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INFRASTRUCTURE

Business development is highly dependent on the quality of the infrastructure. Infrastructure determines whether workers will be able to travel to the workplace in a timely fashion, the power and water supply available for production, local and international communications, and the ability distribute goods and services throughout the region. Following is an assessment of Bridgeport’s infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION

Bridgeport’s transportation and transit infrastructure is one of its greatest assets. Road, rail, maritime and air options abound for residents and workers. The overall system has benefited from great improvements to its regional connectivity in the last decade; however, there is still room for improvement, especially on local bridges and roads, and the severe congestion between Bridgeport and Stamford. Bridgeport is poised to provide productive congestion mitigation strategies for lower Fairfield.

Following is an inventory of existing major components of Bridgeport’s transportation infrastructure.

Highways

Interstate 95

Interstate 95, the primary north-south highway on the Atlantic Seaboard, travels east-west across Connecticut, while carrying approximately 130,000 vehicles per day

through an often congested Fairfield County corridor. Six of I-95’s exits are located within the bounds of Bridgeport. A \$348 million construction investment was recently completed to improve traffic flow.

Merritt Parkway

The Merritt Parkway, the division of Route 15 extending from the New York border to the Housatonic River, was created to alleviate congestion on the Boston Post Road—Route 1. Although the Merritt Parkway does not directly pass through Bridgeport, it is widely used as an alternate means of commuting to both the New York Metro Area and New Haven County, due to its close proximity to the City (exits 47 and 48 are within a mile of Bridgeport’s North End neighborhood).¹

Route 8/Route 25

Combined Routes 8 and 25, carrying some 75,000 vehicles per day, extends north from I-95 through Bridgeport, with exits at Fairfield, North and Boston Avenues, to the northern suburbs. Just south of the Merritt Parkway, the highways split; Route 25 continues toward Trumbull, while Route 8 follows a more easterly direction toward Shelton. These highways are fast becoming some of the busiest commuterways in to and out of the City.

Railroad

Bridgeport Station

Located in Downtown Bridgeport, the Bridgeport

Intermodal Transportation Center is a stop for both Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Service and the Metro-North New Haven Line, which averages a daily commuter ridership of 3,120 passengers. The station can be easily reached from Interstate 95, as well as by bus or ferry service. The hour and a half commute to Grand Central, along with high frequency stops in business areas such as Norwalk, Stamford, and Greenwich, account for much of Bridgeport's rail usage.

Bus

The Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) operates a family of bus transit services in the greater Bridgeport area. The GBTA features a 16-route region extending from Milford to Norwalk, including the Stamford Commuter Connection and an extensive minibus service for riders with disabilities. A major upgrade of the regional bus service will be completed in September 2007, with the opening of the new 17-bay pulsing and intelligent transportation systems bus terminal.

Intermodal Transit Center

The Intermodal Transit Center will provide a single-site access to the Metro-North railroad, the Port Jefferson Ferry and local buses. The project consists of a new 17-bay bus station, also including Peter Pan, Greyhound, and Trailways services, walkways to a new parking garage, and an improved rail terminal that is easily accessible from I-95 via exit 27.

Maritime

Port of Bridgeport

One of only three deep-water ports in Connecticut, the Port of Bridgeport provides an accessible, decongested pathway to the entire Northeast. The port has also made strides to build a niche in shipbuilding and ferry services.

Bridgeport Regional Maritime Complex

In May 2003, the Port of Bridgeport was selected by the state of Connecticut as the home of a new barge feeder service for short sea shipping from terminals under the jurisdiction of New York/New Jersey Port Authorities. The 48.5-acre Bridgeport Regional Maritime Complex won an economic development award of \$17 million from the Connecticut Economic Resource Center.

Bridgeport Port Jefferson Steamboat Company

The Bridgeport Port Jefferson Steamboat Company offers hourly ferry departures across Long Island Sound for passengers and automobiles. The 75 minute ride transports an average of 996,000 passengers and 470,000 vehicles annually.

Air

Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial Airport

Owned by the city of Bridgeport and located in Stratford, the Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial is a two runway airport that averages 225 daily flights. The airport is currently planning runway safety improvements on its main ramps and increased hangar space.² It is also home to a new helicopter service to New York City.

POWER DISTRIBUTION

Electrical supply by United Illuminated (UI) is dictated by demand. Downtown Bridgeport is currently fed underground and new energy vaults are planned to meet existing and future demand. Installation of the 345kva upgrade is ongoing and work is scheduled for completion in August 2008. In addition, two new fuel cell plants are being developed within the city.

NATURAL GAS

Existing natural gas service networks are adequate to serve known development projects including Steel Point. The Utility may need to extend high pressure mains and this work should be coordinated with any storm and sanitary separation projects initiated by the City of Bridgeport. Natural gas upgrades will follow demand and rarely are facilities upgraded or expanded based on speculative projects only. Future upgrades are planned and have been coordinated with the State of Connecticut for future roadway upgrades on State owned Fairfield Avenue and State Street.

WATER

Supply

Water distribution by Aquarion has more capacity than the City of Bridgeport currently requires. The system, though dating back to the early 1900's, was constructed to supply major industrial plants with a 70,000,000 gallon per day demand; current demand is 45,000,000 gallons per day. Due to the age of the system, the Utility currently replaces approximately

1,500 linear feet of main per year to avoid future breakage and consequent service disruption. The Utility communicates regularly with the City of Bridgeport for the timely upgrade of existing facilities or extension to new development.

Wastewater Treatment and Stormwater

Wastewater treatment facilities are adequate to serve sanitary flows generated by the City of Bridgeport and neighboring communities that currently purchase capacity within the treatment system. However, capacity is overburdened during particular rainfall events since a majority of the City's storm and sanitary systems are combined.

The treatment plants do not have the capacity to treat sanitary and storm flows at the same time and this results in local area flooding and a discharge of untreated waste to local waterways. The solution lies in separating the storm flows from the existing pipe network so that only sanitary flow is received at the wastewater treatment facility. Considerable investment is required to separate the systems.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Fiber optic networks are critical to sustain a business community. Some fiber optic vendors distribute service through ATT conduits. Though these conduits are congested in areas, fiber optic service in downtown Bridgeport is sufficient at this time. ATT is in the planning stages for technology and distribution upgrades throughout the State of Connecticut and the City is a target service area. Though the Utility tends to follow demand, new zoning maps should be provided to the Utility so that future plans may be solidified and/or expedited to stay ahead of local demand.

Other vendors have an independent network or share with ATT and are prepared to expand service as development demand is generated.

¹ <http://www.nycroads.com/roads/ct-turnpike/>

² <http://ci.bridgeport.ct.us/airportsikor.aspx>