
From: Teri Guma < >
Sent: Friday, July 01, 2016 5:16 PM
To: DOT Environmental Planning;
Subject: The Saugatuck River Swing Bridge

Dear Mr. Alexander,

I'm a resident of Westport, CT and I have driven over the Saugatuck River Swing Bridge for over two decades. On most weekdays I commute by rail to and from NYC via Westport's Metro North train station, and therefore I cross the bridge on a twice daily basis. In all of these years, I have never experienced or witnessed a vehicular or pedestrian accident on or near the bridge. The DOT has created the impression in its RSR that the small dimensions of the bridge are responsible for a high accident rate on the span. Based on my twenty-plus years of experience travelling across the bridge, the complete opposite is true. The bridge is safer than most busy intersections BECAUSE it is small and, as such, it warrants slow speeds and a driver's focused attention. It is a disservice to our community and to the bridge itself to imply otherwise – the bridge's petite dimensions improve its safety rather than diminish it.

I also love the idea that this old bridge has rested in this exact same location and has served Westport residents in the same way for 130 years. For well over a century, we have driven our carriages/cars across this bridge (or walked) "to get to the other side." It's very existence today is such a rarity; there remains no other bridge in the nation of its type like it. This alone should be reason enough to carefully preserve it just as it is – in its original location and in its original dimensions. In fact, more than most bridges, it should be honored and celebrated for these exact qualities, not criticized, altered or destroyed because of them. When repairs are needed, they should be made with preservation as the primary motivation. And, going forward, proper care and maintenance should be undertaken by the DOT so that naturally occurring corrosion is caught and corrected early, or prevented entirely. The Saugatuck Swing Bridge is Westport's Statue of Liberty – it is that iconic to us.

Westporters don't NEED this bridge to be bigger. We didn't generate this request for more. The bridge isn't located on a large thoroughfare that passes through our town; it's a quaint country bridge on an equally quaint, two-lane road that leads from the small village of Saugatuck into a highly residential area lined with historic homes. That's the way it has always been and we like it that way. A wider and taller bridge will tempt large trucks to depart from I-95 to avoid accidents and delays – their GPS navigators and traffic apps like WAZE will direct them to the Saugatuck Bridge where they'll inundate the bridge and surrounding neighborhoods in search of the next best way back to I-95. We Westporters are no strangers to the havoc that traffic plays in our lives. With I-95, the Merritt Parkway, and Route 1 crossing through our town, we deal with traffic delays on a daily basis, no matter where we go and at what time of day. Allowing large trucks to access the Saugatuck Bridge will add insult to injury in our community...and by injury, I mean in more ways than one. Accidents (both pedestrian and vehicular) will increase, not decrease. Traffic will increase, not decrease. Noise, pollution and property damage will increase, not decrease. Safety will be compromised, not improved. Property values will fall, not rise. There are NO advantages for us and plenty of liabilities.

For these reasons, the bridge should be repaired and preserved in its current dimensions, not enlarged, raised, moved or replaced.

*Sincerely,
Teri Guma*