

DANBURY BRANCH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TASK 5

ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM IMPACTS ANALYSIS

STATE PROJECT 302-008



SECTION 17: SCENIC ROADS

DECEMBER 2010

SECTION 17. SCENIC ROADS

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the presence and potential impact to scenic roads that traverse the study corridor. In Connecticut, there are two categories of scenic roads: State Scenic Highways, which are determined for eligibility and managed by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), and Local Scenic Roads, which are selected by municipalities and protected by municipal ordinances. Both of classifications of scenic roads are recognized for archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities.

Although there are considerable variations of the definition and eligibility standards of a local scenic road, among the municipalities that have scenic road ordinances, CTDOT has put forth specific criteria for potential state scenic highways. According to CTDOT, a scenic highway must “abut significant natural or cultural features such as agricultural land or historic buildings and structures which are listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, or afford vistas of marshes, shoreline, forests with mature trees, or other notable natural or geologic feature which singularly or in combination set the highway apart from other state highways as being distinct. The Highway shall have a minimum length of one mile and shall abut development which is compatible with its surroundings. Such development must not detract from the scenic or natural character or visual qualities of the highway area.”

The State Scenic Highway within the study corridor is The Merritt Parkway (Route 15), which crosses over the Danbury Branch in Norwalk, between exit 39 (US 7 Expressway) and exit 40 (Old US 7/Main Street). The Merritt Parkway is designated a scenic road easterly from the New York state line to the Housatonic River in Stratford. Relative to the railroad, the Merritt Parkway is an overhead structure at Milepost 3.41 and is about 0.2 miles south of Merritt 7 Station.

There are two Town Scenic Roads in the study corridor. Seeley Road in Wilton traverses the study corridor north of Cannondale Station. It begins at Route 7 and runs easterly, crossing the Norwalk River. Further east it crosses the Danbury Branch at-grade. The area around Seeley Road within the study corridor is generally wooded. In Redding, Marchant Road from Simpaug Turnpike to Umpawaug Road features gentle terrain, meadows, stone walls, and mature trees.

IMPACTS

Alternative A: No Build

Alternative A will not impact any Scenic Roads.

Alternative B: Transportation System Management (TSM)

Alternative B will not impact any Scenic Roads.

Alternative C: South Norwalk to Danbury Improvements

Passenger Stations (Existing Stations)

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed station work.

Traction Power System - Electrification

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed substation or RTU work.

Catenary and support structures

- Catenary that could impact the visual elements along the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk, Seely Road in Wilton, and Marchant Road in Redding is proposed in this Alternative. At each location, new galvanized steel catenary support poles would be approximately 200 feet apart and replace the poles that remain from the original electrification of the line. The old poles, which have deteriorated and become rusted over the years, would be removed. Where the Merritt Parkway crosses over the railroad, the catenary will be below the viewing plane.

Track Reconfigurations, Sidings and Connections

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed track work.

Structures and Bridges

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed structure or bridge work.

Alternative D: Extension from Danbury to New Milford

There are no Scenic Roads that would be impacted by Alternative D.

Alternative E: Improvements from South Norwalk to Wilton (Merritt 7)

Passenger Stations (Existing Stations)

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed station work.

Substations and remote housing units (RTUs)

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed substation or RTU work.

Catenary and support structures

- Catenary that could impact the visual elements along the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk is proposed in this Alternative. New galvanized steel catenary support poles would be approximately 200 feet apart and replace the poles that remain from the original electrification of the line. The old poles, which have deteriorated and become rusted over the years, would be removed. Where the Merritt Parkway crosses over the railroad, the catenary will be below the viewing plane.

Track Reconfigurations, Sidings and Connections

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed track work.

Structures and Bridges

- There are no Scenic Roads in the vicinity of proposed structure or bridge work.