



Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Connecticut Department of Transportation

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I-95 Stamford 
Planning and Environment Linkages Study

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I. INTRODUCTION

Study Context

The Connecticut Department of Transportation’s (CTDOT) I-95 Exit 7 to 9 Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study will examine alternatives to replace the bridge over Metro-North Railroad and Myrtle Street, reduce overall congestion on I-95 between Exits 7-9, serve existing and future needs, and identify opportunities to improve traffic operations, travel time, and safety. It will ultimately recommend transportation solutions to the I-95 corridor between Exit 7 and 9, including replacement of the bridge over Metro-North Railroad and Myrtle Street, and provide recommended phasing that could be implemented.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan Overview

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) outlines how the study team will inform and seek input from the communities, stakeholders, regulatory agencies, and the traveling public during the study process. Methods of outreach include stakeholder and public workshops, pop up events, public meetings, project website, social media, fact sheets, e-bulletins, and other forms of outreach, as appropriate. The engagement strategy is designed to be a transparent and open process. Public opinion and comments will be documented and considered in the development of study recommendations. Meetings will be held virtually or in-person, as appropriate.

This SEP is a living document. It will be regularly revisited and refined throughout the study as outreach needs evolve. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the public engagement process is designed to be flexible. The study team has tailored the outreach methods in this SEP to be specific to methods in Phase 1 (approximately 14 months) of the study and will adjust these methods as needs and opportunities evolve.

The study steps and timeline displayed below reflect Phase 1 and the beginning of Phase 2 of the PEL Study. Phase 2 will include an in-depth analysis of the projects or alternatives identified in Phase 1. Additional details about the Phase 2 study steps will be shared as the study progresses into 2023. The expected study duration is 2-3 years.



This SEP includes methods to inform and involve the public and stakeholders in a meaningful way. A range of techniques, public engagement events and engagement tools will be utilized as part of the overall public involvement effort.

II. PEL STUDY GOALS

The PEL Study goals are to identify:

- Transportation Needs and Deficiencies
- Draft Purpose and Need Statement
- PEL Risk Management Analysis
- Identification and outreach to corridor stakeholders
- Identification of Environmental Resources and potential impacts
- Development and screening of preliminary alternatives addressing Corridor needs

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CTDOT seeks to implement a comprehensive and inclusive public and stakeholder outreach program. The outreach objective is to determine the best possible transportation solutions to address congestion in the PEL Study corridor that meets the project goals. To that end, the SEP has been developed to support public engagement in accordance with the following guiding principles:

Accessibility

The public receives sufficient notice of public meetings, which are held at a convenient time, place or on a virtual platform, and are accessible to all. This includes complying with the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. The public is given time to review project-related materials in advance of meetings. Up-to-date project information is shared on the project website in an accessible format.

Inclusiveness

The public will receive equitable access to all aspects of the PEL Study process. The study team will be inclusive in its practices, distributing project information via a variety of channels and venues, and delivered in clear and simple lay language to the extent possible. The study team will identify and partner with select individuals and organizations from diverse communities to facilitate greater interactions and outreach to the public. This includes providing language assistance and translated public notices to limited English proficient (LEP) populations and affirmative identification and engagement with communities that have been traditionally underrepresented.

Responsiveness

Public questions and inquiries will be answered in a timely manner. In particular, the study team will respond appropriately to the express needs of interested individuals or groups for whom participation is challenging.

Transparency

The study planning process will be clear and understandable to the public. The study team will establish an open and honest dialogue with the public and share pertinent information that informs project decisions and direction. In addition, technical information and regulatory procedures will be explained clearly to help the public understand the planning, regulatory and project development processes.

Communication

Project information, updates and news will be consistently communicated with the public through the project website, e-communications, newsletters, and local media outlets. Materials will be translated to assist LEP individuals and ADA accessible formats will be utilized. Results of public engagement activities and how feedback was considered in the project will also be shared.

III. COMPLIANCE

Public projects such as this PEL Study are subject to regulatory requirements. Several federal and state statutes or guidance documents call for certain outreach and coordination measures to be taken to ensure that adequate public and regulatory agency input is incorporated into the project.

