

**REPLACEMENT OF THE METRO NORTH RAILROAD BRIDGE OVER EAST AVENUE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF EAST AVENUE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE CITY OF NORWALK**

**State of Connecticut Project No. 170-1375/102-297**

**PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Date: March 17, 2009**  
**Time: 7:00 PM**  
**Location: City Hall Community Room**

**Presenters:**

Julie Georges, CDOT – Introduction and general overview

Tim Fields/Robert Brown, CDOT – Overview of the proposed bridge project, existing conditions, final design, staging of the project, and anticipated cost of the project. Extensions to both westbound and eastbound train platforms are included in the project. A new staircase will be provided at the northwest corner, and a replacement staircase on the southwest corner. This will dramatically improve pedestrian safety. There will be no property impacts associated with the bridge installation. Substructures will incorporate form liners that will replicate the appearance of the existing brownstone abutments. A handout was provided to all by ConnDOT containing a Project Description, Comment Form and copies of all boards used in their presentation.

Arthur DiCesare, A. DiCesare Associates – Overview of the existing conditions of East Avenue, limits of the roadway widening in different areas along the project length as well as property impacts. Detailed descriptions of widths of the proposed roadway were given to audience.

Derrick Ireland, CTDOT – Overview of ConnDOT Property and Easement Acquisition Procedures

**Other City and State Representatives present:**

CTDOT: Nick Ozkan  
Lev Laber  
Jay Mather

Metro-North: David Willard, P.E.

City of Norwalk: Brian R Sweeney, P.E.

**Public Participation:** Richard P. Linnartz, P.E., Monitor

**Elected Officials that presented comments:**

Bob Duff – State Senator, 25<sup>th</sup> District  
Laurel E. Lindstrom – Council Member  
Nicholas D. Kydes – Council Member  
Douglas E. Hempstead – Council Member  
Dennis Santella, Third Taxing District Commissioner

**Elected Officials and General Public Comments:** Approximately 60 people attended the Public Informational meeting. Generally there were many comments presented concerning the impact of the project on the East Avenue area, both due to the perception that traffic volumes would increase and that aesthetic appeal of the project area would be downgraded. There were an equal number of comments presented that this is a much needed project and long overdue.

Discussion followed on the relative impact of the minor widening (4 to 6 feet) throughout the length of the project, except at the RR bridge itself, where the existing two lanes and single sidewalk are proposed to be improved to 4 lanes of traffic and a sidewalk on each side.

The audience was very supportive of the platform extensions and new sidewalks proposed as part of the bridge replacement.

Several people requested consideration of putting the overhead utilities underground. It was explained that there are no funds for this in this project and they should contact the Third Taxing District Electric.

Comments were made concerning the increase in vertical clearance and width of the new RR bridge, some in favor and some opposed. The potential for increase in traffic, especially truck traffic, was the main reason for opposition. Those in favor, would like that traffic to remain on East Avenue, and not the more residential side streets. It was explained by the City that improvements that are presently being made at Monroe Street will provide another option for truck traffic to enter South and East Norwalk, thereby reducing the number of vehicles likely to be using East Avenue. During this discussion, a person from the audience asked why East Avenue could not be posted for “No Through Trucks”. The City explained this was not an option for this City owned major arterial roadway.

The City did explain that associated with the roadway improvements, there would be easements required for installation of sidewalks on private property and that actual takings of portions of property will be limited to very small areas where curb lines radii were being increased to improve turning movements of vehicles. A number of public

officials and the general public had expressed concerns over the taking of property by use of eminent domain and this should be avoided within the City.

A number of business owners expressed concerns that the project will impact their ability to enter their property and will impact their businesses. While the duration of the project was discussed as possibly being four to five years it was noted that the roadway widening could be performed within a much shorter period of time, thus limiting the impact of the project on businesses and residential properties along the corridor. It was noted that for the roadway portion of the project, traffic will be maintained at all times on East Avenue, though limited at times to one lane in each direction. For the bridge work, it was noted that most of the construction activities will take place at night due to the need to minimize impacts to train schedules and RR operations and that there will possibly be short periods of time where East Avenue will be closed at the bridge location for setting of structural steel. During these closures, detouring of traffic to side streets will be used with advance warning signs to try to deter traffic in general from the area.

One comment from the audience noted that this project must comply with the Section 1.06 process due to historic structures and the cemetery being nearby. This will be investigated by the design team. This same person requested that the existing bridge abutment stones be reused in the new bridge. It was noted by the State Bridge Unit that this would be both cost prohibitive and impractical and that the intent is to replicate the appearance of the brownstone abutments via the use of form liners similar to those being used at the new Reed Street railroad bridge. These would be used for both the RR bridge and the retaining walls as part of the project.

There were requests as to whether there were any “enhancement grants” available for this project to install brick sidewalks, historic lighting and such throughout the project area. The City explained there were no such grants at this time.

The City noted that there were at least five trees that would be removed due to their location interfering with the proposed curb and sidewalk installations. Some in the audience objected to this though it was noted that new trees would be installed by the City behind the new sidewalk. It was also noted that these tree installations would be dependent on property owner approval and would be on private property.

A question was asked whether as part of the drainage installation, the City would be installing “filters” in the catch basins. The City noted that this will be done at all catch basins on City streets in the project area.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9:30 pm.