

OLD FARMS ROAD PHASE I (NORTH/SOUTH SECTION) PROJECT
(STATE PROJECT NO. L004-0001)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)
September 19, 2022

Q1: What is the scope of this project?

A: The scope of the Old Farms Road Phase I (North/South Section) Project focuses on the section of Old Farms Road from the intersection with Thompson Road north to a point approximately 1,700 feet north of the intersection with Scoville Road. The project will include the relocation of the existing roadway approximately 180 feet to the west onto property currently owned by the Avon Old Farms School; the installation of improvements, such as a roundabout and crosswalk treatments, at the intersections with Scoville and Thompson Roads, respectively; the installation of a multi-use trail along Scoville and Old Farms Roads; and other related improvements. The project will also require a land swap between the Town and Avon Old Farms School whereby the Town will acquire the right of way for the relocated road from the School and quit claim the old road to the School at the conclusion of the project. A project map identifying the major components of the project can be found below:



Q2: Why is this project needed?

A: The primary issue that the project will address is safety for all users. The area experiences an excessive number of accidents when compared to similar corridors in the state. Analysis has shown that the roadway's geometry (the dimensions and arrangements of the visible features of a roadway), narrow lanes, and other roadway conditions contribute to the majority of the accidents. Of all the accidents recorded for the corridor, approximately 91% have factors associated with the substandard conditions of the roadway. The narrow roadway combined with the roadside features confine motorists in the travel lane, thereby eliminating opportunities for accident avoidance. Larger vehicles, including school buses and fire apparatus, experience difficulties navigating the roadway due to the sharp curvature, and narrow lanes. Excessive speeds exacerbate the aforementioned conditions and create a more hazardous roadway. Additionally, the current road is not wide enough to allow for an adequate shoulder for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel safely.

Q3: What is the financial impact of this project on taxpayers?

A: The following is a breakdown of the estimated financial impact of the Old Farms Road Phase I (North/South Section) Project (State Project No. L004-0001). The Town has been approved for grants from the State of Connecticut in the amount of \$5,459,458. Construction will be fully funded through these grants. The Town will not need to issue debt to fund the construction of this phase of the project. As a result, the approval of this project will not have any additional financial impact on Avon taxpayers. Per the Town Charter (Sec. 10.3.3(a)(1)), due to the project cost, a referendum vote is required to approve the expenditure of the state grant funds.

TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS:

DESCRIPTION:

<i>Construction Cost (not to exceed)</i>	\$ 5,459,458
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Add: Soft Costs

<i>(i.e. Design cost to date; attorney's fees, referendum costs, etc.)</i>	\$ 360,000
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TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	\$ 5,819,458
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<i>Less: Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program Grant Funding (construction cost)</i>	(\$ 5,110,076)
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<i>Less: Community Connectivity Grant Funding (construction cost)</i>	(\$ 349,382)
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<i>Less: Use of Existing Capital Budget Appropriation (soft costs)</i>	(\$ 360,000)
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ADDITIONAL LOCAL TAXPAYER FUNDING REQUIRED	\$0.00
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Q4: What will happen if this project is not approved?

A: The construction of this project will be funded by state grants. If the project is not approved, it is likely the Town will forgo these grants and the needed improvements will not be made. The road will still require some level of improvement in accordance with the Town's Pavement Management Plan.

Q5: What impact will this project have on the Town's operating budget?

A: As this project involves the relocation of an existing road, there will be no increase to the Town's operating budget. Funds are included in the Town's operating budget to maintain the existing road, which includes plowing, striping, sweeping, catch basin cleaning, and patching of pot holes. As the new road will be freshly paved at the conclusion of the project, the road will not require resurfacing for many years, allowing the Town to allocate its capital budget for paving to other streets in town.

Q6: How will the Town ensure that the road maintains its rural feel and doesn't turn into a thru-way?