This project will comply with:

- Statewide and Metropolitan Planning. 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 450 and 500 and 49 CFR Part 613, February 14, 2007
- Environmental Impact and Related Procedures and Section 4(f). 23 CFR Parts 771 and 774, October 16, 2001; 40 CFR 1506.6 and Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552)
- Protection of Historic Properties. 36 CFR Part 800
- Air Quality Conformity. 40 CFR Part 51, November 24, 1993
- Management and Monitoring Systems. 23 CFR 500, December 1, 1993
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898, US Department of Transportation Order 5610.2(a); and
- FHWA Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule 23 CFR 630 subpart J
- LEP Executive Order 13166
- Other applicable regulations, as identified

The federal regulations listed above require:

- Early, continuing, and inclusive public involvement opportunities during all stages of the planning and programming process
- Timely information about transportation issues and processes to the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects
- Reasonable public access to information used in the development of plans and projects
- Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key milestones
- A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input
- A process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households; and
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process.

IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Project Advisory Committee

The study team will work with CTDOT to develop a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to help guide the overall study process. The PAC may consist of representatives from Stamford, neighborhood groups, business entities, and /or transit agencies. The study team will make concerted efforts to engage and encourage historically underrepresented community members to participate in the PAC. Near the conclusion of Phase 1, the study team will create a PAC invitation list and confirm PAC members for subsequent meetings in Phase 2.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews seek to understand the respective interests, goals, issues, and desired outcomes of the PEL Study. A summary of interview issues will be prepared after the interviews take place and results will be part of the public transportation plan and the innovation brainstorming workshop agenda. It is anticipated that up to ten (10) interviews will be planned and hosted during Phase 1 of the PEL. Concerted efforts will be made to ensure that interviews will include individuals representing historically underrepresented communities. The study team will consider hosting meetings virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study team will coordinate with key stakeholders and community influencers to attend interviews. These key stakeholders will include appropriate neighborhood groups and community-based organizations, including Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs).

NRZs are coalitions of residents, businesses, and organizations that work together and share a common goal of revitalizing the neighborhoods in which they live, work, and spend leisure time. NRZs are often trusted local groups and are imperative for the study team to cultivate relationships with and utilize to disseminate information. NRZs have influencers that encourage others to get involved and have their voices heard. The study team will collaborate with NRZs that serve underrepresented neighborhoods to ensure that Environmental Justice (EJ) communities can provide input to the study. Collaboration methods include attending and giving updates on the study at monthly meetings, as well as providing NRZ leaders materials to distribute to their constituents. The NRZs listed below are a sample of those the study team will contact to collaborate with. This list is not all-inclusive.

- Cove Neighborhood Association
- East Side Partnership
- Glenbrook Neighborhood Association
- Harbor Point Neighborhood Association
- Shippan Point Association
- South End NRZ
- West Side NRZ

In addition to the NRZs, community-based organizations are important stakeholders in the study area. The study team has identified and will discuss the study with several community organizations that serve EJ communities. If the organizations are interested, the study team will collaborate with them to provide information to and educate their constituency about the study and encourage them to provide feedback about potential multi-modal improvements. The organizations can include, but are not limited to:

- Stamford Downtown Special Services District
- Stamford Board of Reps
- Retiree Association
- Community Based Organizations that serve EJ populations, as identified

Outreach to Regional Partners/Small Groups

The study team will coordinate outreach to regional partners and small groups to develop effective strategies for involving their respective constituencies and other key stakeholder groups. Participants will offer input on technical analysis for each topic. Each meeting will be led and managed by a technical lead from the study team. Meetings will be held at multiple points during the study. It is anticipated that up to five (5) meetings will be planned and hosted during Phase 1 of the PEL Study. The study team will consider hosting meetings virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These regional partners can include, but are not limited to:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Historical societies, if appropriate
- City departments and surrounding municipalities, if appropriate
- Eastern Transportation Coalition (formerly the I-95 Coalition)
- Western Connecticut Council of Governments
- Others as identified

Public Workshops / Meetings

The study team will host public workshops and/or meetings at various milestones throughout the PEL Study. These meetings will follow an open house format and include a presentation. The purpose of these meetings is to obtain input from the public regarding the development of this project and related recommendations. It is anticipated that two (2) public workshops and/or meetings will be held during Phase 1 of the PEL Study.

