
From: Alexander, Mark W
Sent: Wednesday, July 06, 2016 5:29 PM
To: Fleming, Kevin
Subject: FW: Urgent: Westport Bridge No. 01349

Importance: High

Another comment letter.

Mark W. Alexander

Transportation Assistant Planning Director
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From: [mailto:]
Sent: Friday, July 01, 2016 3:51 PM
To: Alexander, Mark W
Cc:
Subject: Urgent: Westport Bridge No. 01349
Importance: High

Via Email and First Class Mail.

To:
Mark W. Alexander
Transportation Assistant Planning Director
CTDOT, Bureau of Policy and Planning
2800 Berlin Turnpike,
Newington, CT 06131

Re:
Rehabilitation Study Report
Bridge No. 01349
Issued June 2016
State Project No. 0158-212

Dear Mr. Alexander,

I am a Westport resident and I strongly support preservation of the Saugatuck Swing Bridge, which is one of Westport's most important and iconic historical resources, and is greatly valued by those of us who live here and use it every day.

It contributes to the special character of Saugatuck Village and prevents large trucks from using our local streets and endangering pedestrians and bikers.

As former Chairman of Westport's Municipal Tree Board, with training funded by

CT DEEP/Urban Forestry relative to tree biology, tree law and multiple aspects of Urban Forest "best-practices"--I am familiar with important USDA metrics related to air, soil and water quality.

As an observer/participant to the State Vegetation Management Task Force--convened by way of Governor Malloy and issued to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental protection--I persisted in asking for evidence-based metrics that would incontestably support the Task Force's findings relative to air, soil and water quality--as well as the closely associated increased residential and commercial real-estate values when Urban Forestry and Conservation issues are appropriately addressed. Within the Final Task Force Report are USDA metrics which has subsequently helped our municipality make the right choices in funding and land use.

These metrics--directly related to maintaining and improving residential and real estate values--serve not only residents, but our municipality's coffers by keeping Westport a valued and sought-after community in which to live.

Subsequently, I have broadened scope of inquiry and advocacy beyond Urban Forestry, to include Land and Water Conservation--action which has positively impacted Municipal Planning & Zoning practices.

Given this background, the following are only several of many concerns that need to be recognized in addition to important historic preservation:

1. If DOT were to remove the historic swing bridge and replace it with a larger bridge/off ramp for 1-95 over the Saugatuck River, there will be increased traffic with increased and harmful roadway run-off pollutants falling directly into this tidal river which flows directly into Westport's Compo Beach and Long Island Sound.

These residual pollutants will be cumulatively harmful to residents and visitors--particularly small children--who swim at Compo Beach.

And will have long-term negative impact, in many forms, within Long Island Sound waterways.

2. Replacing the historic swing bridge with any other structure will also likely cause negative impact to important riverbank vegetation which helps buffer and sequester pollutants. In addition, this existing vegetation is essential in maintaining a number of ecological balances--as well as providing irreplaceable natural beauty to one of the most important scenic gateways into Westport.

3. If the historic swing bridge were replaced with any other structure, and the mature riverbank vegetation buffers are disturbed, it will also negatively impact air quality--through increased traffic and loss of above-mentioned vegetation which sequesters a good deal of harmful air-borne particulate matter.

Westport--sandwiched between 1-95 and the Merritt Parkway--deserves the protection and stewardship of any aspect which fosters cleaner air to breathe and cleaner waterways.

Our Municipal and State elected officials should be championing the preservation of any vegetation-- instead of proposing more pavement, clear-cutting or increased traffic.

4. If the existing historic swing bridge is replaced, it will most likely Increase docking and pleasure boating further up the Saugatuck River into Downtown Westport.

This would only serve to further increase water and air pollutants--creating lasting damage for all Westport residents--at the expense of a small special interest group.

Yale School of Forestry hosted a recent Symposium related to wise practices in urban development: the consensus was that water conservation and protection was the single most important issue to be dealt with in the 21st century.

Westport needs its State and Local elected officials to understand and support these crucial evidence-based factors.

It has been pointed out that the Saugatuck Swing Bridge is our Nation's oldest, active span of its type and requires respectful conservation.

For this reason, and those described above, the Bridge should be repaired and preserved in its current dimensions, not enlarged, raised, moved or replaced.

Sincerely,
Pamela Klomberg