

# Inside CTDOT

An e-Newsletter for Employees of the Connecticut Department of Transportation  
Summer 2020

Here are the headlines for this edition of Inside CTDOT (scroll down or click on headline for the full stories).

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## We Cope with COVID-19

Connecticut DOT employees saw their lives turned upside-down in early March when the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic slammed into our state. Schools, hair salons, and many other establishments closed; essential businesses like grocery stores and pharmacies remained open. Governor Ned Lamont issued a statewide directive to “Stay Safe, Stay Home” and practically overnight many of us were working from our dining room tables at home, doing “Teams” and “Zoom” virtual meetings and, of course, wearing masks when we go out.

Much of this did not apply, of course, to our Highway Operations/Maintenance employees, whose work requires their physical presence on the job. But they too had modified work schedules – working one week on site and the next week doing training from home. They have only just returned to a regular schedule.

Commissioner Joe Giulietti initiated [weekly messages](#) with the latest information on COVID-19 as it applied to and affected employees.

Our highway VMS boards carried the message: “Stay Home, Stay Safe” and advised people to call 2-1-1 for information on the pandemic.

We saw a plunge in public transportation ridership. Rail commuting dropped by more than 90 percent; bus ridership was off more than 50 percent. Rail commuters often have the option to work from home, while many bus riders don’t have that option, relying on the bus for work and other essential travel. We took time out on a couple of



Joe Lynch and Julio Alicia rebuilding a catch basin for a VIP.



Masked crew works on a catch basin replacement in Avon.

Photos courtesy of Office of Maintenance

Continued next page

# Inside CTDOT



Moving blocks for Guard Field Hospital in Sharon.

occasions to “Sound the Horn” on buses and trains to honor public transit workers.

Several key events had to be postponed and we hope to reschedule them: [Work Zone Safety Awareness Week](#), the 100th anniversary of the



Quickly completed CVS Testing facility in New Haven. [See details.](#)

opening of [New Haven Union Station](#) our own 125th anniversary and our annual “Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day” that had been set for April 23.

As of this writing, plans are being made for “workplace reentry.” Several teams have been created for various elements of the agency’s workforce. Employees were asked to complete a survey and offer comments as to their relative comfort on a return to the office. [Telecommuting “best practices”](#) were offered to everyone.

The Department was instrumental in helping to set up a temporary hospital in Sharon and a huge COVID testing center on the Gateway Community College campus in New Haven. We

were moving concrete barriers and striping pavements. We did the same with the Department of Motor Vehicles in their parking lots so they could begin to reopen. [See video.](#) The I-95 Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge (Q Bridge) between New Haven and East Haven was [lighted in red](#) to honor frontline health-care workers.



One of the food trucks serving at the Wallingford Rest Area.



Painting pavement for food trucks.

We also launched a [poster contest](#) for school kids to honor public transit drivers and operators who were dubbed “heroes moving heroes” as we encouraged people to limit their travel to essential places like hospitals and grocery stores. Winners will have their posters enlarged and printed, and posted at bus shelters and other locations.

In the middle of it all, we (finally!) launched ourselves on social media. Check

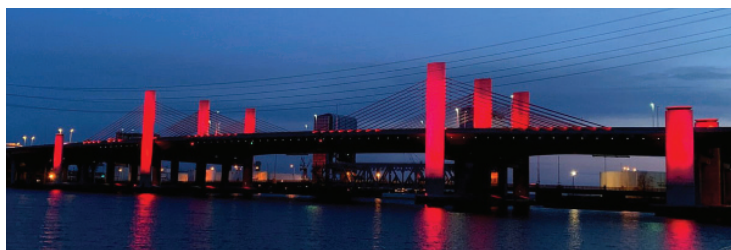
out our Twitter feed here. <https://twitter.com/CTDOTOfficial>

