



GREATER HARTFORD FLOOD COMMISSION



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December 13, 2016

James P. Redeker
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06111

RE: Hartford I-84 Viaduct Repair Project
Alternate I-84/I-91 Plan Support

Dear Commissioner Redeker:

The Greater Hartford Flood Commission enthusiastically and fully supports the I-84/I-91 proposal put forth by Congressman John B. Larson. Further, we request that the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) conduct an expedited study of this tunnel alternative either in conjunction with the ongoing I-84 Hartford Project to replace the Aetna Viaduct or as a part of the I-84/I-91 Interchange Study. Congressman Larson's plan would replace the viaduct with an underground bypass and interchange system, reclaim the Hartford and East Hartford Riverfronts, and create new levels on the land-side of the flood control system which would fortify the levees on the Hartford side of the river.

The City of Hartford is heavily dependent on the I-84 and I-91 highway system for its transportation needs, significant portions of which are interrelated with the City's flood control system--considered the largest of its kind in the Northeast. Modifications to the I-91 highway system, in particular, have occurred since the original levee construction and have potentially compromised the system's ability to provide the same level of flood protection as originally afforded.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has identified this "underseepage" control deficiency in the section of the Hartford Floodwall parallel to I-91 between the Bulkeley and Founders Bridges. The consequences of an underseepage related failure include excessive uplift pressures that could potentially cause the I-91 pavement structure to fail and allow for considerable seepage related flooding of the highway to occur. A large capital project, in the order of \$12.5 M, is needed to remedy this condition. In the short term, interim risk reduction measures for temporary mitigation are also needed. This deficiency and its associated capital improvement is included in a formal "SWIF" agreement that the City has formally entered into with USACE.

Replacing the I-84 viaduct presents a rare and historic opportunity to address the long-term infrastructure needs of the capital city and transform the region for generations to come. If we plan and invest wisely, we have the potential to correct the monumental design errors of the past and create a robust transportation system for the next century. It is crucial that we fully

consider the long-term viability of Hartford and the surrounding communities before choosing one alternative over another.

On November 9, 2016, Congressman Larson presented his 100-year plan to our organization. His plan would reroute I-84 underground from the area of Flatbush Avenue in West Hartford to the Charter Oak Bridge, extending underneath the Connecticut River to the vicinity of Roberts Street in East Hartford. It would also bury I-91 along the Connecticut River north of Riverside Park to the South Meadows, freeing up acres of land for development and recreation in Hartford and East Hartford, and repurpose sections of I-84 and I-91 into modern boulevards.

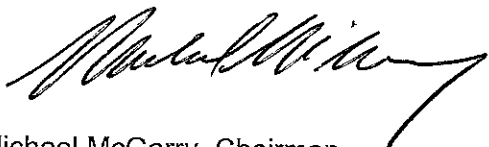
In addition to creating a vibrant, livable community, Congressman Larson's plan would also solve several major infrastructure challenges along this heavily travelled corridor. In particular, it would: allow I-84 to stay open during the construction phase; strengthen the levee system—an urgent threat to public safety; and, create a much needed bypass system for the significant amount of vehicles that pass through Hartford, freeing up our roads for local traffic.

From the Greater Hartford Flood Commission's perspective, we firmly believe that Congressman Larson's plan offers far greater advantages over DOT's current plan to replace the I-84 viaduct with a lowered highway section. We have concerns over the potential impact to the Park River Flood Control Conduit with the current plan, a major section of which lies immediately beneath I-84. More importantly, the current plan does nothing to begin to address the flood control underseepage problems associated with the I-91 highway section noted above. Congressman Larson's plan is much more comprehensive in that it not only addresses transportation issues in the region, but also contains the potential to implement improvements to the flood control system due to the interrelation of the proposed tunnels to the flood control levees and floodwalls. Also, as a regional entity, the Flood Commission would like to express its concern that the highway improvements being proposed under Congressman's Larson's plan will alleviate the massive regional disruption to traffic in the Hartford area that the in-place reconstruction of the I-84 viaduct would present.

We applaud CTDOT for the hard work that has been put into developing the I-84 Hartford Viaduct Replacement Project. Your department clearly understands the challenges associated with this project and the enormous opportunity that it presents to transform the region and move us in a positive direction. Because the decisions we make now in regards to infrastructure will determine the shape of our region for generations to come, it is crucial that we get this right. We applaud Congressman Larson's bold vision and his view to the future, rather than reliance on transportation thinking of the past. The tunnel solution outlined by Congressman Larson to replace the viaduct warrants careful consideration and we urge you to expedite a study to fully evaluate this alternative.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michael McGarry, Chairman
Greater Hartford Flood Commission

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