



# Final Meeting Summary

## Route 7/15 Norwalk Project Public Scoping

October 17, 2017, 4:00 to 8:00 PM  
Norwalk City Hall, Norwalk, CT

---

### Project Overview

---

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Route 7/15 Norwalk Project is an initiative to provide the missing connections between Route 7 and Route 15 (Merritt Parkway), and improve mobility and safety at the Merritt Parkway's Main Avenue and Route 7 interchanges.

As the project moves forward, each of the potential roadway redesign concepts under consideration must undergo engineering and environmental analysis. Scoping provides an early opportunity for federal and state agencies and the community to comment on the project's draft Purpose and Need statement, preliminary alternatives, and technical studies being performed.

The CTDOT conducted a scoping meeting in October 2017 to allow the public to learn more about the project and provide input on the scope of the project and the preliminary alternatives.

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.

---

### Public Scoping Meeting Summary

---

A public scoping meeting was held on October 17, 2017 from 4:00 to 8:00 PM, at Norwalk City Hall, located at 125 East Ave, Norwalk, CT. Identical presentations were provided at 5:30 and 7:30 pm, each followed by an official comment period from 5:30 to 6:00 pm and from 7:30 to 8:00pm.

Attendance included 42 members of the public, 5 elected officials, 2 members of the press, 4 consultant teams (BL, FHI, VNE and STN) and CTDOT representatives. The meeting was advertised in the following publications:

- Norwalk Hour
  - Display ad published on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and October 10, 2017
- Stamford Advocate
  - Display ad published on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and October 10, 2017
- Published in the Connecticut Environmental Monitor published three times; October 3<sup>rd</sup>, October 17<sup>th</sup> and November 7, 2017
- Norwalk's local television network (Channel 12) advertisements for two weeks beginning September 28, 2017



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

---

- E-blasts to project contact list sent September 26, 2017; and an email reminder sent on October 12, 2017
- Route 7/15 project website: notifications posted on the project website on September 26, 2017 and were available through the end of the scoping comment period November 16, 2017.
- CTDOT website: a press release was issued by CTDOT on September 28, 2017

The public meeting venue met ADA compliance regulations and was conveniently located in the City of Norwalk, easily assessable by bus, rail, automobile and pedestrian routes. Project Team members were on hand to talk with members of the public about the presentation and materials presented. Individuals interested in speaking were provided a speaker card upon registration. The cards list the speaker name and affiliation, and were used in the order received to call upon each speaker after the presentation.

At registration, attendees were asked to sign in and were given an agenda and comment sheet and, if interest was expressed, the draft Purpose and Need document, the Route 7/15 Norwalk Fall 2017 newsletter, and a business card. Project Team members verbally explained the agenda, as well as the various ways to comment.

The meeting began as an Open House at 4:00 PM, where 19 informational boards were displayed around the room, each staffed by a Project Team member. The public was encouraged to view the boards and ask the Project Team any questions that they may have. Informational boards included:

- Welcome
- Project Area
- Project Schedule
- Purpose & Need
- NEPA/CEPA Process
- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Historic Bridges
- Visual Resources (2)
- Land Use/Socio-Economic Conditions
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Conditions
- Peak Hour Traffic Levels of Service
- Data Collection Locations
- Origin/Destination Traffic Patterns (2)
- 2010-2014 Crashes in Merritt Parkway Corridor
- Alternate 26
- Alternate 21C

During the Open House, several copies of the Fall 2017 newsletter, Purpose and Need document and comment sheets were available at tables in the main board display area.

At 5:30 PM, attendees were asked to be seated for a presentation led by the Project Team, followed by a comment period. The Open House again commenced after public comments completed, and an identical presentation was provided at 7:30 PM, followed by a comment period. The presentation gave a



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

---

detailed overview of the project, purpose and need, alternative analysis process, environmental process and public participation opportunities.

---

### Project Introduction

Presenter: Rich Armstrong, Principal Engineer, CTDOT

The purpose of this meeting was to give a brief overview of the Route 7/15 Project and obtain input from the public.

