

DOT has big plans for state's roads, railways

By Brianna Gurciullo
STAFF WRITER

From a \$50,000 project to install electric vehicle charging stations at town facilities in Canton to a more than \$3 billion effort to replace a railroad bridge between Stratford and Milford, a five-year capital plan released this

month by the Connecticut Department of Transportation assigns \$15.7 billion in funding to hundreds of projects across the state. Some projects, such as the EV charging stations in Canton, are funded by a mix of federal and local dollars. But most involve state funding, often in combination with federal

money. Here are some of the most expensive projects in the DOT's plan.

Devon rail bridge

A project to replace this 120-year-old bridge, which brings Metro-North's New Haven Line and Amtrak's Northeast Corridor over the Housa-

tonic River, is expected to cost more than \$3 billion, with 80% funded by the federal government.

"The movable portion of the bridge has experienced operational issues in the recent past, including a significant incident in the summer of 2015, which closed one of the



Arnold Gold/Hearst Connecticut Media
The platforms at Union Station in New Haven in 2023.



Arnold Gold/Hearst Connecticut Media
Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz speaks at the Zum Transportation bus yard in Branford on Friday at a news conference to talk about Branford Public Schools use of electric school buses and their vehicle-to-grid capabilities. Behind her is one of the electric buses.

Branford to launch state's first fully electric school bus fleet

By Crystal Elescano
STAFF WRITER

BRANFORD — In a move that state officials called a major milestone in the transition to zero-emission transportation, Branford Public Schools is launching Connecticut's first fully-electric school bus fleet. "Branford Public Schools and Zum are leading the way and showing what's possible when you prioritize reliability, safety and transparency for families," Lt. Gov. Susan

Bysiewicz said at a news conference Friday with local and company official announcing the move. The conference also marked the official groundbreaking for site construction at the Zum School Bus Yard in Branford, where the electric vehicle infrastructure will be installed. Bysiewicz called the launch a historic milestone, stating the district is expected to operate the largest fully electric school bus fleet with vehicle-to-grid capabilities in

the Northeast and the second largest in the United States starting in the 2026-27 school year. The 2026-27 launch aligns with a 2022 state law requiring districts in environmental justice communities such as Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven — where asthma rates are high — to transition to electric school buses, according to Bysiewicz. Beginning Jan. 1, 2035, school districts may purchase only zero-emission buses, and all school buses

statewide must be zero-emission by 2040. Districts in environmental justice communities must comply by Jan. 1, 2030. School districts may enter zero-emission bus contracts for up to 10 years, according to Public Act 22-25. School Superintendent Christopher Tranberg said Branford is accelerating its transition in part because grant funding must be used within specific timelines or returned.

Electric continues on A10

NEW HAVEN

City mulls way to get disabled, elderly to top of East Rock Park

By Cassandra Day
STAFF WRITER

NEW HAVEN — Disability advocates are looking for an accessible way for all to get to the summit of East Rock Park seven days a week. Being unable to access the view, is "prohibitive," said Gretchen Knauff, director of the Disabilities Service Department. She said she's heard from a number of people with disabilities who can't get to the summit with electric wheelchairs, those with

Access continues on A4

Gov.'s budget would flat-fund 153 school districts

By Natasha Sokoloff
STAFF WRITER

Most Connecticut cities and towns will see no increase in state education funding under Gov. Ned Lamont's proposed budget for fiscal year 2027. The budget proposal's failure to include any change to the state's largest grant to school districts has come under fire from local leaders and education advocates because

Schools continues on A10

Bakeries gear up for dozens of king cakes for Mardi Gras

By Cassandra Day
STAFF WRITER

Chelsea Tripp, owner of Kouign Bakery in Wallingford since 2021, and her two staff members already had 30 orders for king cakes a few days ahead of Mardi Gras and expected many more over the weekend.

Customers of the small-batch bakery who placed pre-orders will be picking up the classic braided brioche-based pastries with a cream cheese/cinnamon filling topped with vanilla glaze Monday morning at 600 North Colony Road, the day before Mardi Gras on Tuesday, when the treat is usu-

ally eaten. They're topped with green, yellow and purple sugar, the colors of Mardi Gras, with green beads in the center. "It's almost like a three kings cake in France, a gateau, which has almond marzipan in the middle," she said. Both have "bebe" trinkets

hidden within the cake. "Traditionally, it's supposed to be ceramic, but they're very expensive and hard to get, so we use little metallic babies," said Tripp. Elmwood Pastry Shop at 1136 New Britain Ave. in West Hartford, which has been around for over 75 years, also specializ-

es in the cakes. The individual who gets a piece with the baby trinket, placed inside after it's baked, gets good luck for an entire year, said Laura Doty, Elmwood's manager. "I think they're supposed to buy the cake next year," she

Mardi Gras continues on A10

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snow shower.
High: 47. Low: 28. Page A12

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