We made new arrangements to [allow food trucks](#) in our rest areas

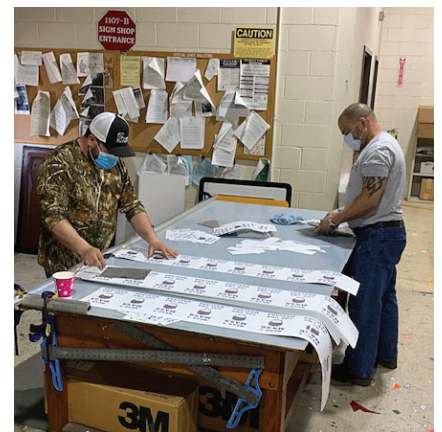
to better serve tuckers

picking up and delivering essential goods around the state. Guidelines were prepared to allow more outdoor dining so restaurants could serve customers in the right-of-way of DOT-maintained roads, while maintaining social distancing.

Speaking of “social distancing,” it’s interesting how a variety of here-to-fore unheard of (or not often heard of) expressions and lingo entered the American vocabulary: “flatten the curve,” “self-quarantine,” “self-isolation,” “shelter in place,” “PPE – personal protective equipment,” “new normal,” “don’t touch your face,” and many more. Even the word “pandemic” was rarely heard in any context before 2020. [More photos here.](#)



The Q-Bridge lighted red in support of frontline workers.



Destined for buses and trains, Sign Shop’s Dean Del Vecchio, and Joel Sierra working on “Wear a Mask” signs.

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## ‘Help Our Heroes – Please Don’t Speed’

On May 8, CTDOT joined the State Police and Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz to launch a campaign to get drivers to slow down. As a result of the coronavirus and the Governor’s “Stay Safe, Stay Home” directive, traffic volumes sharply decreased, practically overnight. But this had an unexpected consequence: a dramatic increase in speeding, including numerous incidences of “extreme speeding” of 85 mph-plus. Crashes became much more severe.

We created a new message for our VMS boards: “Help Our Heroes – Please Don’t Speed.”

Commissioner Joe Giulietti said, “With the coronavirus pandemic impacting every aspect of our lives, now is not the time for dangerous, reckless driver behavior that endangers the public, our maintenance and construction crews, and the critical workers we are all relying on to provide medical care and essential services necessary for the state to recover. We are appealing to the public on a personal level – now more than ever - please recognize the impact of speeding and extreme speeding on every family and every person in this state. Please don’t speed, and together, we’ll get through this.”



[More on the campaign here.](#)

Our Office of Highway Safety had [additional messaging](#) along the same lines.

## What Winter?

Connecticut largely escaped the wrath of winter in 2019-20, much as we did the previous winter. We asked the Bureau of Highway Operations, which includes about half of all CTDOT employees, to fill us in on how this past winter was so different from what we so often have to deal with.

The winter season of 2019/2020 was definitely not reminiscent of past winters. When we think of winter, we have visions of a Halloween snowstorm or snow piling up all winter long causing worry of heavy snow piles on roofs and sight-line hazards. We remember the record snowfalls like Storm Nemo with almost every highway closed, and every other day snow with a nice, white covering through the months of January and February. Don’t forget the sloppy, dense waist-high storms in March or weekly Nor’easters on the verge of spring. This winter was even more mild than last winter, which seemed to have more ice and freezing rain storms than usual. Bear in mind that an average winter for Connecticut is 13 large storms, with the last severe winter having 17 storms in the 2017/2018 season. We experienced six storms, with the first storm occurring on December 1, 2019, bringing the largest snowfall amounts to Connecticut with over 10 inches reported in the Litchfield Hills and parts of Hartford County. We also had 9 winter “activities” (smaller weather events



A Tow-Plow cuts a huge swath. [See larger photo.](#)

requiring field call-outs), which brought forth minimal inches of snow and ice. The months of January and February had no large storms, only scattered activities. Even the far Northwest snowbelt corner of the State fell short this year. See related article of the Department taking control of building our Winter Maintenance Trucks in this issue.

