multiple alternatives were developed and analyzed as part of the environmental planning process. Once environmental documentation was completed, the preferred alternative advanced to final design. Construction began in the early 2000s.

However, in 2006, CTDOT halted construction after a lawsuit was filed regarding the environmental documentation. The court required a re-evaluation of the environmental analysis. Subsequently, CTDOT elected to evaluate new design options. In 2008, CTDOT began work with a public stakeholder group. Strong public consensus was reached on an alternative – identified as 21C – in 2009. This alternative would provide free flow access between the Merritt Parkway

(Route 15) and Route 7, and access from Main Avenue to Route 7. However, due to a lack of funding, the project was canceled.

Now reinstated, the Route 7/15 Project team is meeting with stakeholders to gather input and explain the project process. Alternative 21C will be considered along with a variety of old and new alternatives, as well as a “no-build” option. More alternatives may arise as the environmental phase continues. Your opinions are requested and valued as the team plans for an improved interchange. An important first step in considering alternatives is the scoping process. The October scoping meeting will allow the public to learn more about the project and provide input on the scope of the project and the preliminary alternatives.

Side-by-Side Snapshot Alternative 21C



- Completes all connections between Route 7 and 15
- Free flow traffic with direct on/off ramps
- Main Avenue connects to both north and southbound Route 15, and north and southbound Route 7

Map Legend	
	New Signal
	New Highway Alignment
	New or Reconstructed Bridge

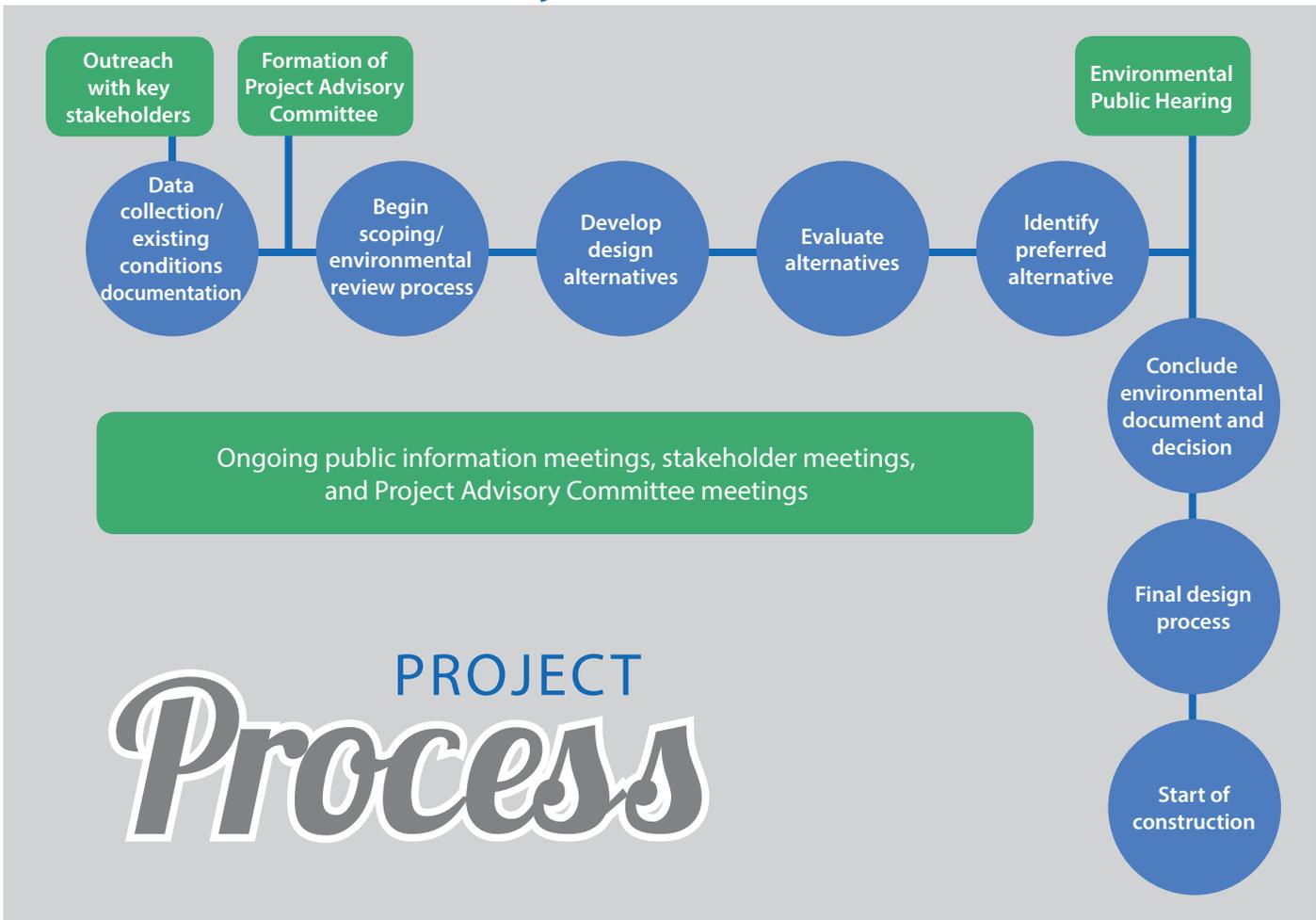
Since the Route 7/15 Project has been reinstated, CTDOT developed an additional alternative, identified as Alternative 26