A: The primary goal of the project has been to improve the safety of the road for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists while preserving the road's rural character. Accordingly, the design process has included numerous reviews with the Town Council; Town staff; the Town's third party engineering consultant, Fuss & O'Neill; and the Avon Old Farms School. All stakeholders are invested in maintaining the character of the roadway while addressing the safety concerns that are driving the need for the project. Some of the design details that will address this concern are as follows:

- No change in the current speed limit of the road (25 mph).
- Widening of road will be kept to a minimum.
- Tree removal kept to a minimum.
- Use of steel backed wooden guard rails rather than metal beam or cable rails. The rails will be installed with the face of the wood beams set flush with the road edge/curb which will promote a park-like visual.
- Use of roadside swales where possible to control drainage. This will add to the rural feel and challenge driver confidence, thus slowing traffic.
- Street lighting kept to a minimum.
- Grass or landscaped feature installed in center of the roundabout.

Q7: How will this project benefit pedestrians and bicycle users?

A: The North/South project will include the construction of a bituminous multi-use trail that will begin on Scoville Road at the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT). The trail will continue to the intersection with Old Farms Road, and proceed south along Old Farms Road to the intersection with Thompson Road. This trail will be supplemented by a future segment proposed as part of the future Old Farms Road Phase II (East/West) project which will proceed from the Thompson Road intersection, west along the north side of Thompson Road back to the FCHT and create a loop trail

approximately 1.25 miles in length. The future East/West component will also include a trail segment heading east along Old Farms Road where it will meet the Town's extensive network of trails in the Fisher Meadows Recreation area.

Q8: Assuming approval at referendum, what is the timing for construction?

A: Assuming approval at referendum on December 14th, the Town plans to place this project out to public bid in early 2023 to secure a contractor to complete the work. We would expect to award a contract in February or March 2023 and begin construction in April or May 2023. We anticipate that the project will take 18 months to complete.

Q9: How disruptive will construction be? Will the road remain open while work is occurring?

A: Fortunately, as much of the work to relocate the road is taking place outside of the existing roadway, the road will remain open and there will be little disruption to drivers during what is called the "off-road construction." Additionally, as the Avon Old Farms School is the only project abutter, and the construction site is primarily in a wooded area on the campus, there will be little disruption to residents or students during daily activities. Drivers will experience inconvenience while work to tie the new road section into the existing road is being completed at the end of the project. The Town will provide advance notice of any anticipated disturbances on its website and by placing warning signage in the area.

Q10: What is included in Old Farms Road Phase II (East-West) Project? When will it happen?

A: The East-West Section (from the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail at Thompson Road, through the intersection of Thompson and Old Farms Roads, and east on Old Farms Road to approximately 225 feet west of the Tillotson Road intersection) will include realignment within the existing corridor due to the presence of wetlands in close proximity to the roadway. The project will include the replacement of two bridges along the roadway to provide wider lanes and safer passage of vehicles, and a multi-use trail adjacent to the roadway. At this time, the Town is working on the design for this section of the project. We have received a commitment to fund from the state for a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program grant in the amount of \$3.6 million. The final cost estimates are not available at this time but, based on the design work completed thus far, we anticipate that the Town will need to issue debt to fund the remainder of the project cost. Staff continue to research and apply for grants to offset the local contribution. This project will be the subject of a future referendum vote. Note, the two phases can stand alone if needed.

Q11: I understand that this project will require a property exchange with Avon Old Farms School. Has the Town obtained a formal agreement from the School that they are in agreement with this project and will cooperate?

A: The project will require a land swap between the Town and Avon Old Farms School whereby the Town will acquire the right of way for the relocated road from the School and quit claim the old road to the School at the conclusion of the project. The School has been an active participant

in planning and design efforts to date. As of this writing, the School and the Town have agreed in principal that there will be no cost for the property exchange and the parties are working together, through their respective legal counsel, to formalize this agreement. A public hearing on the proposed land exchange has been scheduled for the October 6, 2022 Town Council meeting.

Q12: What permits or other approvals were required by local, state or federal agencies for this project to proceed? What is the status of these approvals?

A: At the local level, the project requires a permit from the Inland Wetlands Commission as a portion of the construction activity is proposed to occur in the Upland Review Area. This permit was approved by the Commission in July 2022. As this is a municipal project, the project also requires a review by the Planning & Zoning Commission under Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Though not a permit, the purpose of an 8-24 review is to confirm that the proposed project is in conformance with the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development. The Commission approved the project under 8-24 in July 2022.