# Inside CTDOT

## New Haven Union Station is 100 Years Old

On April 3, Governor Ned Lamont, Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Mayor Justin Elicker, U.S. Representative Rosa DeLauro and Transportation Commissioner Joseph Giulietti and other federal, state and city officials commemorated the 100th anniversary of the opening of New Haven Union Station – the beaux-arts masterpiece that is the jewel of the New Haven commuter rail line.



*The charm of the old with the conveniences of the new.*

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designed by noted American architect Cass Gilbert, Union Station opened on April 5, 1920, with its ornate ceilings, elegant chandeliers, a grand clock suspended from the ceiling, and long oak benches in the cavernous waiting room brightly illuminated by high, arched windows.

The Governor and other officials also [praised the hard work and dedication of transit workers](#) on the front lines and behind the scenes, as Connecticut works through the ongoing Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more on the anniversary here.](#)



*Photo courtesy of Marlene Cordeiro*

*A bronze plaque was fashioned commemorating the Centennial. [See larger photo.](#)*

## CT River Ferries Resume Service

After a delay in starting up the Connecticut River ferries this spring, it was announced that the popular service would resume June 20 when Connecticut enters Phase Two of its COVID-19 reopening.

Typically, the ferries begin operating April 1, but that was delayed as a result of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chester-Hadlyme ferry will operate between 7 a.m. and 6:45

p.m. Monday-Friday, and between 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry will operate Tuesday-Friday between 7 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. on weekdays, and 10:30 to 5 p.m. on weekends. Both ferries will operate through Labor Day, September 7.



*The Seldon III plies the waters between Chester and Hadlyme.*



*The tug Cumberland pushes the ferry barge Hollister between Rocky Hill and Glastonbury.*

“We are pleased to get this popular service up and running again, and I appreciate the public’s patience and understanding during challenging times,” said CTDOT Commissioner Joseph Giulietti. “We are taking all precautions, requiring masks and social distancing for passengers and our crews alike. The ferries will be sanitized on a daily basis.”

The Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry is the oldest continuously operated ferry service in the country, having started service in 1655.

[Read the full announcement here.](#)

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## Marking Our 125th Anniversary



Merritt Parkway - 1940s

Among the countless impacts that the Coronavirus pandemic has had has been putting a screeching halt to plans to materially celebrate CTDOT's 125th anniversary.

Begun as the Connecticut Highway Department in 1895, the agency became the Connecticut Department of Transportation



Incident Management on the 1919 Berlin Turnpike.

under a reorganization law passed in 1969. We had planned an open house to coincide with Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day in April, but both were postponed indefinitely. With any pre-COVID “normalcy” on the distant horizon, it’s unclear how soon any kind of celebration can be planned. But . . . stay tuned!

## Office Of Human Resources News

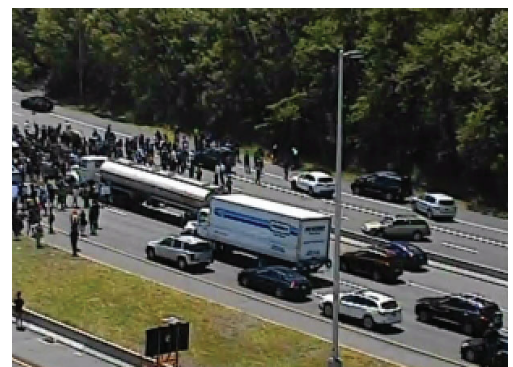
During the holiday season, the Office of Human Resources collected 104 items of hats, gloves, scarves and socks and donated them to Hands On Hartford. Hands On Hartford has been serving and “changing lives” in the Hartford community for over 50 years. “They are committed to increasing food security and nutrition, improving health and providing housing” to those that are underserved in the community. Their signature programs are the: MANNA Community Pantry and Children’s Backpack Nutrition Program. More than 500 families visit their pantry each month for staples, such as milk, eggs and fresh produce. Hundreds of children receive weekend meals and snacks through the Backpack Nutrition Program; Hands on Hartford Housing Program, where safe and affordable supportive housing and support service are provided for people with complex health issues, including those living with HIV/AIDS; Neighborhood Services, whereby utility assistance, limited security deposit assistance, training and employment opportunity assistance, health screening and a diaper bank are made possible. Hands On Hartford also provide jobs for people with barriers to employment.