When scheduling an in-person public engagement activity, the study team will consider scheduling multiple meetings at various locations and times. Every effort will be made to locate meetings near public transportation options. All public engagement activities will be held at venues that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. Once the study team has determined the date, time, and location of the public meeting, the CTDOT Office of Communications will be notified so the event can be added to CTDOT's Calendar of Events and posted on the CTDOT website, in addition to the study website.

The study team will consider hosting meetings virtually or in a hybrid virtual and in-person format. Digital technology can provide project information to interested parties and the traveling public and allow the study team to conduct virtual meetings using live-streaming or pre-recorded digital and video platforms. Virtual meetings will occur on platforms that support LEP assistance and ADA accessibility. In addition, a telephone call-in number will be provided, and the study team will work with local cable access channel(s) to stream

a video of the public meeting, for those meeting participants who do not have internet access on computers and other small electronic devices.

To better reach LEP, minority, and low-income populations, notifications for public informational meetings, public workshops, and formal public hearings will be posted using targeted media that serve EJ and LEP communities in the greater Stamford area. The team will also post notices in Spanish, Haitian Creole/French, and other non-English print media, as identified and needed. In accordance with CTDOT's Public Involvement Procedures, the study team will notify various stakeholder groups of upcoming public involvement events. These groups include community leaders, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, Councils of Governments, organized neighborhood groups, public libraries, schools/universities, Chambers of Commerce, and social service agencies that serve Stamford.

Pop Up Events

The study team will plan and attend pop up events. Many of the events will be pre-planned community events and festivals that the study team will have a booth at with the goal of supporting, informing, and engaging local constituents. Community locations such as grocery stores, barber shops, churches, libraries, YMCAs, etc. might also serve as potential pop-up event locations. The study team will engage environmental justice community members through these events to inform them of the study process and make sure their opinions are represented. Approximately eight (8) pop up events are proposed for Phase 1 of the PEL Study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study team will also consider hosting and attending virtual events.

V. OTHER ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Branding

The study team will create a design color palette, fonts, and logo for the project to be used on various print and electronic materials.

Website

The study team will create an interactive website for the PEL Study at www.I95Stamford.com. The website provides opportunities for the public to submit comments about mobility improvements and issues on an interactive map, learn about the study, view, and download a project fact sheet, sign up for updates about the PEL Study, and information about how to communicate with the study team. The website will act as an information hub throughout the study and be updated continuously. Embedded translation tools will provide site accessibility in other languages.

Social Media

The study team will create Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube accounts for the PEL Study. Announcements, updates, and information will be posted to these platforms approximately eight (8) times per month. The PEL Study social media accounts will keep the public apprised of current activities, important outreach events, and other relevant news. At a minimum, original social media content will be posted in both English and Spanish.

Fact Sheets

The study team will produce up to three (3) single- or double-sided one-page fact sheets in Phase 1 of the PEL Study. The first includes articles on the need for the project, the proposed study area, and preliminary identification of corridors of significance. It discusses schedules and options for the public to participate in project activities. The second fact sheet will address the preliminary results of the data collection and existing conditions. The third fact sheet will cover draft Purpose and Need and high-level alternatives. At a minimum, each fact sheet will be translated into Spanish.

Graphics Support

The study team will create up to twenty (20) simple infographics for the public. The team will review materials to make sure they are aligned with PEL Study branding and communicate technical information

in a public-friendly manner. When appropriate, visualization techniques will be employed to better enable citizens to understand alternative plans and the context of proposed improvements, and graphic illustrations will be used to clarify or replace technical language. Infographics will be crafted to be culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Contact and Comment Database, Comment Response

Contact Database

The study team will develop and maintain a robust contact database for the PEL Study. Stakeholders include federal, state, regional and local officials, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), CTDOT partners or sister agencies, businesses, commerce or economic development organizations, transit operators, freight companies, transportation, transit or commuter advocates, bicycle advocacy groups, environmental organizations, public interest groups, institutions of higher learning, and community-based groups or social service agencies that advocate for LEP populations, people with disabilities, and/or minority, immigrant, or ethnic communities.