At the state level, the project requires a "General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters from Construction Activities" from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. This will be completed by the contractor that is awarded the construction contract prior to beginning the work. At the federal level, the project requires a U.S. Army Corp of Engineers General Permit. Given the scope of the project, this permit involves a self-verification process that will take place after the 100% design approval, expected early fall 2022.

Q13: I heard that there was a major archaeological discovery in the area of the new Old Farms Road Bridge. Has the Town studied the project area for artifacts? If so, what was found? Are any further archaeological surveys needed?

Prior to the approval of the Town's Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) grant award by the CTDOT, the Town was required study the project area as part of the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) review process. The Town engaged the same firm that performed the archaeological investigation for the bridge, Archaeological & Historical Services of Storrs, CT, to perform the work and no significant artifacts were discovered. The state determined that no further surveys are needed.

Q14: I understand the construction of the north/south section of the project is fully funded by grants. I understand that the east/west section will not be fully funded by grants. What happens if the north/south section of the project is approved and the east/west section fails at a future referendum? Can the north/south section stand alone?

The state and federal regulating agencies identified in Q12 have determined that the two projects stand alone. One does not require the other to be viable.

Q15: How were the cost estimates developed for this project and how does the Town know they are accurate?

A: In 2017, the Town hired Fuss & O'Neill to serve as its third-party engineering consultant. They continue to serve in this capacity today. In this role, the firm completed the engineering and design work required for this project and developed an estimate of probable construction cost. As part of the Town's LOTCIP grant applications for this project, the original cost estimate was reviewed by the Capitol Region Council of Government's (CRCOG) consulting engineers, as well as the CT DOT staff. Throughout the design process, the design and related cost estimate has been refined and revised during each phase and reviewed by these parties. Perhaps most importantly, the project has been estimated using the DOT's conservative unit pricing criteria. The estimate also includes conservative contingencies stipulated by the DOT.

Q16: The construction estimate for this project is \$4,223,324.24 and the Town is requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$5,459,458. Why is the Town requesting an appropriation of over a million dollars more than the construction cost estimate? If the cost of the project is less than the appropriation what happens to the remaining funding? Can the funds be applied to the future east/west section?

A: The Town was awarded LOTCIP funding in the amount of \$3,378,000 in 2020. The grant award was subsequently increased by \$1,732,076 to \$5,110,076 in 2022 due to a scope change request to include a roundabout at the intersection of Old Farms and Scoville Road. The LOTCIP program is a competitive grant program, meaning that the Town's application is considered based on a standard set of criteria including accident data, traffic data, local and regional transportation significance, environmental impacts, etc. and compared to applications from other towns for similar projects. For this reason, in 2018, the Town submitted an application for another competitive DOT program known as the Community Connectivity Grant Program (CCGP). The Town requested funding under CCGP for the multi-use trail that is proposed to be installed adjacent to the relocated road, as well as the purchase and installation of four rectangular rapid flashing beacons at trail crossings throughout Town (Note that these beacons were installed and activated in fall 2021). The Town was awarded a Community Connectivity Grant in the amount of \$387,512. At this time, a balance of \$349,382 remains for the installation of the multi-use trail along Old Farms Road.

The Town is requesting an appropriation in the full amount of the grant funds awarded (\$5,459,458) in order to have the funds available for expenditure in the event of highly unusual or unforeseen circumstances that may cause the construction cost estimate to rise over the estimates that have been prepared by Fuss & O'Neill in accordance with DOT criteria and reviewed by CRCOG and DOT. Should the Town be left with a remaining balance at the conclusion of the project, we understand that the funds must be returned to CTDOT.

Q17: The Town is saying that this project will have zero impact on local taxes and that it is fully funded by grants. If there is no tax impact, why does the project require approval at referendum?

A: Per Section 10.3.3(a)(1) of the Town Charter, a referendum is required for any resolution making an appropriation of at least 1/10th of 1% of the current Grand List, regardless of the source of the funds (grants, general obligation bonds, pay as you go cash capital, etc.). The current Grand List totals \$2,667,772,547. As such, any resolution making an appropriation exceeding \$2,667,772

requires approval at referendum. As the Town is requesting an appropriation of \$5.5 million for the Old Farms Road Project, a referendum is required even though the approval of the resolution will have no impact on local taxes.