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**From:** Steve Obsitnik < >  
**Sent:** Friday, July 01, 2016 5:04 PM  
**To:** DOT Environmental Planning  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Rehabilitation Study Report Bridge No. 01349 Issued June 2016 State Project No. 0158-212

Dear Mr. Alexander:

We are contacting you as a follow up to the June 15, 2016 meeting at Westport Town Hall. As you know, this meeting was for Conn DOT to present its "Rehabilitation Study Report" (RSR). We wanted to voice our concerns and emphasize that there is virtual unanimity against both of the options contemplated in the RSR.

Let us first start with a few questions:

- How does this proposed project improve quality of life for CT and Westport residents?
- Does CT really have the economic luxury to fix a bridge that has very low incidents?
- Aren't there more highly leveraged projects that would impact the lives of more people? For example, 95 and Merritt Parkway congestion.

Here are our concerns:

### **Economic Security**

Who is keeping view on the big picture? Connecticut has problems. We all bear responsibility for over \$100 billion in funded and unfunded liabilities (about \$28,000 per person). Our population growth is effectively flat compared to a national average of 2.5% growth annually. Job growth has been effectively non-existent for thirty years. Finally, we just closed a total state budget deficit of over \$1.3billion for FY15-16 with more deficits for the FY16-17 starting today. Is now the time to spend \$20-40M in a bridge remodel? We do recognize that an investment in infrastructure is important, but it should be targeted at fixing the problems just stated. People in Connecticut are hurting and any changes to this bridge in the RSR does nothing to impact their lives.

### **Personal Safety**

We have attended the local meetings and have been disappointed at the misinformation regarding the safety of the bridge and reported incidences. This information is at best misleading to the population. We understand that over a five-year time frame, Conn DOT only referenced 16 accidents on the bridge. Furthermore, the size

dimensions of the bridge impacted only two of these incidents. With over 13,000 vehicles crossing the bridge per day, that equals only 0.000008% incident rate per crossing (2 incidents divided by 23,750,000 crossings). This is better reliability than most any bridge crossing I think you will find. Wouldn't we want this level of reliability in all our daily services from the DMV to airport security? This simply counters Conn DOT's point that the dimensions of the bridge are a safety concern. Do you disagree?

The RSR simply inserts more safety concerns for citizens both commuters, families and children. Any change including construction and eventual implementation of the RSR will create an unsafe environment. In particular, increased traffic volume or the introduction of large format trucks in residential neighborhoods that were not designed to handle this traffic, and will not be adjusted in the RSR to handle this new traffic load, is irresponsible. Have you studied and included the broader neighborhood impact of your plan? Are you aware of the unintended consequences the RSR will have? Change in traffic flow, road maintenance, traffic patterns, noise, enforcement, property value impact and grand list implications among them. And most importantly, will Conn DOT study the points of failure in the plan which could lead to person harm and, hopefully not, any fatality.

### **Quality of Life**

With falling Connecticut home prices and lack of population growth, shouldn't we be looking to improve quality of life and preserve/enhance our communities? The bridge is on the National Register of Historic Places and adds to this goal. For well over 100 years the citizens of Westport have come together to preserve this important piece of our history and future. Why is this a continued effort by the State of Connecticut to change this bridge? Aren't there bigger projects we should be focused on as a state?

Let's play to our strengths as a state: Beautiful towns, incredible schools, flowing rivers that embrace the community in a safe environment compared to the rest of the country. We have many problems to work on together. This bridge is the least among them. We should work together to ensure the safety of the bridge and preserve its current physical dimension and aesthetics while doing what is right for the people of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Steve Obsitnik

Suzanne Tager