The Office of Human Resources’ generous donation will make a difference in many lives and puts the word Human back in the word Humanity!

## Anti-Police Protests Block Major Highways – Some Near Our Projects



As the result of the death of George Floyd at the hands of several Minneapolis police officers, protests against heavy-handed police tactics sprang up nationwide. On several occasions, protesters marched onto I-84 and I-95, blocking traffic. In contrast to many violent protests elsewhere, those in Connecticut were largely peaceful and, in many cases, state and local police officers



knelt, hugged and shook hands with protesters. In some instances, we temporarily shut down projects and removed equipment to minimize disruption or damage to our (and contractors’) equipment. But happily, there were few if any consequences. Commissioner Giulietti [shared his thoughts on the issue](#).

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## CTDOT Marks Earth Day 2020

In observation of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) provided an update on its ongoing “active transportation” efforts to invest in bicycle and pedestrian trails and pathways, as well as signage, sidewalk and intersection enhancements.

Since redoubling its commitment to include bike and pedestrian initiatives in CTDOT road and bridge projects over the past 10 years ago, the Department has completed 75 miles of trails, including 37 miles of the East Coast Greenway that cuts through Connecticut.



Runners and riders enjoy the East Coast Greenway in Manchester.



A bridge over Rt. 6 on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.

Most trails and greenways in Connecticut are open, although some heavily used trails have been closed during the Coronavirus/COVID-19 crisis to maintain social distancing. Overall trail usage is higher than normal, according to the Connecticut Trail Census.

[More on our ongoing efforts here.](#) Also, a new report to the Governor and General Assembly cites “transformative progress” and “significant strides” by the Connecticut Department of Transportation in improving conditions for

bicyclists and pedestrians in Connecticut. [Read the full report here.](#)

## Justin Griffin Helps Save Trauma Patient

Our Maintainers are among the hardest working, most dedicated and, sadly, most unsung day-to-day heroes out there – from our round-the-clock snow plow operators, to our CHAMP drivers and those who work with the Connecticut State Police on traffic incident management. A nice case in point is that of District Four’s Justin Griffin, Crew Leader at the Southbury Maintenance Facility.

In late December, while out on a snow run, Justin made a snap judgment to assist an ambulance from Danbury Hospital and Dr. Matthew Cassavechia, who is Director of Emergency Services at Danbury Hospital.

Dr. Cassavechia related the details in an email the next day:

*Yesterday afternoon I was dispatched to meet up with an ambulance in Roxbury that was transporting a critically injured person to Danbury Hospital from a motor vehicle crash. On my way up to Exit 14, I came upon a DOT salt spreader operated by Justin. Knowing the roadways were treacherous due to icing conditions, I asked Justin if he could continue to treat the roadway in front of my response vehicle and follow me off the ramp to wait on the Westbound ramp for the inbound ambulance. I quickly explained that I would jump into the incoming ambulance to continue treating the patient and asked if he could provide the ambulance with a surface treating escort to Danbury Hospital. He readily agreed – the result was the safe and timely transport of this seriously injured patient to our trauma center. Please extend my sincere appreciation for DOT worker Justin Griffin. The safety of the public we all serve is multi-faceted and carried out by many people and many agencies in a variety of different circumstances, when we work collaboratively and effectively, good things happen.*



D4’s Justin Griffin, Crew Leader at the Southbury Maintenance Facility

Photo courtesy of Eoin McClure

Justin was promoted to Crew Leader in Southbury in October of 2019. He started his career as a Maintainer at Southbury Training School for two years, then transferred to DOT and has been with us for the last 12 years. Currently Justin is a Crew Leader on I-84 through the towns of Middlebury, Southbury and Newtown. He was formally recognized for this fine work at the next District Four safety meeting. Nice going, Justin!

