

Construction Matters

Stamford Train Station Enhancement Program:

Passengers who frequent the Stewart B. McKinney Transportation Center in Stamford have noticed significant changes over the last several months. This past May, the location of the corporate shuttle bus pickups and drop-offs was relocated from the taxi lane at Station Place on the south side of the station, to the Gateway, just off of North State Street. The change was made in an effort to reduce rush hour traffic in the taxi area and to accommodate the construction of a 1,100 space parking garage on Station Place, which is expected to begin this summer. Another recent change was the closing of the pedestrian tunnel that runs under the station to accommodate the replacement of the tunnel sections during the installation of the center island platforms. The closure, which will be in place through August, may also require some platform changes during off-peak hours and at night, so passengers should continue to allow extra time to meet their trains.

Other milestones on the Stamford Train Station Enhancement Project include the completion of the north tower escalators and the opening of the new eastbound platform. Construction has begun on the new eastbound center island platform.

A major renovation of the concourse area is also continuing. The lower concourse and entrance to the station at South State Street have been re-sided and enhanced with a waterfall. Improvements have also been made to the station's security system with the installation of 32 new surveillance cameras.

Officials from CTTRANSIT and the Connecticut Department of Transportation recently opened a new commuter storefront where passengers can purchase their daily or monthly bus passes and obtain the latest scheduling information.

I-95 Bridgeport Reconstruction Program:

Extensive progress has been made on the eight-year I-95 Bridgeport Reconstruction Program, with the recent completion of two phases of the project — the Yellow Mill Channel and the Harbor Bridge. A new highway bridge now carries traffic over the Yellow Mill Channel, with three through lanes, a fourth operational lane and full capacity left and right shoulders. A modernized Interchange 29 on I-95, redesigned to improve traffic flow at the intersections of Connecticut Avenue, Seaview Avenue and Stratford Avenue, offers area residents a more direct and efficient artery between downtown Bridgeport and the east end and improved access from the highway. Completion of the Harbor Bridge Construction project brings a new highway section and bridges between Warren Street and East Main Street, providing new, full shoulder capacity on I-95 over Bridgeport Harbor and improved access to the ferry terminal.

In October, The Connecticut Department of Transportation received a national award for the reconstruction of I-95 over the Yellow Mill Channel. ConnDOT was recognized with a silver award by the National Quality Initiative (NQI), (now the National Partnership for Highway Quality) a consortium of local industry groups.

ConnDOT's award in the Risk Taking category was based on the final results of the project, the magnitude of the risk taken, the number of entities involved, the short and long range impact and the cost/time savings of the project approach.

The Yellow Mill Channel project was the initial phase of the \$400 million Bridgeport Corridor Reconstruction Program. The project was completed a full year ahead of schedule after ConnDOT officials agreed to allow the contractor to reduce the number of construction stages from five to two, saving \$700,000.

The final phase of the I-95 Bridgeport reconstruction program began in March and is scheduled for completion in December, 2004. Over the next several years crews will be working to reconstruct nine bridges between the Fairfield town line and Worden Avenue.

Sikorsky Bridge Replacement Project:

After more than 60 years, the Sikorsky Bridge connecting the Merritt and Wilbur Cross Parkways over the Housatonic River is being replaced. The project is expected to take 40-months to complete and about \$84 million to build, and will be conducted in two stages. The initial phase of the operation is limited to the northbound lanes along the Merritt Parkway from Exit 53 to the entrance of the Sikorsky Bridge.

During the first phase of the project, a new span will be built just south of the existing bridge. This new span will carry two lanes of traffic in each direction. When the new span is complete and connected with the approaches from the parkways, traffic will be shifted to it from the old bridge. Once the traffic has been diverted onto the new structure, the old bridge will be dismantled. A second new span will then be built in the exact location occupied by the original Sikorsky Bridge. The new bridge will have a bicycle/pedestrian lane that is separated from traffic and connects to Route 110. The existing steel grid surface will be replaced with concrete and blacktop. The new bridge will have full shoulder capacity to accommodate breakdowns and minor accidents, and a third operational lane in each direction to improve traffic flow.

