

**Department of Transportation
State Project No. 155-176
Intersection Improvements at Bishop's Corner
Route 44, Route 218, and North Main Street
Town of West Hartford**

**Public Informational Meeting
July 13, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Representatives Present:

Connecticut Department of Transportation:

Scott Bushee, P.E., – Principal Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Joseph D. Arsenault, P.E., – Project Manager – Division of Highway Design
Andrew T. Esposito, P.E., – Project Engineer – Division of Highway Design
Tushar Gaddi – Project Designer – Division of Highway Design
Colin R. Baummer, P.E., – Traffic Engineer – Division of Traffic Engineering
Matthew Geanacopoulos – Rights of Way Agent – Office of Rights of Way

Presentation:

- Mr. Andrew Esposito called the Public Informational Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. There were approximately 60 attendees in the zoom call and approximately 30 attendees watching on YouTube Live. The presentation was recorded and has been posted on the Departments YouTube page and a link is also available on the project webpage. Mr. Esposito opened the presentation by introducing the representatives of the Department of Transportation (Department) and explained Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. He encouraged attendees to take the optional survey and provided information on how to access the survey.
- Mr. Esposito provided project background information and discussed the existing conditions. He then described the issues at the project location, which included long cross walks, poorly maintained refuge islands, and inadequate pedestrian facilities. He showed the 4 alternatives that were discussed with the Department and Town of West Hartford.
- Mr. Tushar Gaddi presented the proposed design for the project. He explained that the purpose of the project was to improve pedestrian mobility and overall operations at the intersection. Mr. Gaddi discussed removing the refuge islands, simplifying and shortening the existing crosswalks, updating sidewalks and sidewalk ramps to be ADA complaint, and also discussed drainage improvements. Mr. Matthew Geanacopoulos discussed the property acquisition process.
- Mr. Esposito presented potential utility conflicts, construction impacts, and possible ROW acquisitions. He then went over the schedule and estimated construction cost.
- After the presentation, Mr. Joseph Arsenault invited attendees to submit questions and comments through the Zoom question and answer portal.

Public comments and questions:

- An attendee asked why there were no dedicated bike lanes in the proposed concept. Mr. Esposito explained that the current lane configuration doesn't provide enough space to include dedicated bike lanes.
- An attendee brought up concerns about the lack of shoulder space along the roads. Mr. Esposito responded that the existing shoulders are very narrow and given the heavily developed environment, getting additional space is difficult but the shoulders will be increased wherever possible.
- An attendee asked if bike boxes could be placed at the intersection. Mr. Baummer responded that there are some areas in West Hartford that are using bike boxes and that the Traffic Unit will take a closer look at this option.
- An attendee asked what the Department's plan was to give bikers more space since there is not enough shoulder space. Mr. Arsenault stated that The Department's Highway Design Unit (Highways) is going to investigate installing bike ramps for cyclist to use as they approach the intersection so they can easily access the sidewalk. Mr. Arsenault also stated that he recognized the desire for bike accommodations and said that he would plan on attending a meeting with the Bike West Hartford group on July 15, 2023.
- An attendee asked about the proposed lane widths. Mr. Esposito stated that all combined and through lanes will have a width of 11' and turning lanes will be 10' wide, which is on the lower end of the Departments standards to get as much shoulder space as possible.
- An attendee expressed their concerns about the removal of the exclusive right-turn lane on North Main Street northbound onto Route 44 and the exclusive right-turn lane for Route 44 westbound onto Route 218. Mr. Baummer explained that those recorded turning movements weren't as high as the Route 218 southbound right turn onto Route 44 and the Route 44 eastbound right turn onto North Main Street. Highways will investigate the benefits of implementing an exclusive right-turn lane for Route 44 eastbound onto Route 218.
- An attendee asked if anything could be done about the lanes merging on Route 218 northbound. Mr. Baummer said that this will be further investigated by the Department.
- An attendee asked if the intersection signal lights would cycle automatically 24/7 or if there will be a priority for the Route 44 green light. Mr. Baummer explained that the signals will operate based on detection and not cycle lengths.
- An attendee suggested eliminating right turns on red at the intersection. Mr. Baummer explained the Department was still investigating implementing no right on red at this intersection.
- An attendee expressed concerns regarding the intersection of Flagg/Sims Road and the Staples Driveway on the western leg of Route 44. They talked about the awkward geometry of the roadway and said it was difficult for drivers on Flagg Road to get to Route 44 due to the vehicles queued up from Sims Road. Mr. Arsenault said that the

Department would investigate further and discuss with Town Officials to see if there is anything that can be done to improve that intersection.

