

News

8/25/2020 CT DOT Presents 2021-2024 SWRMPO Draft TIP and Public Involvement Procedures Includes Funding for Cribari Bridge Project

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Westport, Conn. – The South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) has announced the start of the public comment period for its draft 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a dynamic list of all highway and public transit projects proposed to be undertaken utilizing Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funding during federal fiscal years 2021-2024 within Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.

The draft TIP is being updated and will be considered for endorsement at the SWRMPO meeting on October 15, 2020. It is being circulated beforehand to ensure that community concerns are properly included. In accordance with the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) Public Participation Plan, SWRMPO is initiating a public comment period, which began on August 24, 2020 and will conclude at noon on October 09, 2020.

Also considered for endorsement are the CT Department of Transportation (CTDOT) draft Air Quality Conformity Determinations for Ozone and Particulates. All projects that were evaluated for Air Quality Conformity, were confirmed with the Air Quality standards, so that there is no negative impact on the ozone or particulate matter.

Included in the Town of Westport's project list is the allocation of over \$40M beginning in FY 2023 to be awarded after the four-year TIP period for the rehabilitation/replacement of the State-owned Bridge No. 01349, a/k/a William F. Cribari Memorial Bridge.

During the 2017 TIP period (August 2017), the MPO voted to delete the proposed Cribari Bridge rehabilitation/replacement funding for FY 2021/ FY 2022 at the request of the First Selectman. At the time, the CTDOT had not begun an Environmental Impact, nor clearly defined how it intended to rehabilitate the

bridge. The removal of the Funding approval was delayed until the CTDOT completed a more thorough assessment with consideration of community input and consideration of the Cribari Bridge's impact on the character of the Saugatuck neighborhood, traffic concerns and design alternatives.

In 2018, CTDOT established a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to assist the Department in its decision-making process for rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge. The project stakeholders provided perspectives on a variety of issues, including safety, mobility, environmental concerns, and historic considerations. The PAC reviewed several alternatives for rehabilitation, including a no-build option, and provided feedback.

The PAC completed its assignment on May 8, 2019. The CTDOT is continuing coordination with other state and federal agencies as well as various stakeholders to consider specific concerns, such as the various alternatives and impacts on historic properties. The CTDOT was expected to issue its preliminary Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) document in early 2020, but that has been delayed. Following its publication, there will be a public hearing and comment period after which CT DOT will make a recommendation of a preferred design alternative. After all public comments have been addressed by CTDOT, the complete document, including public comments received and a record of the responses will be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration and the State Office of Policy & Management for decision.

The project will explore options that accommodate safe vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and marine travel, are resilient to the changing shoreline climate and environmental conditions, and consider the historic character of the bridge. No decision or intent for the ultimate design of a rehabilitated or replacement bridge has been made. The Town of Westport has not endorsed any plans for the Cribari Bridge and continues to await a conclusion to the CTDOT (EA/EIE).

Mr. Marpe also stated, "I will provide commentary on the Cribari Bridge as a part of the TIP public involvement procedures. I will remind the WestCOG and the CT DOT that we anticipate a thorough draft EA/EIE with recommendations that address all of the concerns and positions shared by the key stakeholders who participated in the PAC meetings. My staff and I will follow the TIP closely and continue to stay abreast of the environmental findings for the Cribari Bridge rehabilitation or replacement options. I remain committed to keeping the residents and businesses of Westport informed in a timely manner about this very important project."

Comments on the draft TIP or draft air quality conformity may be made by mail to the WestCOG office (1 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT 06482), email: plan@westcog.org, telephone: 475-323-2071 or at the virtual public information meeting scheduled for September 22, 2020 8pm-9pm. Please go to westcog.org to access the link for the virtual meeting date. To register to make a comment at the virtual public information meeting please contact plan@westcog.org and provide your name as well as the subject matter you are commenting on. Comments will be addressed on a first-come, first-served basis and the meeting will conclude at 9pm.

The draft 2021-2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and draft Public Involvement Procedures (PIP) for CTDOT will also be available for review and comment from August 24, 2020 to October 9, 2020. Information on these documents and review is available on the [CTDOT STIP Website](#); Comments should be directed to Ms. Maribeth Wojenski, P.O. Box 317546, Newington, CT 06131.

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