

8. Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

8.1. Introduction

Chapter 8 summarizes the public involvement, agency coordination, and Section 106 consultation activities conducted for the Walk Bridge Replacement Project.

CTDOT has developed a communications management plan and an agency coordination plan, which detail requirements and methods for public and agency involvement through the completion of the project. Appendix 2 provides supporting documentation, including public and agency scoping materials, public meeting presentation and response materials, invitations and responses from cooperating and participating agencies, project partnering, and Section 106 consultation data.

8.2. Public Involvement

In accordance with NEPA and CEPA requirements, Section 106 consultation procedures, FTA’s *Environmental Review Process Guidance* (draft),¹ and federal and state EJ and Title VI directives, CTDOT provided extensive public involvement and agency coordination opportunities in the preparation and review of the EA/EIE.

Table 8-1 provides a list of public involvement activities that CTDOT has conducted as of August 18, 2016.

Table 8-1 – Walk Bridge Public Outreach Activities

Date	Activity
February 24, 2015	CEPA Public Scoping Session
October 13, 2015	Stakeholder Meeting for the Maritime Aquarium
November 18, 2015	Norwalk Seaport Association Meeting
November 19, 2015	Stakeholder Meeting for the Maritime Aquarium
November 20, 2015	Public Outreach Meeting
December 2-3, 2015	Project Partnering Workshop
February 8, 2016	Walk Stakeholders Meeting
March 23, 2016	Rowers’ Meeting
May 3, 2016	Upstream Businesses Coordination Meeting
May 11, 2016	Public Information Meeting
June 23, 2016	Project Partnering Workshop
July 14, 2106	Meeting with Legislators/City of Norwalk
August 16, 2016	Project Open House

8.2.1. CEPA Public Scoping

CTDOT conducted the CEPA public scoping session on February 24, 2015 at Norwalk City Hall. Per CEPA requirements, the scoping session was noticed in the Environmental Monitor on February 3, 2015. CTDOT notified approximately 160 stakeholders and adjacent property owners of the public scoping session through a direct mailing invitation. Additionally, press releases were disseminated to news outlets to advertise the public scoping session.

¹ The Environmental Review Process Guidance (proposed revised guidance for public comment, 3/12/2015) was developed by FTA and the Federal Highway Administration.

Approximately 160 people attended the public scoping session. The following is a summary of general requests from the public scoping session:

- Balance the interests of all water uses in and around the bridge, including barge traffic, boating, and rowing, including coordinating with the Stroffolino Bridge openings;
- Avoid negatively affecting local business owners by taking properties or affecting access to them during project construction;
- Preserve or echo, to the extent possible, the iconic look and historical features of the bridge, while also improving the bridge's operations; and,
- Accomplish other transportation needs such as completing missing bike path/trail links under the bridge on both sides of the river and providing other local road network connections.

8.2.2. Project Website

CTDOT launched the project website, www.walkbridgect.com, in February 2015, prior to the public scoping session, and updates the website on a regular basis. The CTDOT website (www.ct.gov/dot) provides a link to the Walk Bridge Project website. The project website includes an overview of the project, with a discussion of bridge needs and concerns, potential solutions, and project benefits; "frequently asked questions;" and a project documents library, which contains meeting materials and project documents, including project factsheet updates. The project website contains a Google translate option. The website also provides opportunities for the public to get involved in the project through public meetings, direct mailings, or direct contact with the project team. CTDOT regularly maintains and updates social media activity including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts.

The Walk Bridge Replacement Project EA/EIE has been posted to the project website for public review during the public comment period.

Throughout project design and construction, CTDOT will post design and construction updates on the project website.

8.2.3. Project Contact List

CTDOT has a project contact list of approximately 400 individuals (as of August 2016). Of that list, the majority of contacts were developed through meetings with CTDOT regarding the design development and environmental review process, including the public scoping session and public information meeting.

8.2.4. Additional Community Outreach

CTDOT's ongoing outreach with community groups includes abutting neighborhoods and residents; local businesses and community organizations; the traveling public (rail/motorists); and marine users, including the community rowing groups utilizing the Norwalk River.