Rich Armstrong, CTDOT, opened by thanking everyone for taking time to attend this important meeting and provided an agenda of topics that will be covered during the presentation. He then introduced the Project Team.

---

### Environmental Documentation Process

Presenter: Andy Fesenmeyer, Project Manager, CTDOT

Andy Fesenmeyer, CTDOT, presented information about the environmental process and provided some background about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). He noted that the NEPA/CEPA process is used to promote better decision-making and consider any impacts to both the natural and human-made environment.

He then defined project scoping as an important step in the environmental process and an opportunity to help shape the Route 7/15 project and its outcomes. He gave a brief history of the Route 7/15 project and commented on previous alternates studied, then presented an overall project workflow and key scoping milestones, including when the scoping comment period opened and ends and when the scoping summary report will be available. He also provided some background about the various public outreach completed thus far, including establishment of a Project Advisory Committee, a project website, two newsletters, 31 stakeholder meetings, various newspaper articles and a social media presence.

---

### Project Location/Key Environmental Considerations

Presenter: John Eberle, Project Manager, Stantec

John Eberle presented background information about the project area and various natural and built environmental considerations that will be studied, as well as historical and cultural considerations.

---

### Landscape Setting

Presenter: Gary Sorge, Landscape Architect, Stantec

Gary Sorge provided some background data about the project's landscape setting and context, noting that any alternatives considered will need to consider the Merritt Parkway guidelines and the philosophy of the Parkway's historic landscape.



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

---

---

### Draft Purpose and Need Statement

Presenter: John Eberle, Project Manager, Stantec

John Eberle presented general information about the development of a purpose and need (P&N) statement – which defines the transportation problem, limits and guides the range of alternatives and is clear, well-justified, specific and comprehensive. He detailed the P&N's value to the Route 7/15 project as the foundation for a selection of a course of action.

He then presented on the specific 7/15 project purpose – improving system linkages, mobility and safety – and noted project goals and objectives, which include long-term corridor serviceability, maximizing public investment, consideration of the interchange environmental context, and bicycle and pedestrian mobility improvements.

Mr. Eberle detailed the missing interchange connections within the project area, noting that motorists traveling south on the Merritt Parkway now cannot exit directly to either the north- or southbound Route 7 Connector, and motorists driving either north or south on the Route 7 connector cannot exit to the northbound Parkway. He then described how vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist mobility were key considerations

He then provided a brief overview of some safety issues associated with the current interchange area, noting Merritt Parkway crashes from 2010 – 2014 along the entire length of the Parkway, noting significantly higher crashes around Exits 39 and 40 A & B within the project area than at other interchanges.

---

### Alternatives Analysis Process

Presenter: John Eberle, Project Manager, Stantec

Mr. Eberle then discussed the alternative analysis development. He walked through the alternate screening process and noted that all previous alternatives – along with a no-build alternative – will be considered during this most recent alternate screening process. Attention was paid to Alternate 21C and a new alternate, Alternate 26.

#### Alternate 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

#### Alternate 26

- Completes all connections between Route 7 and 15
- Introduces traffic signals on Route 7 to make some of these connections
- Main Avenue connects to both north and southbound Route 15, and north and southbound Route 7 (through the aforementioned signalized intersections)



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

---

---

### Next Steps

Presenter: Andy Fesenmeyer, Project Manager, CTDOT

Mr. Fesenmeyer discussed the next steps for the Project Team; including gathering public input, continuing to develop and screen alternatives, evaluating impacts, selecting a preferred alternative, obtaining environmental permits, and proceeding to design and construction. He then discussed next steps for the public and encouraged continued participation. He noted the November 16 scoping comment deadline, an upcoming spring 2018 public informational meeting and eventual hearing on the environmental document.

He then listed the variety of ways to provide public comment, including speaking at this meeting, filling out comment forms, providing written comments via the project website, and emailing or post mailing Mr. Fesenmeyer directly.

Following this, Mr. Fesenmeyer discussed the format for public comments after the presentation, requesting that speakers say their name slowly, and keep their comments to three (3) minutes. He then noted that if any attendees had questions, the Project Team was available after the public speaking portion of the evening's meeting. He also stated that all comments will be compiled and considered during the preparation of the Scoping Summary Report.

