

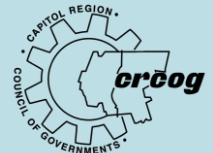


Route 6 Hop River Corridor Transportation Study

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Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum

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Capitol Region Council of Governments



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Introduction

The *Route 6 Hop River Corridor Transportation Study* is being undertaken by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) in cooperation with the towns of Bolton, Coventry, Andover and Columbia, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the corridor that will:

- Address the safety, mobility, and access needs of all corridor travelers, residents, business owners, and patrons while preserving the character of the corridor;
- Provide recommendations and strategies for transportation and land use that build upon and complement the recommendations of the Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council's *Route 6 Hop River Corridor Economic Development Strategy and Master Plan Study* (see Section 1.2.2 for details);
- Evaluate and mitigate the potential effects of future development on traffic growth;
- Support the long-term viability of the corridor as a regional transportation link and economic growth opportunity.

1.1 Study Corridor

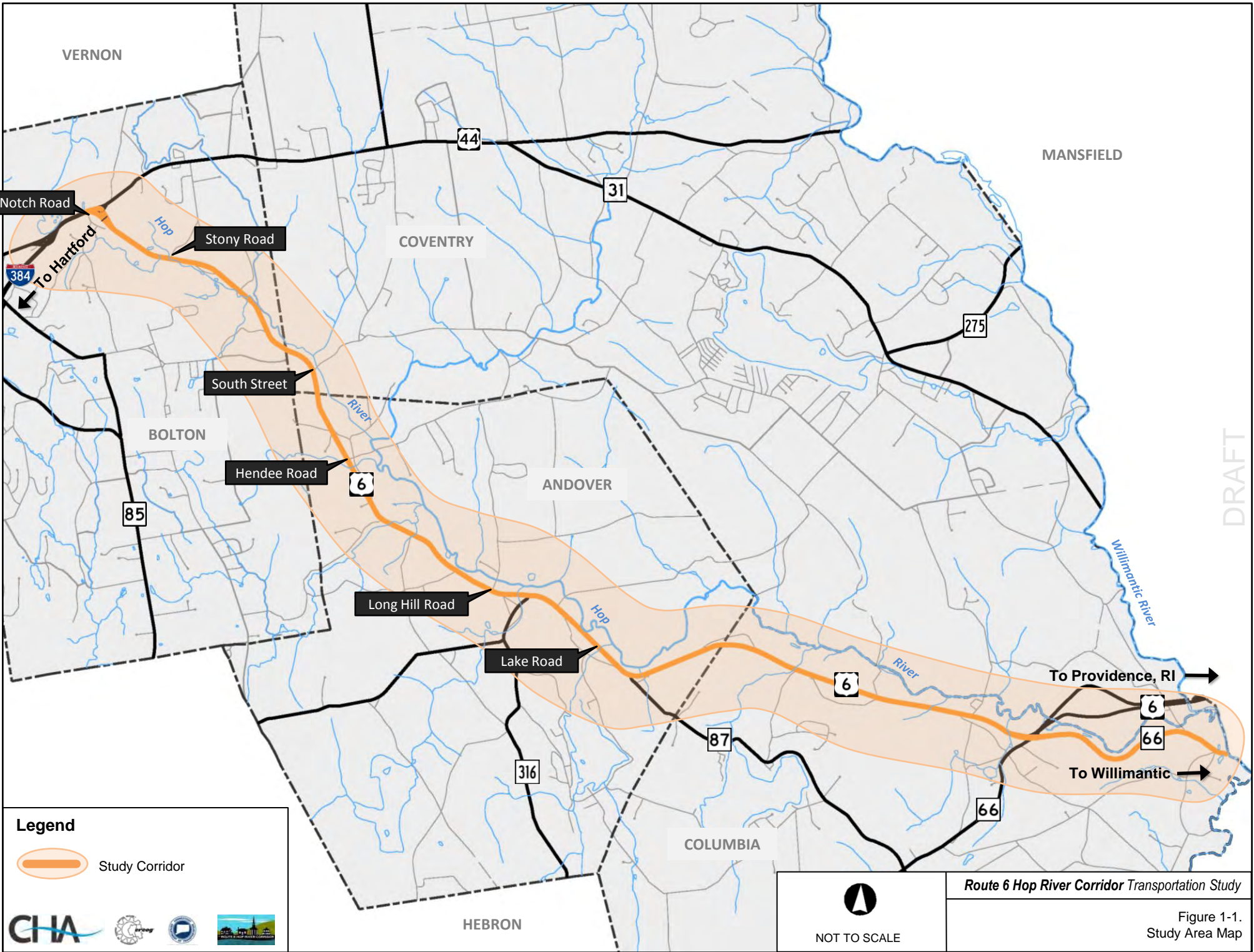
The study corridor includes approximately 11 miles of US Route 6 and 2 miles of Route 66 *East* located between Notch Road in Bolton and the Willimantic River at the Columbia-Windham town line (see Figure 1-1). Because this corridor parallels the Hop River valley and includes segments of both US Route 6 and Route 66, it is generally referred to in this document as the *Route 6 Hop River corridor*.