The study team will create and maintain a list of these organizations and individuals that includes email addresses and phone numbers. These stakeholders will receive project updates and meeting notification via email and the project website. Ongoing maintenance of the list will include the addition of individuals and organizations that request to be added and updating contact information as requested.

Comment Database

Comments submitted by the public and stakeholders at meetings, via the website and social media pages, as well as via email and postal mail, will be reported to the study team. The study team will create a database to collect, manage, and respond to comments. The study team will report to the public (via the project website) what, generally, the team is hearing from the public and how CTDOT is addressing those questions and comments.

Response to Comments

The study team will report on comments from the website, social media, email, and other sources on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the study team will begin responding to comments during Phase 1 of the study.

Every person and/or organization who sends a question or comment to the project website will receive an automatically generated “thank you for your comment” response indicating that the comment has been received and its content will be reviewed by the study team. Questions and comments will be aggregated by topic or theme and responded to on that basis. If appropriate, the topic will be added to the website list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Comments received via the project’s Facebook page or other social media accounts will also be monitored, aggregated by topic or theme, and responded to. Oral comments received at public meetings will be captured by project note-takers and included in the meeting summary. Written comment cards will also be collected at public meetings. These comment cards will be reviewed, aggregated, reported, and included in the comment matrix.

The study team will consider public comments, both written and verbal, expressed during a public hearing, informational meetings, or other forms of public engagement activity in the decision-making processes of the PEL Study.

Following each public meeting or engagement event, a meeting report or meeting minutes will be available to the public and posted on the project website and CTDOT’s website. The study team and CTDOT will make, keep, and maintain a record of the proceedings of the meeting. Virtual meetings will be recorded and posted on the project website as well.

Questions and comments received, and responses provided by CTDOT throughout the course of the PEL Study will be archived for the public record.

E-bulletins

The team will distribute e-bulletins to the public at specific milestones including the launch of the website, social media accounts, and before public workshops/meetings.

Media Relations

The study team will provide materials to CTDOT's communications staff to assist the Department with advertising public meetings through media outlets that cover the Stamford area. Outreach to media outlets will occur within two weeks in advance of public workshops/meetings. CTDOT will be responsible for initiating all media contact.

There are several multimedia outlets which can assist in achieving the above goals. Each of the radio, TV, print, and online outlets serves a strategic purpose to reach EJ communities and Limited English Proficiency populations. The multimedia outlets can include but are not limited to:

Radio/Local Radio

(No stations broadcast out of Stamford directly)

- **WSHU** – WSHU is a public radio station reporting NPR and local stories/public service announcements
- **WEDW** – WEDW is a public radio station reporting NPR and local stories/public service announcements
- **Radio Giron** – local Spanish language radio broadcasting out of Danbury with Stamford audience
- **La Guapachosa Radio** – local Spanish language radio broadcasting out of Danbury with Stamford audience

TV

- **Stamford Connecticut TV (SCTV)** – Stamford's first cable access station covering local news and events
- **News 12 Connecticut** – regional cable news television channel based in Norwalk that showcases local news and events
- **WRDM-CD (Telemundo CT)** – Full spectrum Spanish language television channel broadcasting throughout Connecticut
- **WUVN (Univision)** – Full spectrum Spanish language television channel broadcasting throughout Connecticut

Print/Online

- **Stamford Livestream** – live streamed communications from the City of Stamford posted on the city website and on YouTube

Other Communication Activities

Throughout the course of the project, miscellaneous communication activities will occur with members of the public, especially during the periods leading up to and following public meetings. A sampling of anticipated communication tasks are:

- Coordination with the surrounding towns and cities to send out e-alerts in advance of upcoming meetings
- Design and mailing of flyers to community gathering locations
- Others as identified

VI. EVALUATION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

The study team will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the project's public involvement and engagement efforts. The study team will track, where possible, and assess levels of overall public participation, the engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups, and public engagement metrics



such as the number of comments received, and the degree of misinformation or public confusion about project objectives or process. In particular, the study team will review and adjust engagement efforts at the beginning of Phase 2 to optimize feedback from diverse populations.