The Project Team then thanked attendees and began the public comment period.

---

Following both the 5:30 and 7:30 presentations, members of the public were invited to provide oral comments on the project and the proposed alternatives for improvement. Two (2) elected officials and four (4) members of the public spoke after the 5:30 presentation, and two (2) members of the public spoke after the 7:30 presentation. A copy of the comments of the elected officials and members of the public are included as Appendices to this meeting summary.

In addition, attendees were directed to comment cards which they could fill out and return at the meeting or send via USPS. Attendees were also informed that comments can be submitted via the Contact Us page on the project website ([www.7-15norwalk.com](http://www.7-15norwalk.com)), as cited in outreach materials, and via email and post to Andy Fesenmeyer at CTDOT.

After the conclusion of the final 7:30 presentation and public comment period, Project Team members remained available to answer additional questions until the meeting closed at 8:00 PM.

For comments to be considered as part of the scoping process, they must be submitted and/or postmarked on or before November 16, 2017. All comments will be weighed equally no matter what format they were provided. Once all comments have been received and evaluated, a synthesis of the comments received will be included in the Scoping Summary Report, which will help provide direction for further study and analysis.



# Appendix

## Route 7/15 Norwalk Project Public Scoping Meeting

### Public Comments

Date	Source	Affiliation	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Comment
17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #1	Elected Official	Gail	Lavielle	Connecticut House District 143	<p>I am a representative of Norwalk. This was a very professional presentation. I've been to many meetings on this, and I appreciate the very good communication of the project team. Thank you.</p> <p>My comments are related to the current context of the financial situation of the state and its transportation budget. There is only \$2.8 B bonded for transportation this year, and this includes projects for good repair. This project is part of the bonded funding. Recently I met with Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner Redeker. When he was asked the status of a 40-year transportation project, he replied that once we get to 2020 "it is Armageddon" in terms of funding. This comment says to me we need to be careful -- not that I advocate doing nothing -- but analysis of federal funding to come and the desperate uncertainty of state budget needs to be considered. The focus needs to be on crucial state good repair projects that are currently in the pipeline, and on projects that must be done first for safety etc., followed by a focus on projects classified as those "that would help". I live in Wilton, and I know this project would help, but we need to see this in light of other projects, so we can be sure we are not missing crucial construction safety projects. We have a lot of state-of-good-repair work to do.</p>
17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #2	Elected Official	Fred	Wilms	State Representative 142	<p>What we can afford must be part of the conversation, I agree with Representative Lavielle on this. Regarding this project, I like that there has been ongoing outreach to stakeholders. I am happy that the DOT has kept Alternate 21C on the table, especially regarding the Silvermine community. Alternative 26 is a little out of the box, but it merits a further look. I thank the Department for speaking with stakeholders tonight. I also like all the bicycle and pedestrian options being shown. I encourage the DOT to keep the public outreach going, including social media, presentations like this, and more.</p>