- An attendee expressed concerns about people using Starkel Road to cut over from Route 44 to Route 218 and believed the number of vehicles cutting through Starkel would increase if the exclusive right turn lane on Route 44 westbound onto Route 218 was removed. Mr. Arsenault stated that Highways would take a second look at that area to determine whether to keep the exclusive right turn lane on Route 44 westbound Route 218.
- An attendee expressed concerns about the wide shoulder adjacent to the combined through-right turn lane on North Main Street northbound and asked what's stopping vehicles from using this space to turn right from North Main Street to Route 44 eastbound instead of staying in the through-right turn lane. Mr. Arsenault said that the edge of road is wider here to accommodate large turning vehicles. Highways will investigate possible treatments such as colored pavement to deter vehicles from using this space.
- An attendee asked if the Department had investigated only permitting "right outs" at the plaza entrances between the Bishop's Corner intersection and the signalized intersection on North Main Street, south of Bishop's Corner. Mr. Arsenault said that the Department would discuss these options with the Town.
- An attendee asked if there was a way to place a mid-block crosswalk between the Marshalls parking lot and Whole Foods parking lot on North Main Street. Mr. Arsenault responded that North Main Street is a local road, but Highways will discuss with the Town.
- An attendee expressed concerns about the right only exit near the Bank of America ATM, saying it was difficult to get to the left turn lane on Route 44 eastbound. Mr. Baummer stated that it was a tough movement to make, and the best solution would be to utilize the other exits within the plaza.
- An attendee asked if a road diet had been considered for this project. Mr. Arsenault stated that typically roadways with an average daily traffic (ADT) of 10,000 vehicles or less are good candidates for road diets and roadways with an ADT of 10,000 – 15,000 vehicles would still be considered but Route 44 has more than 22,000 vehicles; so further lane reduction is not feasible.
- An attendee asked why the Department wasn't considering a roundabout for this project since they are proven to be safer. Mr. Arsenault said that a roundabout alternative was investigated during the development phase but was not implemented due to the high ADTs; this would require a multilane roundabout which would require a larger area to build and would result in extensive ROW impacts.
- An attendee suggested implementing a signalized crossing for pedestrians walking to the islands. Mr. Baummer noted that this would require a longer pedestrian interval and would increase congestion at the intersection.
- An attendee proposed that changes be kept to a minimum and the project should only include bringing the refuge islands up to standard. Mr. Esposito explained that if the

Department only made improvements to the refuge islands, pedestrians would still have to cross the channelized right turn lanes. The removal of the channelized right turn lanes provides pedestrians with shorter and more conventional intersection crossings.

- An attendee asked if cameras would be implemented at the intersection. Mr. Baummer noted that traffic cameras for vehicle detection would be used for signal phasing at the intersection but not for speed detection.
- An attendee asked about implementing crosswalks that light up for pedestrians. Mr. Baummer said implementing something like that would be a maintenance issue especially when it comes to snowplows in the winter months.
- An attendee asked why the State is not using a “no right turn when walk light is illuminated” sign instead of instructing drivers to yield to pedestrians. Mr. Baummer explained that the sign would instruct drivers with a green light to “yield to pedestrians” if the pedestrian crossing is activated. For drivers with the red light, the sign would display “No Right Turn on Red” if the pedestrian crossing is activated.
- An attendee asked why the project was coming out to more than \$5 million dollars. Mr. Esposito explained that the \$5.5 million dollar cost is typical for an intersection project of this size which contains two signals and a large amount of pavement and sidewalk work.
- An attendee asked why there was so much concrete as opposed to landscaping on the southeast corner of the intersection. Mr. Esposito stated that the plan was conceptual, and the Department would be working with the Town to discuss landscape and hardscape treatments throughout the project.
- An attendee asked if business entrances would have to be closed during construction. Mr. Esposito explained that no entry points of businesses would be blocked during construction.
- An attendee asked if construction would result in lane closures. Mr. Esposito explained that there will be minimal disruptions during rush hour. Lane closures will occur during off peak hours or at night.
- An attendee asked what property will have ROW impacts as part of the project. Mr. Esposito said that the only partial land acquisition currently proposed is located on the Phillips 66 gas station property, at the northwest corner of the intersection. This is to accommodate the larger sidewalk width.
- An attendee asked what would be done about flooding at the intersection. Mr. Esposito stated that Highways will do a drainage analysis and will include drainage improvements as part of this project. After a follow-up question about the design storm used for analysis, Mr. Esposito stated that the design storm would be a 10-yr storm and a 50-yr storm would be used for drainage inlets at low points in the roadway.

Conclusion:

The Department encouraged the attendees to submit comments through phone or email and directed them to the project website for further information ([0155-0176 West Hartford \(ct.gov\)](https://www.westhartfordct.gov/0155-0176)). It was explained that the comment period would run through July 27, 2023. Overall, the project was well received by those in attendance and the meeting ended at approximately 8:45 pm.