- Completes all connections between Route 7 and 15
- Introduces traffic signals on Route 7
- Main Avenue connects to both north and southbound Route 15, and north and southbound Route 7

Note: These are two of the many alternatives to be considered. The alternatives shown here have been presented to the stakeholder committee

Get Involved With the Project!



Stay Connected!

-  Visit our website at 7-15Norwalk.com
-  Submit comments to projectteam@7-15Norwalk.com
-  Send mail to Andy Fesenmeyer, Project Manager
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131
-  Join the mailing list: 7-15Norwalk.com/contact.php
-  Connect on Facebook facebook.com/7-15Norwalk
and Twitter twitter.com/715Norwalk



The Route 7/15 Norwalk Project team will be visiting employers in the area this fall! Keep an eye out to learn about the transportation initiative and share your thoughts.

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All public and agency comments submitted during scoping will be summarized and responded to in a Scoping Summary Report which will be made available to the public on the project website.

This process will help determine the scope of the issues that should be addressed and provide the project team guidance on the development of project alternatives.

Once the environmental phase is concluded and a course of action decided upon, final design may proceed.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed by Congress in 1969 to promote better decision-making in projects that involve federal action or investment. In 1971, the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) was passed for state-funded projects.

NEPA and CEPA protect critical environmental resources. Along with natural resources such as wetlands, animal habitats, and endangered plants and animals, NEPA and CEPA also refer to the “built” environment that humans have created, such as neighborhoods, historic buildings, homes, and businesses.

The process requires that any possible environmental impacts of each alternative are identified so that they can be avoided, minimized, or mitigated to a reasonable extent.



The Merritt: Honoring History



Unidentified section of Merritt Parkway circa 1950 (Connecticut State Library, State Archives, PG 170)

Constructed between 1934 and 1940, the Merritt Parkway is one of few US highways listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is also designated as a National Scenic Byway and State Scenic Road. Acknowledged for the beauty of its surrounding forest and its significance in the areas of landscape design, transportation, and architecture, the Parkway reflects an Art Deco style with touches of Moderne, Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival (from the *National Register of Historic Places, Merritt Parkway nomination form, 1991*).

Integrating Project Roadways with the Environment

Have you noticed the unique designs of the Merritt Parkway’s many bridges? Designed by the architect George Dunkelberger, all of them embody various 1930s architectural styles. Respecting this overall historic character of the Merritt Parkway – its form, geometry, and appearance – is a key goal of the Route 7/15 Project. Interchange alternatives are developed with a keen eye towards integrating historic Parkway design features while staying true to the corridor’s original landscaping and aesthetics.

The Route 7/15 Project team will incorporate design elements that are consistent with those original aesthetics, as well as features and details that minimize negative effects and strive to improve aesthetic qualities of the project roadways as viewed from adjacent areas. Historical photographs and documents such as the Merritt Parkway Landscape Master Plan and the Merritt Parkway Guidelines will be useful tools to help guide the landscaping and design treatments for the project. Historic treatments can be applied in areas such as lighting types, bridge rail treatment, bridge decoration, etc. There will be continued discussions and analysis as the project moves forward. The critical element will be to restore and enhance Parkway characteristics where feasible.