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #3	Resident	Marcia	Kibbe		I am a 32-year resident and have been involved in this project since 2007-8. I have been very interested in project for a long time. This is a necessary project, and I'm glad the DOT is taking these plans into consideration. My main concern is with adding stoplight on Route 7 for Alternate 26. This is going to cause traffic backup, and I'm concerned about the accidents that could be happening, and I'm also concerned about noise from big trucks putting on their brakes to stop at those stoplights. If Route 7 becomes boulevard and there's stoplights there, what is going to happen to the land on either side of Route 7 – what kind of development is going to be there and how will development be controlled? We need this project and need to be pennywise but not pound foolish.
17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #4	Resident	Joe	Cusack		The idea of putting an exit lane on the Merritt Parkway to access Route 7 does not work. Put the money somewhere else, like towards expanding Route 7 (Super 7). Is Route 7 always going to end at Grist Mill? It's a road to nowhere, you want to put an exit ramp to nowhere. I feel bad for people living on Grist Mill; their problem is not a needed exit but the dropped end of Route 7. I've been in area for 14 years, and I don't know why the DOT has spent so much money on this. The question should be: what are we doing with 7? If the state has an end plan for continuing Route 7 then we can deal with current situation of the interchange, but only if a larger plan for Route 7 is there. This is all happening with a state that doesn't have budget -- where is the money coming from? I just don't see it. Your presentation was spot on by the way.
17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #5	PAC	Elizabeth	Stocker	City of Norwalk	Those were some good comments from Mr. Cusack: what is going to happen to Route 7? This question needs to be part of the scope of this project. Also, I'd like to ask the project team to pay attention to businesses that might benefit from an expansion of Route 7, and to this regard I hope that the environmental review takes into consideration our business and residents along the Route 7 corridor and the surrounding area.
17-Oct-17	5:30 Scoping comment #6	Resident	Mike	Mushak	Norwalk Planning Commission	I am a resident of Norwalk, a member of the City Planning Commission and former Bike Walk Task Force member. I want to share my vote in support of the Merritt Parkway Trail, it is integral to this region, as well as the Norwalk Valley Trail. How these two trails integrate is important. The coming of e-bikes is the way of future. The Merritt was once built for the future. We need to look forward towards innovation. Regarding Alternate 26: I wonder if the state can look at rotaries (roundabouts) instead of stoplights for Route 7? I also want to thank representatives Lavielle and Wilms for making case for tolls in the state. The state GOP has been dead set against tolls, but we're a national laughingstock – people come from ALL over the county going through our state and on our highways for free. Tolls will help pay for our transportation expenses.



## Route 7-15 Norwalk

17-Oct-17	7:30 Scoping comment #1	Resident and Project Advisory Committee Member	Jo-Anne	Horvath		<p><b>(from written comments read at the meeting):</b> My name is Jo-Anne Horvath and I reside at 1 Cobblers Lane, Norwalk, near Creeping Hemlock Drive, and I am very familiar with this project.</p> <p>Back in 1985 when Bill Collins was may or Norwalk, I wrote to his office concerning the exit ramp at Exit 40-B of the Merritt Parkway and since then I have been actively involved in this project.</p> <p>Back in 2008/2009 I was part of a group of neighborhood Stakeholders who met with the State Department of Transportation engineers for a year to develop a concept design for this interchange project. All of those stakeholders at that time chose Alternate 21-C as their preferred plan. I am now serving on the Project Advisory Committee reviewing the two alternates that were discussed this evening. But tonight I am speaking as a Norwalk resident. The design of Alternate 21-C involves flow-through ramps which would provide seamless <b>SAFE</b> connections between the Merritt Parkway and the Route 7 Connector. <b><u>This is the Alternate Plan I favor.</u></b></p> <p>Alternate 26, with two traffic signals on the Route 7 Connector highway, would pose a major traffic nightmare! From what I have seen of drivers in this area, they are in a hurry to get to their destinations. Do you think they want to stop for traffic lights? I don't think so. What about distracted drivers - talking on hand free cell phones and texting, etc.? I think too many accidents would happen with rear-end collisions - think about it. Alternate 26 is not the answer!</p> <p><b>THANK YOU.</b></p>
17-Oct-17	7:30 Scoping comment #2	Resident	Diane	Lauricella		<p>Thank you for this scoping session. I agree with Ms. Horvath's comments. I was involved in the 2008 environmental studies, there was lots of work done on this project. As a former environmental consultant with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, I feel that revisiting all 26 alternates seems inefficient way to use state funds. Roundabouts are not popular yet, so 21C seems to be the most efficient use of state money. We need to move forward with this project. Businesses were promised that interchange would be replaced by now, and we don't want to go back to the drawing board. I understand that you must do due diligence, but the CTDOT did good job then (in 2008); we don't need to reinvent the wheel. I will speak with state representatives and senators to help this move forward. Whatever alternative you decide on, please be sure that any storm drains – especially in the southern cloverleaf area – do not harm the aquifer. Also, the Super 7 project needs to look at emergency response to possible contamination.</p>