

**CT Department of Transportation
State Project No. 0172-0504
Proposed centerline rumble strips on
Route 145 (Stevenstown Road) from the Deep River/Westbrook Town Line
to Route 80 (Winthrop Road) in the town of Deep River
Virtual Public Informational Meeting
December 16, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.
MS Teams Live Event and YouTube Live**

Report of Meeting

In Attendance: There were approximately 7 people on Teams and 4 on YouTube in attendance for this event, including First Selectman Angus McDonald. The remaining attendees were likely residents.

Presentation: The meeting went live at 6:15 p.m. with an informative introduction slide for attendees to view before the event began. The official start of the meeting was at 6:30 p.m. with an introduction from the Department's Project Engineer Balazs Szoke, who also covered the process for how attendees could interact with the project team. Mr. Szoke gave a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation, followed by a Question and Answer session. Natasha Fatu, Stephen Bruno, Robert Smith and Devyn Howe were also present and involved with the event on behalf of the Department.

The presentation covered the following items:

- The project description and location of the project limits. The background of steps and analysis process taken to evaluate Route 145 as an eligible centerline rumble strip segment were discussed. Crash history within the project limits was discussed as well.
- The use of centerline rumble strips in the nation and Connecticut were also discussed, as well as crashes affected by its installation, criteria for eligibility, scheduling, and costs, followed by the live Question and Answer session.

Comments and Questions: Questions regarding roadway noise were most prominent, with multiple concerns raised about the existing centerline rumble strips on Route 80 in the town of Deep River. The comments/questions are summarized below:

1. **E-mail Question:** I have a concern that when there are rumble strips in the center of a road that vehicles will not give sufficient safe clearance to pedestrians and bicyclists on edge of the road when passing. I have bicycled in these areas and I am concerned that this will decrease safety.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that bicyclists are inherently included in the design before we consider the centerline rumble strips in an area. The requirement for centerline rumble strip eligibility, is that the roadway width from the centerline to the edge of the road is a minimum of 14 feet wide, and this section of road meets that requirement. The lane width for a vehicle is 11 feet which means that the shoulder width is at least 3 feet wide, and the average vehicle width is about 6 feet wide, which means that vehicles have a few feet of buffer both between the shoulder and the centerline itself.

2. **Voicemail Question:** This road is already noisy from trucks and the airport is nearby. Last thing we need is more noise. Having rumble strips installed is not that big a deal around here. It is not needed. Bigger thing would be to have the trucks driving by here slow down which would make things safer.

Randomly found out about this since she gets the Hartford Courant, not the New Haven Register, which is where the advertisement posted. New London Day is another paper that people get in the area.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that regarding the road noise, Route 145 was already milled, leveled, and paved with a top course of approximately 2 inches of hot mix asphalt, which is the most versatile and widely used concrete mix that the state uses, so the pavement itself should not be loud. The intent of the rumble strips is to alert the driver when they are encroaching on the center line or over the centerline, so it only makes a noise when they are driven over. Given that the roadway is wide enough, around 14 to 15 feet from the centerline to the edge of the road, cars should not be encroaching on the rumble strips. If they are, that means the driver needs to perform a corrective maneuver to get back into their lane, whether they are distracted or whatever the case may be. The only time that noise would be made is if a driver is going over the centerline, which means they need to take corrective action. This means that the rumble strips are doing their job. Regarding the speeding trucks, the Department of Transportation does not have jurisdiction as we do not have any kind of enforcement power. If motorists are traveling at a speed higher than the posted speed limit, which is 45 miles per hour for this area, it is recommended that the resident reach out to the local police department and request additional enforcement in the area. The police department are the only ones that have authority to enforce the speed limit. The Department can only put up the speed limit signs but cannot enforce them. Regarding the newspaper selection, Mr. Szoke will mention this to the Department's Communications department and see if this is something that can be fixed prior to any future meetings.

