



Commissioner's Office
Connecticut Department of Transportation



July 24, 2026

VIA E-MAIL

Rep. Aimee Berger-Girvalo
Legislative Office Building, Room 2301
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Aimee.Berger-Girvalo@cga.ct.gov

Dear Rep. Berger-Girvalo:

Subject: U.S. Route 7
Milepoint (MP) 16.9 to 21.1
Town of Ridgefield & City of Danbury

Thank you for convening the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), municipals leaders from Ridgefield and Danbury, and the state legislative delegations from Ridgefield and Danbury, to discuss the recent fatal crash on U.S. Route 7. The conversation was extensive and reflected the seriousness of the concerns.

CTDOT's Division of Traffic Engineering has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Danbury Road/Sugar Hollow Road (U.S. Route 7) corridor in the Town of Ridgefield, extending from Danbury Road (Route 35) north to the median divided section of U.S. Route 7 in the City of Danbury, approximately 0.3 miles south of Wooster Heights Road. The evaluation included an assessment of the existing roadway conditions, traffic operating conditions, and available crash data, and identified both short-term and long-term improvements to enhance safety and traffic operations along this corridor.

Existing Conditions

U.S. Route 7 is a north-south principal arterial serving the western portion of Connecticut and is an important regional commuter and freight corridor connecting the City of Danbury with the Towns of Ridgefield and Redding.

Beginning just north of Branchville Road (Route 102) and continuing north to Route 35, U.S. Route 7 consists of one travel lane in each direction. North of Route 35, the roadway transitions to a four-lane undivided highway approaching the limited-access portion of U.S. Route 7 in Danbury. The posted speed limit is 40 mph beginning just north of Route 102 and increases to 45 mph at a point 600 feet south of West Starrs Plain Road. Existing roadway features include several horizontal curves, signalized intersections, dedicated turn lanes, painted medians, and multiple commercial and residential access points. Extensive wetlands exist throughout and adjacent to the roadway's footprint.

In the late 2000's a $\pm$ 3.5-mile portion of U.S. Route 7 was widened from two lanes to four. In May 2024 this same portion of roadway was resurfaced as part of CTDOT's maintenance resurfacing program (MRP) which maintained the same configuration of 4 lanes with shoulders that generally provide six to eight feet in width. High visibility pavement markings were installed as part of the MRP, and sinusoidal centerline rumble strips (CLRS) were installed in April 2025. Sinusoidal CLRS were also more recently installed on U.S. Route 7 between Route 35 and the Ridgefield/Redding town line in June 2026.

Traffic Volumes

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes increase significantly as you progress northerly along U.S. Route 7 corridor. Recent traffic counts indicate the following:

- Just north of Branchville Road – 17,500 vehicles per day (2026)
- Just south of Danbury Road – 18,800 vehicles per day (2026)
- Just North of Danbury Road – 27,300 vehicles per day (2026)
- At Starrs Plain Road – 26,600 vehicles per day (2022)

- North of Starrs Plain Road – 30,200 vehicles per day (2025)

Vehicular Operating Speeds

Speed data collected along the corridor indicates that operating speeds substantially exceed the posted speed limit in several locations. At the intersection of U.S. Route 7 and Route 35, where the posted speed limit is 40 mph, the observed 85th percentile speed is 54.8 mph, approximately 15 mph above the posted speed limit. Similarly, in the vicinity of the Bennet's Farm Road intersection, where the posted speed limit is also 40 mph, the recorded 85th percentile speed is 59.6 mph, nearly 20 mph above the posted speed limit.

These recorded speeds indicate that a significant percentage of motorists are traveling well above the posted speed limit. The substantial difference between posted and operating speeds increases the potential for severe crashes, particularly along a corridor with numerous access points, intersections, and turning movements.

Crash Experience

A review of the crash experience along this corridor was conducted from the Redding Town Line north through Ridgefield to the median divided portion of U.S. Route 7 in the City of Danbury (mile point 13.1 to mile point 21.1).

The latest 3-year crash data from 07/01/2023 to 06/30/2026 indicate six fatal crashes occurred in the ±8 miles through Ridgefield north to the end of the study area. Five of the six fatal crashes involved head-on (front-to-front) collisions, and four of the six occurred south of the Danbury/Ridgebury Town line.

The most recent fatal crash occurred on July 13, 2026, near Milepoint 19.73 involving a motorcycle and SUV in a head-on collision, however the full details of that incident are yet to be released.

A second fatal crash occurred in this vicinity on September 10, 2023, near Milepoint 20.24. The investigation determined that a northbound vehicle was traveling the wrong way in the southbound lanes and collided head-on with a

southbound vehicle. This crash occurred in the divided highway section where opposing traffic is separated by both a grass median and a paved median treatment.