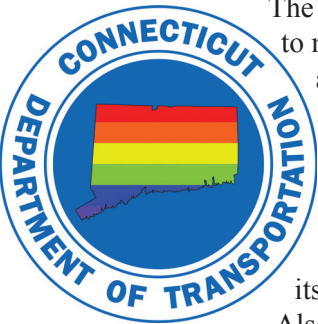
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## Diversity Council News

In the midst of the global cultural movement triggered by injustices, more people are talking about systemic racism and how they can take action. We have employees who may be new to the conversation and are finding ways to educate themselves and that's where we, the Diversity Council have come in as it relates to the Department of Transportation.

The Diversity Council was created to work together as a team to educate co-workers about the different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds of employees as well as to value and respect those differences. The Council is sponsored by the Office of the Commissioner and serves under the guidance of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Affirmative Action.

The mission of the Diversity Council is to foster awareness of its employees' diversity through open communication and active participation, which embraces a working environment of mutual respect and understanding through Lunch and Learns, Bi-Annual Taste of Diversity, PowerPoints, and showcasing events throughout the agency.



The Diversity Council is working on providing training and resources on these issues and we want to make them available to all employees. More information will be forthcoming as we seek to assist DOT employees to engage in respectful conversations with each other, allowing mutual understanding.

As we plan for a possible virtual training event we are also gathering resources to help support and understand these issues and one another better. We encourage you to email your suggestions to us at [DOT.DiversityCouncil@ct.gov](mailto:DOT.DiversityCouncil@ct.gov)

Here is a [short presentation on Juneteenth](#) which was recently celebrated. It nicely highlights its history and significance.

Also, in celebration of Pride Month, [here is a presentation highlighting a few of the many people who have made a difference in the world.](#)

-Ada A. Alvarez, Chairperson, The Diversity Council

## Department Mourns Passing of Former Commissioner James Byrnes



Beloved former Commissioner James "Jimmy" Byrnes passed away Thursday, June 11, 2020, following a long illness.

The hard-driving but popular and always jovial engineer from Colchester spent more than 40 years in engineering/transportation, rising from a CTDOT engineer to deputy commissioner and then, from 2002 to his retirement in April 2004, as the agency's head.

Byrnes had a BS in civil engineering from UConn and a master's from Cooper Union in New York City. After his retirement from the DOT, Byrnes worked at private engineering firms, including, most recently, AI in its Middletown offices.

He was highly regarded and respected in the transportation industry, and loved by CTDOT management and rank-and-file alike.

Commissioner Joe Giulietti said, "I worked with Jim on many occasions during my years at Metro-North and always found him to be a congenial, straight-talking professional who cared deeply about Connecticut, and the safety and welfare of its citizens."

Another former Commissioner, [Emil Frankel](#), issued a [thoughtful remembrance](#) that was shared with all DOT employees.

Deputy Commissioner Mark Rolfe said Jim Byrnes was "much more than a colleague. He was a true friend and a real professional who guided countless younger men and women through the intricacies of such a complex agency, and helped them establish themselves in their careers. I personally benefitted many times from his advice and counsel. I wish his family the best, and I know all of us will keep them in our hearts and prayers."

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## CTDOT Takes Control of Building Winter Maintenance Trucks

From Jim Chupas, Transportation Maintenance Manager:

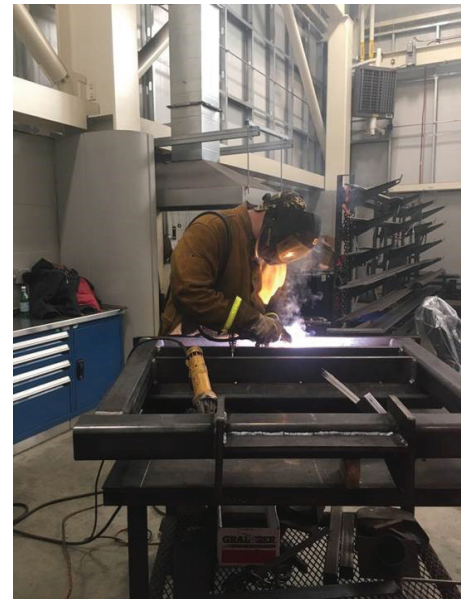


Historically the Department has struggled with orders and delivery of its fleet of Winter Maintenance Trucks (WMTs) trucks. Moving into a new Repair and Maintenance facility in Rocky Hill provided the space and tooling to be able to complete the project. The new facility provided the addition of tooling and capabilities that the State has not historically had in the past. With the Rocky Hill facility encompassing the State Machine shop brought additional