3. **Chat Question:** Since having the rumble strips increases safety so much, why not on the sides as well?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded this project is specifically just for the installation of centerline rumble strips. Even if the edge line rumble strips were eligible, that is not something that would be installed under this project as it is outside of the scope.

4. **Chat Comment:** The state installed them on West Elm Street, the road width from Rt 9 to Rt 80 is less than 15 ft on most of it, I measured it this summer. It is 11 1/2 at my home and less than 25 from my front door, additionally the grooves are not in the painted line.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he is not familiar with centerline rumble strips installed at other sections in Deep River other than what is being discussed in this meeting tonight. Mr. Szoke was not involved in the installation of centerline rumble strips on Route 80. The State has been installing centerline rumble strips since 2014 and as far as public information meetings have been happening for the past year, that is not one Mr. Szoke is personally familiar with, therefore is not aware of the exact specifications of the roadway width in front of where the home is located.

5. **Chat Comment:** The noise is terrible and greatly degraded our quality of life.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he is not familiar with the installation of rumble strips on Route 80. The Department values all the citizens' input and will take all these comments into consideration. This meeting is the first part of the process to get input from the people local to the area. He reiterated that this is a low-cost roadway safety countermeasure that is proven to save lives. The Department has taken a proactive approach to prevent the crashes from happening rather than a reactive approach, which is fixing the problem after crashes have already happened. If there is roadway noise that means that the vehicles are encroaching on the centerline and they need to take corrective action, which is the purpose of the centerline rumble strips. The

Department wants to make sure that drivers who are distracted, fatigued, etc., will be taking corrective action and getting back into their lane to avoid any kind of head-on or sideswipe crash.

6. **Chat Question:** Why was there no hearing for residents of Route 80? We had no chance to voice concerns prior to installation.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he was not involved in the Route 80 installation and is not sure why there was not a public information meeting for that project. The Department reaches out to the towns before the rumble strips are installed because we have a working relationship with towns and their elected officials. For at least the past few years, letters have been sent to towns about rumble strip projects because it is known there may be concerns, especially due to noise.

7. **Chat Question:** I live on Route 80 in Deep River that had rumble strips installed. The rumble strips are very loud and disruptive. Are these rumble strips the shallow ones you discussed?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that the rumble strip specifications have been the same for a couple of years. The centerline rumble strips are shallower than the edge line rumble strips and believes they have been recently updated to be even shallower. Having said that, for the Route 145 section, majority of the houses are over 100 feet away from the road. What Mr. Szoke is taking away from comments is that for the Route 80 section houses may be closer to the edge of the road or to the centerlines. The Department found that the vast majority of the homes on Route 145 are further away from the road than 100 feet, and the noise should not be a constant. It is very important to reiterate the point of centerline rumble strips is to make sure that vehicles stay in their lane, and if they move out of their lane, they take corrective action to prevent a crash or fatality. Safety is the most important aspect of why the Department does this and why we are trying to be proactive with this project. At the same time, The Department takes all input into consideration before moving forward, and that is the reason for this meeting.

8. **Voicemail Question:** Was consideration given for this road being rural in nature with many homes near the edge of the road and noise volume a concern?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded as mentioned before that yes, the Department does take that into consideration. The Department makes sure that the section of roadway being reviewed is eligible for installation, and this section of Route 145 met the criteria. The majority of homes on Route 145 are more than 100 feet away from the edge of the road which is something that is taken very seriously and checked for prior to engaging with the town to go through this process.

9. **Chat Comment:** PLEASE READ THIS: For the residents of 145, do everything you can to prevent these being installed. They will lower your home value and cause a TON of noise!!!! I am a victim of the installed strips on Route 80. I have to sleep with earplugs at night because of these. This is ridiculous. DO NOT LET THESE BE INSTALLED!

