

Connecticut Delegation Works for Federal Aid to Repair Route 7

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Oil Tanker Damages Route 7 Bridge in Ridgefield

Washington, D.C. - Governor M. Jodi Rell, Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT), Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Representatives Nancy Johnson (R-CT), Rob Simmons (R-CT), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and John Larson (D-CT) have reached out to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DoT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) seeking an expedited release of Emergency Relief Funds. The funds will reimburse Connecticut's eligible expenses from repairing damage caused by a trailer truck accident on U.S. Route 7 bridge over the Norwalk River in Ridgefield. DoT has offered technical assistance for environmental remediation and rerouting of traffic, and will reimburse 100 percent of the costs of restoring traffic flow and prevention of additional damage.

Tuesday afternoon a trailer truck loaded with gasoline rolled over on a U.S. Route 7 bridge over the Norwalk River in Ridgefield, catching on fire, fatally injuring the driver, and severely damaging the 40 foot bridge.

"We are optimistic that emergency federal funding will be expedited for these badly needed repairs. Route 7 is among the busiest roadways in western Connecticut, carrying thousands of commuters and other citizens every day," Rell said. "We are working around the clock to make the necessary repairs as quickly as possible and believe this is a project that merits prompt federal reimbursement. Connecticut's Congressional delegation is to be commended for its quick action on this request."

"We have reached out to the U.S. Department of Transportation and received a positive response. We will continue to work through the appropriate channels to ensure the state has the support they need to quickly assess and repair Route 7," Shays said. "This is a key road for many constituents in the 4th District and I'm eager to get it into working order again as quickly as possible. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the gentleman who lost his life in this accident."

"This is a major transportation artery in our state that has been badly damaged. It calls for major financial first aid," Dodd said. "It's critically important that the federal government provide every resource available to help restore this bridge and reimburse Connecticut to deal with the cost of cleanup and repairs."

"First, my thoughts and prayers go out to the families affected by this horrific accident during this difficult time," Lieberman said. "Access to Route 7 is critical for Connecticut's commuters and the release of this funding provides a much needed boost to the state's repair efforts. Assistance for remediation and rerouting provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation removes the roadblocks to reconstruction."

"An incident such as this impacts all of Connecticut," Simmons said. "By working together in a bipartisan fashion, I'm hopeful that we can deliver some immediate assistance to all those who rely on this critical route and bridge."

“Route 7 is critical to those living and working in Western Connecticut,” Johnson said. “We are working with federal transportation officials to make sure our state has the resources it needs to repair and reopen this busy roadway as quickly as possible.”

“It is critically important that the state receive this emergency federal aid to restore this bridge and get traffic in Western Connecticut moving again,” said DeLauro. “I would also like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the family of the truck driver who tragically lost his life in this accident.”

“Thousands of people rely on Route 7 everyday,” said Larson. “The quicker we can get the federal aid needed to clean up the highway and get people moving again, the better.”

All traffic has been diverted to Route 35 and Route 102. A detailed assessment of the damage will be done when gas fumes clear enough to allow Connecticut Department of Transportation officials access, but early estimates indicate repair will cost between \$2 million and \$5 million. U.S. Route 7 is part of the National Highway system.

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