capabilities on the same footprint that would make this project move forward.

The initial pilot build began fall of 2019. Questions internally that needed to be answered were: 1) Can we complete this project? 2) Do we have the facility? 3) Do we have the time? 4) Is there value to be realized? 5) Cost? 6) Are staffing levels sufficient?. The answers to all of these is yes. Bringing the build process internally would provide many benefits such as consistency, standardization and better workmanship. Involving the staff that uses these vehicles allowed the builds to provide a better product, increasing comfort and ergonomics of the WMT trucks. Our Machine shop designed and produced plow hitches, rear tow pintle plates and various brackets and mounting structures for equipment. Rocky Hill Repair Staff assembled dump body and plow parts, plumbed all hydraulic systems, completed all installation of emergency lighting and winter operating system.

DOT has very talented people and through this process the learning and involvement of staff provided an increased knowledge of the equipment that will provide better response for maintenance and repair throughout the equipment's lifecycle. [See details and pictures of the operation here.](#)



## Sneak Peek At New Highway Operations Center

The New Highway Operations Center is up and running. With forty-five screens on the display walls that can be configured as needed, the amount of information available is staggering. Watch for an update next issue. [See larger photo.](#)



Photo by Dave Cruz



# Inside CTDOT

## First In-House Virtual Public Information Meeting (VPIM)

The Department conducted its first in-house [Virtual Public Information Meeting \(VPIM\)](#) on June 29th. To advance projects, the Department must inform the Public and other stakeholders of our plans, answering questions and taking their comments into consideration before completing designs. This important step traditionally occurred at a public forum, usually held in a local meeting place. Due to Covid constraints, the meetings have been moved online.

While consultants have conducted two Department VPIMs, this was the first for an in-house CTDOT team. The subject was the replacement of Bridge 2510, Route 82 over Strongs Brook in East Haddam. The meeting was anchored by Project Manager Kevin Blasi, who also introduced the first selectman for comments from the Town's perspective. Project Designer Ashley Heredia delivered the presentation, and Matt Geanacopoulos presented the Rights of Way information. After the presentations, Project Engineer Ken-Taro Plude and the team fielded questions which could be submitted by Teams chat, email and phone. Principal Engineer Andy Cardinali added to the answers, giving attendees a wide perspective from the entire team.

The meeting was simulcast on Teams Live Event and YouTube to provide for attendees with different technical requirements. Captioning in English and Spanish was available live on Teams and any language is available on the YouTube recording. In addition a listen-only phone line was made available to those without internet access and as always, attendees were encouraged to get in touch with the design team directly if they had any questions or comments over the succeeding two weeks. [The recording is available to watch here.](#)

Policies and procedures for VPIMs were developed over the past several weeks by a steering committee looking at platforms and procedures that give the public the best opportunity for an engaging experience while following CTDOT, FHWA, Title 6 and ADA requirements. If you need to conduct a VPIM, please contact [Judd Everhart](#) for information.

## Suits For Vets Clothing Drive - Gives Charity Biggest One-Time Donation

The Suits for Vets Clothing drive ended last season just after we went to press and was a great success. Due to all the generous donations of our fellow DOT employees, we were able to collect close to 90 men's suits as well as many women's dress outfits, dress shirts and additional accessories like belts and neck ties.