Response: Mr. Szoke responded the Department does value all input and will take your comment into consideration. He reiterated that we understand there are concerns about Route 80 with the majority of the comments and questions regarding that section, not the Route 145 section. This section of Route 145 was reviewed and found to be within the requirements of eligibility for the rumble strip installation. Mr. Szoke thanked them for that comment and reassured the citizen it is something that will be kept in mind moving forward.

10. **Chat Comment:** PLEASE ALSO READ THIS: I am a resident of Deep River, and I live on Winthrop Road (A.K.A. Route 80). This is a rural area and there are many nearby houses along this stretch of roadway. Recently this road was repaved and rumble strips were added. The noise that these create when cars

FREQUENTLY hit them is unbearable. It impacts every aspect of my home life. I cannot even sit in my living room or bedroom without being accosted by the sound of what can only be described as an “extremely loud, random, and sudden machinegun blast”. Every time my dog hears the noise, both night and day, he quickly jumps up and starts barking like someone is knocking on the front door. It is significantly interfering with the peaceful use of my house & property. This must stop.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he understands that there are concerns regarding the Route 80 section. Mr. Szoke apologized to hear this, and stated it is not the Department’s intention to have a negative impact at the cost of safety. Mr. Szoke wonders why drivers are crossing over the centerline of Route 80 so frequently, and the Department will be reviewing after this meeting. Mr. Szoke wants to focus more on Route 145. However, moving forward the Department will take notes from this meeting about Route 80, and discuss with the First Selectman after this meeting to see what may be causing this issue and how it can be rectified.

- 11. Chat Comment:** We drive a motorcycle, and so does my family. We have to drive over the rumble strips every time we leave our driveway or my family comes to visit. It is a safety concern, and I am afraid either me or my elderly family members will get into an accident.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he also rides a motorcycle, therefore he understands the concern. Having said that, there are breaks in the centerline rumble strips not at driveways, but at intersections with town roads such as Witch Hazel Drive and others along this segment. The breaks are not at driveways, because if they were, there would be lots of breaks and it would take away from the continuity of the rumble strips. The Department also follows best practices and guidelines that the Federal Highway Administration gives in terms of designs and specifications.

- 12. Voicemail Question:** how much voice does the community have regarding installation of the CLRS or has it already been predetermined that they will be installed?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded no, he wants to reiterate again that this meeting is for the Department to receive input from the town and its residents. The intent of this meeting is to educate citizens about the centerline rumble strips, but also to get input from the community. The Department relies on local citizens to inform of any issues or concerns specific to the project area. Once all the comments are received, and the Department has time to discuss them, it will be discussed with the Local Traffic Authority and the First Selectman of Deep River.

- 13. Voicemail Question:** I live on Route 80 and have found that the CLRS are about 25-30' and the speed limit is 35 mph and measures less 15.5' in width. Why is there no break in centerline for driveways?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he is not as familiar with the Route 80 segment as he is with the Route 145 segment that is being presented today. As touched on by the motorcycle related question, the breaks in centerline rumble strips, if installed, are only at intersections with town roads. That specification is following design standards from FHWA and the best practices that they set forth for the Department.

- 14. Chat Question:** What is the process to request removal of rumble strips already installed?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he is assuming this question is about Route 80, and the Department, along with the Chief Elected Official for the town, and any other town officials will discuss both Route 80 and Route 145.

- 15. Voicemail Question:** Angus McDonald received a letter on 11/19/2018 regarding the CLRS on Route 80 from the Department. Angus was told to sign and did not need a public hearing. How was this able to happen and what can we do now?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he was not involved with the installation of the centerline rumble strips up until 2020; therefore, is not familiar with the Route 80 project. However, the Route 80 rumble strips are something the Department will discuss with First Selectman McDonald and other town officials. The Department will continue discussing and educating people on the safety benefits of centerline rumble strips and to have public discussions as necessary.

16. Chat question: Since, in sections, the strips are not in line with the painted lines so cars hit them without even going over the line. Can that be fixed?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he must defer to the same answer he has given previously, the Department will discuss with the First Selectman and any other town representatives to resolve the concerns on Route 80.

