

To: Cost Review Subcommittee
From: Sotoria Montanari, CRCOG Program Manager
Date: April 12, 2019
c: Transportation Committee
Rob Aloise, CRCOG Transportation Director
Duane Martin, Town of West Hartford
Subject: LOTCIP scope change request for Mountain Road in West Hartford

A Cost Review Subcommittee meeting will take place at 11 AM at **CRCOG, 241 Main Street, 3rd floor Hartford, CT** prior to the Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, April 22, 2019. At the meeting, we will be discussing and acting on the following:

- LOTCIP scope change request for the Mountain Road Project in West Hartford

Mountain Road at Albany Avenue Project in West Hartford (L155-0002)

This project was approved under the 2015 LOTCIP Solicitation as an Intersection Improvement Project and has progressed through the Preliminary Design Phase. The Town of West Hartford is requesting changes to the project's proposed bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. The town is requesting a scope modification that will allow for removal of an existing 500 feet of sidewalk along Mountain Road on the southeast side of the intersection (including its associated crosswalk across Albany Avenue). Town staff has indicated that multiple other Complete Streets elements including providing consistent north-south bike lanes and new cross-walks with rapid flashing beacons at other locations are included the current design, however concerns with the elimination of existing sidewalk have been raised by the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission (see attached letter)

As stated in the project's application, "the primary purpose and need for this project is to provide additional intersection capacity to accommodate the existing and future vehicular demand.....The secondary purpose and need of the project is a Complete Streets design that will provide suitable accessibility to and through the intersection for all users." The need for the elimination of a segment of existing sidewalk has arisen due to the inability to obtain right-of-way following proposed widening necessary to solve for the project's primary purpose and need and the town's desire to provide continuous north-south bike lanes along Mountain Road through the Albany Avenue intersection. Additional information regarding existing conditions, and application phase and current concept plan conditions are provided in more detail below.

Existing Conditions: Currently, Albany Avenue and Mountain Road carry ADT's of about 25,000 and 11,600 respectively. Albany Avenue is two-lanes in each direction, with exclusive left turn lanes developed on each approach to the intersection. Mountain Road is one-lane in each direction with an exclusive left turn lane developed on its northbound approach to Albany Avenue, and both exclusive left and right turn lanes developed on its southbound approach. Bike-pedestrian accommodations along Albany Avenue are limited to narrow (typically 1'-2') shoulders. Bike and pedestrian accommodations commonly appear along Mountain Road, however are not continuous. Bike accommodations include varying shoulder width (typically more than 3-4 feet) with bike lane symbols where sufficiently wide, however the shoulders are squeezed to about 1' in two segments alongside where left turn lanes are developed. Sidewalks typically exist along one side of Mountain Road, however there is a 430 foot gap immediately north of Albany Avenue. A crosswalk is provided at Albany Avenue with push buttons that activate a concurrent traffic signal phase (no pedestrian signals are provided).

Concept Plan in Application: This concept plan limited proposed changes almost exclusively to the Mountain Road. The initial application concept plan included the following improvements:

- Revision of Mountain Road’s southbound approach lanes from exclusive left, exclusive thru, and exclusive right to exclusive left, exclusive thru, and shared thru/right
- Providing consistent 5’ wide bike lanes along both sides of Mountain Road
- Providing additional 430’ of sidewalk to fill the existing sidewalk gap along Mountain Road just north of Albany Avenue.

Current Concept Plan: Based on CTDOT feedback, to meet the project’s primary purpose and need an additional northbound through lane was required to better accommodate existing and future traffic volumes. The change resulted in a northbound approach lane arrangement of exclusive left, exclusive thru, and shared thru/right lanes. This change required an additional approach and receiving lane in the northbound direction, increasing the overall width of the roadway. These proposed roadway modifications meet the primary purpose and need based on the Level of Service Analysis (LOS).