CTDOT held a public information meeting on May 11, 2016, to update the public of the project, identify concerns and address questions. The meeting, held in the Community Room of Norwalk City Hall, was conducted in two sessions, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm, and from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, to solicit a wide audience. Each session included a presentation on the Walk Bridge Replacement Project; a question and answer period; and an open house during which displays were available for viewing and project team members were available for informal discussion. The public information meeting also provided an update on the

design of the new bridge and related projects, environmental reviews, and construction schedule. CTDOT held an open house on August 16, 2016 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the lobby of the IMAX Theater at the Maritime Aquarium, 10 North Water Street, Norwalk. This was an informal open house where the public was able to speak one-on-one with CTDOT staff, ask questions and view informational graphics about the project.

As cited in Section 3.26, CTDOT has conducted outreach to LEP and EJ communities through advertisement of meetings in a Spanish newspaper, contacts with community and neighborhood organizations with LEP and EJ participation, and translation of project materials distributed at meetings.

CTDOT will conduct a public hearing on the EA/EIE and will obtain additional community input and comment through the 45-day public comment period.

CTDOT will maintain a local office through project construction to facilitate community outreach. The local office is currently the Fender Repair Project Field Office, located adjacent to the project site at 15 North Water Street in the Maritime Garage Building in South Norwalk. The local office will provide opportunities for the public to attend regularly scheduled open house events to talk with project staff, view project displays, and obtain updated project information. The local office events and hours will be advertised on the website, social media, and through the media. Signage in the local office windows will display public information, the website address, and other contact information.

CTDOT will continue to conduct community outreach through project design and construction. Outreach will include public meetings, open houses, group presentations and tours, media press conferences, information tables at community-wide events, and informational kiosks. CTDOT will continue to coordinate with the City of Norwalk to identify community organizations and develop methods for outreach to EJ and LEP groups.

8.3. Agency Coordination

Table 8-2 is a list of federal, state, and local agencies involved in the development and review of the Walk Bridge Replacement Project EA/EIE.

8.3.1. Lead and Sponsoring Agencies

FTA is the Lead Federal Agency for the environmental review of the Walk Bridge Replacement Project, and is responsible for NEPA compliance and issuing its finding of the project relative to anticipated environmental impacts.

CTDOT is the Sponsoring Agency for the Walk Bridge Replacement Project. CTDOT is responsible for preparing the environmental review document in compliance with NEPA and CEPA and other federal and state regulations and policies. In addition to coordinating with FTA regarding compliance with NEPA, CTDOT is coordinating with the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) regarding compliance with CEPA, including preparing the Record of Decision document for OPM's review and approval.

8.3.2. Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Cooperating Agencies have jurisdiction by law or special expertise regarding the environmental impacts that may result due to the project. CTDOT invited four federal agencies and one state agency to participate in the development of the EA/EIE as Cooperating Agencies. Participating Agencies are federal, state, tribal, or local agencies that have a special interest in the project. CTDOT invited four

agencies to participate in the development of the EA/EIE as Participating Agencies. Cooperating and Participating Agencies reviewed the EA/EIE, including review of the project’s anticipated impacts and proposed mitigation.

Table 8-2—Walk Bridge Replacement Project Agency Involvement

Agency	Role
Federal Transit Administration	Lead Federal Agency
CT Department of Transportation	Sponsoring Agency
US Coast Guard	Cooperating Agency
US Army Corps of Engineers	Invited Cooperating Agency
US Environmental Protection Agency	Invited Cooperating Agency
Federal Railroad Administration	Invited Cooperating Agency
National Marine Fisheries Service/ Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Participating Agency
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Participating Agency
City of Norwalk	Participating Agency
Western Connecticut Council of Governments	Participating Agency
State Historic Preservation Office, CT Department of Economic and Community Development, Offices of Culture and Tourism	Invited Cooperating Agency and Section 106 stakeholder
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation	Section 106 stakeholder
THPO, Mohegan Tribal Nation Cultural Department	Section 106 stakeholder
Norwalk Historical Commission	Section 106 stakeholder
Norwalk Historical Society	Section 106 stakeholder
Norwalk Preservation Trust	Section 106 stakeholder
SONO Switch Tower Museum	Section 106 stakeholder

8.3.3. Agency Scoping Session

CTDOT held an agency scoping session on March 5, 2015. Both federal and state agencies participated in the session and provided comments on the proposed scope of the project EA/EIE. The agencies acknowledged the high priority of the project. They provided input regarding potential alternatives to be evaluated, including a fixed span alternative. They also reviewed and confirmed permit requirements.

8.3.4. Other Federal and State Coordination

CTDOT submitted requests to federal and state agencies for information specific to the environmental evaluations conducted for the EA/EIE.