17. Voicemail Question: how can the residents on Route 145 be assured that what happened on Route 80 happen to them? was Route 145 properly reviewed because it did not appear to reviewed for Route 80? Dump trucks are noisy and police can't seem to enforce speed

Response: Mr. Szoke responded regarding how residents can be assured, is that the Department is having this public meeting. The Department is trying to be transparent with the town and has worked with the First Selectman on this. One of the things the Department discussed with the First Selectman was about the existing passing zone along Route 145 starting approximately 400 feet south of the intersection with Route 80 and extending south about 600 feet, which were reviewed and removed as part of the repaving project. So it is important that the Department is very transparent and willing to work with the town as well as the citizens and take as much input as we can get. As far as how the Department properly reviewed Route 145, is through the presentation. The Department understands that noise is the biggest concern. The houses are further away from the centerline, most of them are over 100 feet away, some as much as 200 feet away, and the width of the roadway is at least 14 feet along the whole section. Those specifications are what the Department sees when determining if a roadway is eligible. Regarding the speeding trucks, unfortunately, the Department does not have the ability to enforce speed, speeding is the jurisdiction of the police. The best thing that folks from the town can do is reach out to the police that they are concerned about the speeding along this roadway, because the Department has no control over speeding.

18. Chat Question: How many people are on this call / meeting?

Response: Mr. Szoke was unsure and deferred to Mr. Bruno who responded that there are about 7 attendees on Microsoft Teams and 3 on YouTube as of that moment. Mr. Szoke added that total there were about 10 people along with anyone that might be listening on the phone lines.

19. Chat Comment: Please post: I am just warning my neighbors for what they are in for. They need to know.

Response: Mr. Szoke said thank you for that comment. The Department will take all these comments into consideration. This is not the end of this discussion, there is a two-week comment period following today, up until December 30th. If people have additional concerns or comments, they can leave a voicemail or send an email to the address shown on the screen. The Department is having this meeting to get input from the town and citizens.

20. Chat Question: Is this presentation being recorded for viewing later?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded the meeting is being recorded and once the video is processed it will be available on the Department's website at the project webpage

portal.ct.gov/DOTDeepRiver172-504. The Department also has a video library on the Connecticut Department of Transportation website. Once the video gets processed, which takes at least a few days, it will be available.

21. Chat Question: Does the presenter have rumble strips in front of his house?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded no; he does not have rumble strips in front of his house.

22. Chat Question: Do rumble strips decrease the value of your home?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he does not know the answer to this question. He thanks the person with that question but is not a realtor therefore does not have that information.

23. Voicemail Comment: FS Angus McDonald for Route 80 I was told that since it was a State highway and controlled by the State, that the State was going to install the CLRS despite the fact that I was against them. I'm hoping this meeting gives the town and local citizens and opportunity for conversation.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that he agrees, and that the Department has taken a lot away from this meeting, specifically about Route 80. As mentioned, the Department is going to have a discussion with the First Selectman about this. Just to reiterate, Mr. Szoke is not familiar with the installation of CLRS on Route 80, but the Department will work to resolve with the town.

24. Voicemail Comment: is this a federal mandate or a feel good measure to just use state money? We do not have a history of head-on collisions, what is the reasoning behind installation?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded no, it is not a feel-good measure. The reason the Department is looking at this segment of Route 145 is because one of the criteria for installing centerline rumble strips requires the pavement age to be between zero and three years old, and for the pavement to be in good condition. Since the Department recently repaved the roadway, this gave the opportunity to enhance safety because the Department as the road owner has the responsibility of providing safe transportation systems for all road users. This is a low-cost safety feature that is proven to save lives, therefore if it saves even one life or prevents a crash from happening, it pays for itself. The Department is taking a proactive approach trying to prevent crashes from happening rather than waiting for crashes to happen, or a tragedy to strike, and reacting once it's too late.