Thank you to all the volunteers that offered their time to coordinate this project. Rick DiNardi and Joy Henault for assisting with collections, folding and boxing the clothing for delivery. Also, a special thanks to Cindy Young and Mary Spada for securing the boxes and to Fred Kruath for volunteering his storage room for the collection. This charitable drive could not have been so successful without the help of our volunteers and the generous donations from the rest of Team DOT.

Chris Brochu, who spearheaded the effort, said his contact at the charity stated it was the biggest one-time donation he had ever taken in! They were also impressed with how well the clothes were packaged and labeled.

Freedom and security are precious gifts that we, as Americans, should never take for granted. It feels good to give to our nation's defenders, who have sacrificed so much, in hopes that these small gifts will help them on their path to the next chapter of their lives.

**Replacement of Bridge No. 02510**  
State Project No. 0040-0146  
Route 82 over Strongs Brook  
East Haddam

**Public Information Meeting**  
Live Event: **Monday, June 29, 7:00 p.m.**

Join us for a Question and Answer session following the formal presentation and send us a question or a comment during the session:  
Project Email: [DOTProject0040-0146@ct.gov](mailto:DOTProject0040-0146@ct.gov) (preferred)  
Phone: (860) 944-1111 (please leave a voicemail)

Visit the Project Webpage:  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DOTEastHaddam40-146>

A recording of the formal presentation will be posted to YouTube after the live event. Closed captioning, including non-English translation options, will be available at that time.  
La grabación de esta presentación estará disponible después del evento en YouTube, incluyendo subtítulos y acceso a traducciones en otros idiomas.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Image courtesy of Kevin Blasi

Photo courtesy of Chris Brochu



Fellow Suit Hauler, Rick DiNardi.



Drive Coordinator Chris Brochu with close to 90 suits collected for Vets. The charity said it was the biggest one-time donation ever! [See larger photo.](#)

# Inside CTDOT

## Shore Line East Marks 30 Years of Service



*Riders prepare to board Shore Line East at the Old Saybrook station.*

In May, CTDOT marked the 30th Anniversary of the Shore Line East train service. Shore Line East began train service on May 29, 1990. The fledgling service began with only six trains each weekday between Old Saybrook and New Haven. In 1996, the Department extended service to New London. In 2001, the Department offered limited express service to Bridgeport and Stamford. Prior to recent service reductions due to COVID-19, Shore Line



*Harry Harris christens the first train of the new service.*

East provided 36 trains per weekday and 21 trains per day on weekends and holidays.

The train service has been popular with many residents, serving 595,547 riders last year. Since the service debuted in 1990, it has carried over 15 million passengers.

[More about the anniversary here.](#)

## Hartford Line Marks Two Years of Service

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) announced today that in the first two years of service operations, the CTrail Hartford Line has carried more than 1.2 million passengers. The service, running from New Haven to Hartford and Springfield, began June 16, 2018.

“This popular service has surpassed all expectations,” said CTDOT Commissioner Joseph J. Giulietti. “Prior to COVID-19, a survey of our riders showed a 91 percent satisfaction level with Hartford Line service, and more than 96 percent of customers said they would recommend the service to a friend or family member.”

CTrail and Amtrak services have seen a significant decline in ridership because of the pandemic and increased teleworking.

As the state enters the next phase of reopening and with anticipation of increased ridership, CTDOT announced

enhanced and more frequent cleaning of trains and station facilities to keep frontline employees and passengers as safe as possible. Rail passengers are asked to wear a mask and maintain the recommended six feet of social distancing while on board the trains and at the stations.

“I want to thank CTrail service provider Transit America Services / Alternate Concepts management and employees, as well as Amtrak for their dedication in operating the service, and to all the passengers who traveled on the Hartford Line the past two years,” said CTDOT Public Transportation Bureau Chief Richard W. Andreski.

[View the full press release here.](#)



## This is YOUR Newsletter

You are encouraged to suggest ideas for stories or to send us a draft article for consideration. Send them to the ConnDOT Office of Communications, [judd.everhart@ct.gov](mailto:judd.everhart@ct.gov)

*The Department of Transportation is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity employer.*