The Route 6 section of the study corridor is part of the National Highway System and is a critical regional roadway link between the eastern terminus of I-384 in Bolton and the western terminus of the Route 6 expressway in Columbia. The Route 6 corridor is signed in Connecticut and Rhode Island as the designated route for travel between Hartford, CT and Providence, RI. As such, the route serves a significant level of interstate travel and local and regional commuter travel to employment centers in the greater-Hartford area.

The Route 66 East section of the study corridor parallels the Route 6 expressway in Columbia and links the Route 6 section of the study corridor to Willimantic, generally serving shorter trips between local destinations rather than serving a significant level of interstate travel.

Locally, both Route 6 and Route 66 East provide access to residential, commercial, industrial/manufacturing, and recreational uses in Bolton, Coventry, Andover, and Columbia.

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As shown in Figure 1-1, Route 6 is one of two major east-west routes connecting I-384 to points east. US Route 44 is the other major route and continues north of Route 6 from I-384 serving destinations in northern Coventry and Mansfield, including the University of Connecticut in Storrs (via Route 195).

Regional east-west travelers between I-384 and the Route 6 expressway can utilize Route 44 and Route 31 as an alternate route to the Route 6 section of the study corridor. Local interconnectivity is limited between Route 6 and Route 44 in Bolton and Coventry, with only a few local roads and streets providing direct and indirect connections between them.

Other important regional connections from Route 6 include Route 316 which provides access to Hebron and other communities to the south, and Route 87 which connects the corridor to Norwich and other points to the southeast.

1.2 Study Overview

From serving General Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau and his army's march to Yorktown, Virginia in 1781 to connecting thousands of employees to the workplace in present-day, the Route 6 Hop River corridor has been, throughout its history, a critical piece of the local, regional, and interstate transportation networks. This study effort, in conjunction with recent planning efforts conducted by the Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), will provide a comprehensive set of recommendations to support the future viability of the corridor relative to the transportation needs it serves and the future viability of the corridor as an economic growth opportunity.

This section discusses key information to provide background context for this study effort, and presents an overview of the REDC, its recent study efforts, and the study process undertaken for this study. The specific goals and objectives of the study are presented in Section 1.3.

1.2.1 Background

Expressway Plans

In 1953, Connecticut's long range transportation plan first introduced the notion of constructing an expressway parallel to Route 6 through eastern Connecticut to serve interstate travel demands and to relieve traffic on existing Route 6. By 1968, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) designated the proposed expressway I-84 which would continue 64 miles from East Hartford to Providence, Rhode Island. In 1970 and 1971, nine miles of expressway were constructed from East Hartford to Manchester and five miles were constructed through Willimantic (Willimantic Bypass). In the 1980s, Rhode Island abandoned plans to complete its part of I-84 and CTDOT renamed the East Hartford to Manchester segment to be I-384 and the Willimantic Bypass segment to be part of Route 6.¹

Throughout this time, the construction of an expressway that would connect I-384 and the Route 6 expressway remained part of CTDOT and FHWA plans. By the late-1990s, CTDOT had evaluated more than 130 alignment alternatives for the planned expressway, but each was opposed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), or local representatives. Federal funding for an expressway was ultimately withdrawn in 2002 after an impasse was reached between the USACOE and CTDOT regarding a preferred alignment alternative.²

¹ <http://www.kurumi.com/roads/ct/index.html>

² <http://www.kurumi.com/roads/ct/index.html>

1.2.3 Study Process and Participants

CRCOG developed a study process for the Route 6 Hop River Corridor Transportation Study that maintains consistency with the REDC's previous planning initiative in the Route 6 Hop River corridor and facilitates the active involvement of study team members and other stakeholders in the development of the study and its recommendations. Study team members include members of the REDC and other town representatives; CRCOG; Windham Regional Council of Governments (WINCOG); and CTDOT. Other corridor stakeholders include a broader group of study participants, local residents, area business owners, community groups, and anyone who has an interest the study and its recommendations.