25. Chat Comment: FYI. You can hear the noise for a half mile away.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that FHWA most likely has something that measures the intensity of the noise in decibels when vehicles drive over the rumble strips. Mr. Szoke stated that since this is a rural and very wooded area, the trees would block out some of the noise at least on Route 145. Mr. Szoke cannot comment if this is true for the Route 80 section. This comment is something that the Department will take into consideration moving forward, and thanks the commenter for their input.

26. Voicemail Comment: Jane Samuels - It is outrageous that CLRS installation can be made by one person, the FS. I think CLRS are a terrible idea and I hope they do not get installed at any more locations.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that decision to install centerline rumble strips are not made by one person. The Department has a group of safety engineers that looks at the eligibility and times that with when the roadways are being repaved so they can be installed when the pavement is still new and in good condition. Mr. Szoke understands there is a lot of concern in Deep River, but the Department will take the comment into account. Mr. Szoke would like to reiterate that

centerline rumble strips are a low-cost proven safety countermeasure, and understands the noise is a concern, especially on the Route 80 section which the Department will investigate, however there are almost 400 miles of centerline rumble strips on state roads and almost 100 miles on local roads. In general centerline rumble strips are helpful to reduce crashes, and the positives outweigh the negatives. Having said that, the Department will not force the installation in Deep River and there will be further discussions with First Selectman McDonald and other town representatives. Since it is a proven safety countermeasure, the Department has seen a decrease in the number of head-on crashes on roadways where centerline rumble strips were installed, it is important to keep that in mind.

27. Voicemail Question: how can we be assured that the community has involvement and adequate input for Route 145?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that this is done by having this meeting and talking through all the concerns that the town and citizens have, getting the community involved, and making a presentation regarding centerline rumble strips.

28. Chat Question: can citizens be involved/present when the DOT has their discussion with the first selectman?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that the Department will have a discussion internally and with the First Selectman to see what can be done regarding Route 80 and further discussion about Route 145. Mr. Szoke believes the First Selectman is in this meeting and has received all the citizens' opinions and concerns, therefore he is aware and further discussions will follow. The comment period is open until December 30th for anyone who has additional concerns that maybe were not addressed tonight or think of a question or concern after this meeting.

29. Voicemail Question: West Elm resident - how many people in the affected area were notified about this meeting because it was not in all the local papers or in the town newsletter?

Response: Mr. Szoke responded that the Department reaches out primarily through the Chief Elected Official's office, in this case is the First Selectman and his administrative assistant. The Department provides a copy of the notice of the public information meeting which contains a brief description of the proposed project as well as copies of project display materials that may be used to post on the town website. As mentioned before, there was a citizen concern about the public information meeting display advertisement in the New Haven Register on December 2nd and December 9th. The Department's policy is to post the advertisement one week and two weeks prior to the meeting. The direction the Department had regarding Deep River was to post in the New Haven Register.

30. Chat Comment: Thank you for this session. Very educational and informative. I'm in favor of the rumble strips

Response: Mr. Szoke thanked them for their comment. It is important to let people know why the Department is doing this and reiterate it is a proactive safety countermeasure.

31. Chat Comment: Please post: You should go door to door along those 400 miles of rumble strips how they feel about it.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded the Department will take all comments into consideration.

32. Voicemail Comment: you say that you are going to listen to the people of the town but you also say that are you going to work with the FS who is just one person. That does not seem correct.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded yes, the Department will work primarily with the First Selectman and other town representatives, however, does not preclude citizens from participating. This meeting is a chance for everyone to voice their concerns.

33. Chat Comment: Angus – If you're on this call, please schedule a public meeting on this for citizens to voice our concerns.

Response: Mr. Szoke responded he believes First Selectman McDonald is listening in on the meeting, however if he is not the Department will pass along the message.

The meeting ended at 7:41 pm after all questions were answered. Attendees were reminded to fill out the survey and that the comment period would be open until December 30th should anyone wish to submit after further comments or questions to the project email or phone number.