Other fatal crashes occurred on the undivided portions of the corridor and primarily involved vehicles crossing the centerline into opposing traffic, often associated with distracted driving, unsafe driving behavior, and/or excessive speed.

Current and Ongoing Planning Activities

In 2021, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) released the region's first Regional Transportation Safety Plan. This Plan analyzed four years of crash history across the region to identify locations with safety concerns and make recommendations for concepts to improve transportation safety. WestCOG subsequently was awarded a federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) implementation grant to make over 90 of the safety improvements identified in the Plan.

Transportation patterns change over time, and WestCOG is currently updating its safety plan. The data analysis for this plan has been finished. WestCOG expects to release the completed, updated safety plan in late 2026. This plan, which expands on the previous analysis to include statistical risk considerations and an additional six years of crash history, will include new maps, tables, and safety improvement recommendations ranging from short- to long-term. As before, WestCOG anticipates moving these recommendations into the project development pipeline for construction.

At the local level, the City of Danbury and the Town of Ridgefield have been awarded SS4A planning grants to develop local Safety Actions Plans. The development process for these plans, which complement the region's forthcoming regional safety plan and the state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan, is expected to be launched soon.

Recommendations:

Based on the conversation held last week at our convening, and the review conducted by CTDOT and work underway by WestCOG, CTDOT offers the following recommendations.

CTDOT/WestCOG Actions

- *CTDOT will advance the following near-term roadway modifications:*
 - Install oversized speed limit signs to increase sign visibility.
 - Refresh existing pavement markings, if needed.
 - Clear vegetation that may limit sign visibility, if needed.
 - Upgrade and replace damaged traffic signs, if needed.
 - Install speed reduction markings.
 - Evaluate/Install transverse rumble strips in the vicinity of speed limit reduction.
 - Continue the planned 2027 installation of High-Friction Surface Treatment (HFST) along two curves on U.S. Route 7 in Danbury under Project 0174-0490, in the vicinity of Starrs Plan Road (between milepoints 18.04 – 18.77).
- *CTDOT will evaluate the following mid-term recommendations:*
 - Review illumination options in the area.
 - Evaluate additional centerline and shoulder treatments.
 - Review opportunities for additional delineation and channelization.
 - Evaluate this corridor for:
 - Potential restriping opportunities to better define travel lanes.
 - Potential median treatments where/if appropriate.
- WestCOG will evaluate the following recommendations:
 - Review past plans to determine applicability to Route 7 corridor.
 - Continue the current safety planning initiatives.
 - If necessary, initiate additional planning efforts on this segment of Route 7.

Municipal Actions

Due to the substantial deviation between the posted speed and the operating speed along this corridor, CTDOT recommends that Ridgefield and Danbury consider the following actions:

- Install dynamic speed feedback ("Your Speed") signs:
 - It is recommended that the municipalities consider installing dynamic "Your Speed" signs. In recent years the State of Connecticut, through the University of Connecticut, has made available "Your Speed" signs for municipalities for situations such as this. When installed periodically, such signs have proven to be an effective countermeasure to reduce operating speeds, and the data collected by the devices can help local enforcement to focus their efforts on the most critical times of the day. Additional information is available at the [CT Safety Circuit Rider Program | T2 Center](#)
- High Visibility Enforcement:
 - The quickest and most effective solution to discourage high operating speeds and impaired driving is through increased law enforcement presence. CTDOT's Highway Safety Office offers several high visibility enforcement grant opportunities and may be able to support law enforcement through the provision of additional impaired driving enforcement grant funding.
- ATESDs:
 - Consider implementation of Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices (ATESDs), including speed safety cameras, in accordance with Public Act 23-116 and CTDOT guidance. CTDOT's Office of State Traffic Administration (OSTA) is available to meet and provide guidance on best practices in ATESD program design.

CTDOT recognizes the significant safety concerns raised and shares the commitment of our municipal, regional, and legislative partners to reduce

crashes and prevent future tragedies. CTDOT remains committed to partnering with local officials, WestCOG, law enforcement, and the public to advance both immediate safety enhancements and long-term solutions.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of these further, please do not hesitate to contact me

Sincerely,



Garrett T. Eucalitto
Commissioner

cc: Mayor Roberto Alves
First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Senator Joshua Kushner
Senator Cici Maher
Rep. Farley Santos
Rep. Raghieb Allie-Brennan
Rep. Constantine Savet
Rep. Patrick Callahan
Rep. Bob Godfrey
Rep. Ken Gucker
Patrick Ridenhour, Chief of Police - Danbury
Jeff Kreitz, Chief of Police - Ridgefield
Francis Pickering