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Sikorsky Bridge Project (cont'd)

Intensive studies have been conducted in preparation for the project concerning wetlands, floodplains, soils, watershed and groundwater, fisheries, wildlife and vegetation habitats, sensitive and endangered species, air quality, noise abatement, hazardous materials disturbance, seismic vulnerability, and archaeology.

MetroPool is working with ConnDOT to produce an informational video and brochure on the project, which will be available in early summer.

Arch Street Construction Project:

A four-year project began this past spring to completely replace the existing railroad bridge structures at: Arch Street, Hamilton Avenue and North Water Street in Greenwich. In addition, the 90 year old, 20 mile long overhead catenary wire system that powers the New Haven Line trains is being replaced with a modern system. Bridge plates have been installed at the Cos Cob, Riverside, Old Greenwich, Greenwich, Port Chester and Rye train stations as work on the project progresses. The bridge plates are designed to allow access to the train from the platform when the trains are on the center tracks.

The project also brings improvements to the Greenwich train station including replacement of the existing pedestrian walkway, the addition of two new stairways to and from the station and improvements to the existing stairs, easier access to the station's ticket booth for physically challenged passengers, and the extension of the train platforms to accommodate longer trains.

Most of the project work will occur at Arch Street, where the overpass is being replaced by a new bridge. One very important factor resulting from this reconstruction is the addition of a left turn lane from Arch Street onto Railroad Avenue. This will facilitate traffic flow and also minimize the possibility of accidents and injuries at this very busy intersection.

The entire project is scheduled for completion in April, 2004. MetroPool and ConnDOT are preparing a brochure that will be mailed to area residents and businesses this summer. Public information meetings have been held with residents and businesses; additional meetings will be held as the project continues.

Interchange 8 Reconstruction Program (Tarrytown, New York):

The 30-month, \$187 million project to reconstruct the I-287/87 interchange (Interchange 8) from the Tappan Zee Bridge Toll Plaza to the Saw Mill River Parkway on the Cross Westchester Expressway that began this spring is designed to improve mobility, provide more reliable service, increase safety and add convenience for motorists.

The project will include reconfiguration of Interchange 8 and the reconstruction of the Tappan Zee Bridge toll plaza. Two additional EZ-Pass lanes will allow vehicles to travel at speeds of up to 20mph through the plaza. The reconstruction of the I-287/87 interchange will create three through-lanes of I-287 traffic to be linked with I-87 in both directions.

The primary activity in the early phase of the project will be rock blasting along Route 9 in Tarrytown. Federal law requires that all traffic be stopped during the blasting operations, which are scheduled for Monday through Thursday, from 10 AM to 2 PM. Traffic will be stopped for up to 20 minutes per blast. In response to recent traffic delays, the New York State Thruway Authority implemented a traffic detour plan to reduce delays and maintain traffic flow through the Interchange 8 area. The detour plan will be used on an as needed basis during the approved blasting periods.

Actual blast times are being announced on the Thruway Authority's Highway Advisory Radio (530 AM) and on local radio and television stations. A toll free hotline has also been established for the latest information on scheduled traffic stoppages: 1-877-ABOUT-I-8 (1-877-226-8848).

MetroPool and the New York State Department of Transportation recently introduced a new e-mail information service for the project, targeting employers and commuters along the I-287 corridor as well as the northern Hudson Valley, New Jersey and southwestern Connecticut. The service provides free, bi-weekly updates on the project's progress and milestones. To date over 800 companies and individuals have requested the updates; most of the recipients are forwarding the e-mail to others in their organization. In addition to important construction information, the updates also include information on NYSDOT-sponsored transit and other commuter and employer services.

MetroPool will continue to work closely with the New York State Department of Transportation, the Rockland County Department of Planning and Transportation, and Westchester County's SMART COMMUTE program to update the public on the progress of this vitally important project, and to help businesses identify the commute alternatives that best suit their employees' needs.

The Departments of Transportation in Connecticut and New York are working with MetroPool to keep you informed on the projects' progress and of any impacts to the daily commute.