Since CTDOT’s initial coordination meetings with USACE, USCG, and CTDEEP in September and October 2014, CTDOT has conducted ongoing informational meetings with the federal and state agencies to apprise them of the status of the project and to solicit their input regarding their concerns about the project, including bridge design and operations, and permitting requirements. CTDOT will continue to meet with the agencies throughout project design and construction.

8.3.5. Local Coordination

CTDOT’s ongoing coordination activities with the City of Norwalk include meetings with the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission and its Walk Bridge subcommittee, the Norwalk Harbormaster, the Mayor, the Norwalk Board of Selectmen, and the Norwalk Historical Commission to provide project updates and solicit municipal information.

8.4. Other Outreach Activities

8.4.1. Railroad and Utility Coordination

CTDOT is conducting conceptual design coordination meetings with NHL service providers, including Metro-North, CSX and P&W Railroad, regarding coordinating the project construction with ongoing train operations. CTDOT also is conducting coordination meetings with Metro-North and Eversource Energy regarding signaling and communications for the project, including replacement of the utility functions located on the existing high towers.

8.4.2. Project Partnering

CTDOT conducted project partnering workshops with a comprehensive group of project stakeholders in December 2015 and June 2016. Partnering is a facilitated working session approach to project development that brings together a wide array of entities with different interests and perspectives of the project to share ideas and concerns, and to provide input to guide the project from design through construction and operation. The goal of partnering is to help resolve issues, build understanding, improve communications, and gain consensus as the project progresses.

Walk Bridge Replacement Project stakeholders participating in the partnering workshops included representatives from the City of Norwalk, Norwalk Harbor Management Commission, and Norwalk Historic Commission; adjacent facility owners; state and federal environmental agencies; consultant designers; construction contractors; CTDOT as the project owner; and Metro-North as the rail operator. The objectives of the first partnering session, held on December 2-3, 2015, were to establish the partnering process and the partnering relationships among project team members. The objectives of the second partnering session, held on June 23, 2016, were to address more specific design and construction issues, including coordination with other area-wide projects, project outreach and communication with City stakeholders and local businesses, environmental permitting issues, and project safety and security.

8.5. Section 106 Coordination

8.5.1. Project Historic Stakeholders

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO), four local historical associations, and two Tribal Nations are participating in the review of the project as Section 106 stakeholders, as shown in Table 8-2.

At the initiation of the Walk Bridge Replacement Project, CTDOT met with representatives from CTSHPO and project historic stakeholders to ascertain project issues. CTDOT anticipates that its outreach and consultation activities with CTSHPO and local historic stakeholders will continue through the EA/EIE process, Section 106 consultation, and CTSHPO's review and approval of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). CTDOT will continue to coordinate with local historic stakeholders through project completion.

8.5.2. Design Charrettes

CTDOT sponsored two design charrettes in Norwalk with project historic stakeholders through the preparation of the 30 percent design. The purpose of the design charrettes was to identify historic stakeholder concerns and solicit historic stakeholder input on key design elements of the replacement bridge.

For the first charrette, held on August 13, 2015, CTDOT presented alternative concepts on different aspects of the bridge design and solicited feedback from project stakeholders. There were 22 attendees, including project historic stakeholders, and agency and consultant representatives. CTDOT used the results of the first charrette to inform project design. Based on a review of conceptual design renderings, project historic stakeholders provided input on the designs of the superstructure, control house, east and west abutments, approach span, pedestrian trails, and high towers.

CTDOT held the second charrette on February 24, 2016, to update project historic stakeholders, gather input on project elements, establish dialog on historic elements and project effects, and gather information to develop the project MOA. There were 30 attendees, including project historic stakeholders, the City of Norwalk, and agency and consultant representatives. Attendees reviewed the project's progress to date, including a review of historic resources, archaeological resources, and bridge design updates. The group discussed other design components of the project, including the control house, west approach span, bridge approach span options, east and west abutments and walls, and high towers. Potential mitigation concepts focused on above-ground resources, as archaeological resources are unknown at this time. It was determined that mitigation measures must be rail-related and local, and could include interactive elements for children on swing bridges, booklets, traveling exhibits, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programming on rail bridges.

CTDOT's third charrette with project historic stakeholders and the City of Norwalk is proposed to be held concurrent with or immediately following the public review of the EA/EIE. In the third charrette, CTDOT will update stakeholders on the below-ground cultural resource investigations and work with stakeholders to finalize project mitigation presented in the MOA.