Key aspects of the study process include CRCOG's participation in the public involvement components of REDC's study – which consisted of attendance at REDC meetings and joint participation in public meeting presentations – and REDC's continued involvement as members of the advisory committee for this study. Additionally, the study process includes numerous mechanisms of public outreach by which stakeholders are kept apprised of the study progress and are provided the opportunity to interface with the study team and provide input to the objectives, direction, and recommendations of the study. These mechanisms include:

- **Advisory Committee Meetings:** An Advisory Committee (AC) comprised of REDC members, CRCOG staff, and CTDOT staff will guide the study process. Responsibilities of the AC will include reviewing technical products of the study; overseeing public involvement activities; and providing input on the development of recommendations. As many as 15 AC meetings will be conducted throughout the study and scheduled concurrently with regular meetings of the REDC in Columbia Town Hall. These meetings are open to the general public.
- **Technical Working Group Meetings:** As many as 10 meetings will be conducted to discuss specific technical aspects of the study. Meeting participants could include REDC members; town officials; local business representatives; CRCOG and CTDOT staff; CTTransit representatives; or other stakeholders.
- **Project Updates and Website:** Articles prepared for local media will provide updates on study findings, progress, and public involvement opportunities at key study milestones. Additionally, CRCOG is hosting a study website⁴ that provides regular study updates and gives visitors an opportunity to join the study mailing list for direct notification of study progress and announcements.
- **Public Information Meetings:** Three sets of public information meetings will be conducted during the study. These meetings will inform the general public of the study findings and recommendations. These meetings will also provide attendees an opportunity to pose questions to the study team and provide comments and feedback on the study. One set of public meetings was conducted concurrently with meetings for the *Route 6 Hop River Corridor Economic Development Strategy and Master Plan Study* in May and June 2010 (see Appendix 1-1 for a summary of these meetings).
- **Public Access Television Broadcasts:** Study team representatives will be guests on three public access television broadcasts to be hosted by the REDC chairperson. It is anticipated that these shows will highlight existing corridor conditions, preliminary alternatives, and the final recommended corridor improvements.

⁴ http://www.crcog.org/transportation/current_stud/Route6.html

By responding to and incorporating constructive input from corridor stakeholders as a fundamental component of the early planning process, the study team will be able to develop recommendations that are generally accepted by the stakeholders. This process will help facilitate the implementation of recommendations in subsequent stages of design and construction.

1.3 Goals and Objectives

The study goals and objectives outlined below were developed with input from the Advisory Committee and reflect the overall desire for a safe and efficient transportation system that will support and promote the economic viability of the Route 6 Hop River corridor. These goals and objectives are currently in draft form and will be refined as necessary throughout the study to reflect evolving public sentiment and focus.

Goal: Improve Corridor Safety for All Users
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address safety concerns and deficiencies in high accident locations and other areas of concern. • Provide measures to manage vehicular speeds, particularly in areas of existing and future development nodes. • Manage vehicular access to minimize conflicts on Route 6. • Provide measures to promote safe use of corridor by pedestrians and bicyclists.
Goal: Improve Mobility and Accessibility for All Users
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate traffic delays along Route 6. • Improve side road access to and from Route 6. • Provide new and improved pedestrian facilities (where appropriate) to promote walkability within development nodes. • Provide new and improved bicycle facilities (where appropriate) to promote bikeability in the corridor and to improve bike access to the Hop River Trail, Park & Ride lots, and other destinations. • Provide improved multimodal access for Park & Ride lots and public transit services; examine opportunities for other Park & Ride lot and transit service improvements.
Goal: Coordinate Land Use and Transportation Strategies and Recommendations
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build upon the land use and transportation recommendations of the REDC’s <i>Route 6 Hop River Corridor Economic Development Strategy and Master Plan Study</i>. • Develop transportation recommendations and promote land use strategies based on <i>smart growth</i> principles that provide compact development, incorporate mixed uses, and facilitate transportation choices. • Support future economic development opportunities and associated transportation needs.
Goal: Preserve Character and Context of Study Corridor
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies and recommendations that are consistent with the existing rural, small community characteristics of the corridor. • Minimize impacts to historic, environmental, and visual resources.

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