



**Public Landscape Workshop
Meeting Summary
Date: September 17, 2018
Norwalk Inn and Conference Center
Time: 7:30pm**

Attendance

PAC Members	
David Waters	Building and Land Technology
Chris Wigren	Connecticut Historical Trust
Timothy Densky	Empire State Realty Trust, Inc
Wes Haynes	Merritt Parkway Conservancy
Jo-Anne Horvath	
Alan Kibbe	Norwalk Silvermine Neighborhood
Nancy Rosett	Norwalk Bike Walk Commission
Tod Bryant	Norwalk Preservation Trust
Jim Carter	Norwalk Valley River Trail
Peter Viteretto	Silvermine Community Association
Ray Rauth	Sound Cyclists
Heather Dunn	Norwalk Association of Homeowners (NASH)
Jeff Ram	Empire State Realty Trust, Inc
Connecticut Department of Transportation and FHWA Staff	
Yolanda Antoniak	CTDOT
Tom Doyle	CTDOT
Andy Fesenmeyer	CTDOT
Susan Fiedler	CTDOT
Matt Verry	CTDOT
Project Consultant Team	
Meghan Bard	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Ken Livingston	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Paul Stanton	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Marguerite Carnell	Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc.
John Eberle	Stantec
Gary Sorge	Stantec



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Emily Valentino

Stantec

General Public

Sue Prosi

Diane Jellerette

Norwalk Historical Society

John Flynn

Virginia Tyburski

Judith Wasserman

1. Welcome

Andy Fesenmeyer, of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), welcomed everyone to the Public Landscape Workshop and introduced John Eberle, of Stantec who then introduced the project team, gave an overview of the project and outlined the format of the meeting.

Meeting Overview

John Eberle reviewed the meeting's agenda items, which were covered using PowerPoint presentation slides:

1. Introduction/Work session format
2. Links to Purpose and Need Statement
3. Guiding Documentation and Landscape Conditions
4. Representation Visual Features
5. Work Session

2. Links to Purpose and Need Statement

John Eberle discussed how the project is intended to improve system linkages between Route 7, Main Avenue, and the Merritt Parkway, improve mobility, and improve safety. He also noted the importance of integrating project roadways with the environmental and neighborhood context, as noted in the project Goals and Objectives. Additional goals include creating a Merritt Parkway design consistent with its historic character and preserving, enhancing and/or restoring existing historic landscapes where practical and/or creating new scenic amenities consistent with the Parkway's original design intent. John Eberle introduced Gary Sorge, a landscape architect from Stantec, to continue the presentation.

3. Guiding Documentation and Landscape Considerations

Gary Sorge outlined the guiding documentation that was to be utilized as the project moves forward: Merritt Parkway Landscape Master Plan, Merritt Parkway Guidelines for General Maintenance and Transportation Improvements, Merritt Parkway Bridge Restoration Guide, Merritt Parkway National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, National Park Service Presentation Brief - Protecting Cultural Landscapes #36. Gary S. also went over the visual and physical, and historic and cultural landscape considerations for the Merritt Parkway.

4. Representative Visual Features

Gary S. presented historic and current images of the Merritt Parkway to show key view corridors and perspectives



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along the Parkway, existing visual impacts to the historic landscape character of the Parkway, as well as how the landscape surrounds and focuses attention to specific locations along the Parkway.

5. Work Session

Attendees then broke out into two tables as workstations. They were asked to consider three questions:

1. What are the most appealing landscape/ visual features within the project area?
2. What are the least appealing landscape/visual features within the project area?
3. What is most important to you?

Each table was provided with an aerial map of the project area with key landscape resources, a set of questions and a summary of key corridor photos depicted in the PowerPoint presentation for reference. Attendees discussed and drew their ideas on the map. Reporting and group discussion followed.

Attendees who stayed for the work session were broken into two tables comprised of:

Table 1: Tod Bryant, Wes Haynes, Heather Dunn, Nancy Rosett, Judith Wasserman

Table 2: Sue Prosi, Chris Wigren, Jo-Anne Horvath, Alan Kibbe, Martin Katz, Virginia Tyburski, Peter Viteretto

Subsequent to the table discussions, each table reported out their discussion points addressing the question outlined above.

Generally, the groups felt that views of the natural and built environments, traffic calming effect of the Parkway and the plant variety and visibility were the more appealing features. The least appealing features generally included the Glover Avenue Apartments and the existing construction staging areas along with non-original bridges. Finally, participants generally felt that views, bridges, scale and natural resources were the most important features to them.

Following herein are the actual notes condensed from notecards prepared by the participants.

Actual Notes from Workshop

The following text is verbatim notes from the workshop. These are the actual comments and notes provided by participants and have not been summarized or edited. The comments represent the specific views of individual participants and do not reflect the overall perspective of CTDOT or the two workshop groups, as a whole.

What are the **most** appealing landscape/visual features within the project area?

- Water and rock ledge views.
- Views of stone bridges.
- Some architecture and building tops over and through vegetation; not all buildings.
- It is a road in a park. Calming effect of Merritt Parkway driving experience.
- Plant variety and visibility
- Wildflowers enhance landscape setting

What are the **least** appealing landscape/visual features within the project area?

- Glover Avenue Apartments. Can it be green-screened?



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- Construction staging areas that persist.
- New construction is too visible. Encroachment.
- Degradation of the Silvermine walking trail.
- Erosion within cloverleaf ramps, along roadway edges.
- Use of chemicals to treat vegetation eradication along roadway. Does impact on groundwater?
- Non-original bridges.

What is **most** important to you?

Views

- Visual experience of drivers and passengers. Buffer passenger views.
- Appearance of a bombed-out war zone in areas
- Views toward Super 7; design intent of Super 7 in proximity of Merritt Parkway?
- Visibility to and of exist and entrance ramps.
- Enhance harbor views where they currently exist.
- View of Main Avenue bridge from north and south.
- Capture view of Route 7 ponds and/or Norwalk River from ramps.

Structures

- Bridges are key elements
- Approaching Perry Avenue Bridge: horizontally works; small scale; avoid folly.
- Better way to light Route 7. Scale lighting in proximity to Merritt Parkway. Also consider scale down of lighting on access and egress ramps. Light only what needs to be illuminated.
- Signage approach: less is more. Keep with Parkway standard throughout project area.
- Median barriers: if needed, conform to accepted modernized systems used elsewhere on Parkway.
- Stop lights, if any, should be appropriately scaled and detailed for Parkway vicinity.
- Color of bridge railings. Use earth tone colors.

Maintenance

- Avoid I-95 mentality. Road character not important to community. It matters on Merritt Parkway.
- Insufficient maintenance. Budget adequately in future. Cyclic treatment with ongoing investment in landscape.
- Long-term maintenance and operations of the Parkway landscape. Neglected in past. Increased management by State. Paying attention to conditions.
- Water containment in retention ponds. Appearance of retention ponds.

Scale

- Visual experience of drivers and passengers
- Appearance of a bombed-out war zone in areas



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- Consider vehicle sizes and disparity between Route 7 and Merritt Parkway vehicles
- Rock out-cropping (Creeping Hemlock) and others are characteristic. Naturalize setting around. Should appear less as remnants of past construction work.

Vegetation and natural resources

- Consider ecological systems and landscape connectivity and cohesiveness.
- Provide for safe sight-lines when selecting and installing plant material
- Create and maintain tree buffers between roads and homes.
- Replace lost and diminishing screening.
- Meadow and wildflowers in grassy areas as a landscape management practice.