Due to right-of-way constraints, grading issues, and property impacts resulting from the increased roadway width, the addition of continuous bike lanes and the proposed sidewalk along Mountain Road north of Albany Avenue could not both be accomplished. The Town solicited input from abutting property owners, the Town’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission, and the general public concerning the proposed project and developed several alternative proposals in an attempt to address responses. Based on field observations and feedback from stakeholders, the town concluded that more people drive and bike on Mountain Road and there is little to no pedestrian activity near the intersection. Therefore the town decided to provide continuous 4’ wide bicycle lanes in both directions in lieu of retaining the existing 500 feet of sidewalk just south of Albany Avenue. Without a sidewalk connection on the north side of the intersection, this existing section of sidewalk provides minimal value.

Additionally, the current proposal includes the addition of two mid-block crosswalks equipped with push button rapid flashing beacon lights (north of Albany Avenue at Fairfield Road and south of the Albany Avenue intersection at Mountain Farms Road) to provide walkable connections for adjacent neighborhoods. The Town feels that the proposed improvements are in concert with the Town’s Complete Street policy.

The following table provides a comparison of the existing, approved and current proposal of the bike/pedestrian improvements for the project.

| | Existing | Approved Application | Current Proposal |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Additional Bike Accommodations | Unmarked northbound bike lanes stop before Albany Ave; inadequate space to expand | Five-foot wide bike lanes extended to Albany Ave (northbound); shared lane (southbound) | Continuous four-foot marked bike lanes both directions along Mountain Road through intersection |
| Pedestrian Accommodations | No sidewalk connection from Lovelace to Mountain Road (north of Albany Ave); no crosswalks | Sidewalk gap eliminated northeast side of Mountain Road to the west side | Existing sidewalk (500 ft) removed on southeast side to accommodate bike lanes; Installation of new mid-block crossing with rapid flashing beacons and signage at two neighborhood intersections to accommodate residents |

To incorporate scope change for the LOTCIP West Hartford Mountain Road at Albany Avenue Project (L155-0002), staff would like the committee to consider approval of scope modification allowing for the removal of an existing 500 feet of sidewalk on the southeast side of the intersection.

WEST HARTFORD PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE COMMISSION

*%Sandra Fry, Chair
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March 18, 2019

Duane Martin
Town Engineer
Town of West Hartford
50 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107

Dear Duane,

At the March 11 meeting of the West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission, we discussed the latest concept for the intersection modification at Mountain Road and Albany Avenue (Route 44.) The Commission is very appreciative of the effort that you and your staff have expended in working to modify the original design in response to our comments.

The Commission continues to be concerned with the proposed elimination of an existing sidewalk and the precedent this sets. Our concern is in terms of both future projects on other roads in West Hartford, and the possibility of one day having sidewalks on Mountain Road. We understand that it is difficult to achieve all aspects of a **complete street** on a road that is being repaved, where you are limited by the curb to curb width. For this specific project, which entails widening of the existing right-of-way, we believe a complete street design improvement should be implemented. The complete street design should include facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, enhancing multimodal connections and opportunities within the Town.

As you have rightly noted and is demonstrated by field observations and various exercise tracking applications such as Strava, Mountain Road is a primary, and almost exclusively the only, north/south bicycle network connection in West Hartford. Adding travel lanes to the road as this project will do, makes it more aggressive and less comfortable, and **potentially less safe** for bicyclists.

Generally, on a road of this size and speed, a wider bike lane than four feet would be warranted. A bike box, allowing bicyclists to position themselves ahead of the stop bar at the traffic signal would also be helpful on Mountain Road, to allow bicyclists to avoid being placed in an unsafe position with right turning vehicles.

We understand the difficult design parameters that you are dealing with and suggest that the larger issue at this intersection is not a lack of vehicle lanes on Mountain Road, but a signal timing system that unnecessarily provides too little green time to the Mountain Road approaches. Can the Town investigate this further with DOT to determine if signal timing can be changed in such a way that additional lanes are not needed on Mountain Road? If this is not possible, we urge the Town to take its

Complete Streets Policy to heart and redouble its efforts to provide for all road users, even when it is difficult to do so.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sandra M. Fry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandra" being the most prominent.

Sandra M. Fry, Chair

West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission