

Annex B: Scenic Road Land use and Maintenance Considerations

An annex to the 2016-2026 Corridor Management Plan: Connecticut State Route 169 National Scenic Byway



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Abbreviations

CTDOT- Connecticut Department of Transportation

FHWA- Federal Highway Administration (U.S. Department of Transportation)

NECCOG- Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

NNECAPA- Northern Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

NPS- National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Page	Photographer	Title or <i>Description</i>	Link
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13	NNECAPA	Meat Market, Bedford, NH	https://www.flickr.com/photos/nnecapa/2846490733
13	NNECAPA	Dollar General Store, Schroon Lake, NY	https://www.flickr.com/photos/nnecapa/2652496437

14	Town of Canterbury Economic Development Commission	<i>Better Val-U sign</i>	http://www.canterburybiz.com/everything-canterbury-in-pictures/
14	NNECAPA	Common Ground Café Sign, Hyannis, MA	https://www.flickr.com/photos/nnecapa/2868248117
14	<i>Wikipedia user:</i> Wolfgangus Mozart	Streetlamp Varberg 2010	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Streetlamp_Varberg_2010.jpg
14	Town of Canterbury Economic Development Commission	<i>Burgis Brook sign</i>	http://www.canterburybiz.com/everything-canterbury-in-pictures/
14	<i>Wikipedia user:</i> Ftombardo	Red Maple	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Red_maple.png
14	Jonathan Billinger	Plum Blossom on the First Day of Spring	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plum_blossom_on_the_first_day_of_spring_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1214413.jpg
17	NECCOG	<i>Stone wall near Bush Hill</i>	
17	NECCOG	<i>Stone wall on the byway</i>	
18	CTDOT	<i>Merritt Parkway Guardrail</i>	http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=4109&q=474562
18	NECCOG	<i>Guardrail in Pomfret</i>	

Plan Annex B: Scenic Road Land Use and Maintenance Considerations

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Overview

Applicability and Intent

This document is **advisory** in nature and carries with it **no regulatory authority**. This document simply presents suggestions for land use regulations, landscape design, and roadway maintenance in the areas along the Connecticut State Route 169 National Scenic Byway (“the byway”). This document is an annex to the 2016-2026 Corridor Management Plan: Connecticut State Route 169 National Scenic Byway (“the Plan”) and is intended for use by municipal and regional officials, boards, commissions, committees, and staff of communities along Route 169 (*see map on following page*), as well as the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and utility companies. These guidelines focus on three key areas along Route 169: *Residential/ Agricultural* lands, *Villages*, and *The Roadway* itself.

Additional Scenic Routes

Eastern Connecticut is a region with multiple scenic roads, villages, and rural lands. These guidelines promote the planned preservation and enhancement of the regional landscape and its unique sense of place. Communities **not along** Route 169 are **encouraged** to use these guidelines for their own benefit.

Plans of Conservation and Development

The municipal plans of conservation and development (POCDs), adopted pursuant to §8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S), of towns along the byway should be amended or updated to reflect a need to preserve the scenic character of rural lands and villages along the byway. **It is strongly recommended that the following should be included in the POCD:**

- **A Vision Statement for the preservation and enhancement of byway as a scenic and cultural resource**
- **Recommended changes to zoning regulations and other land use regulations, if needed**
- **Identified priority areas for environmental and historic preservation or aesthetic enhancement**



FIGURE A: ROUTE 169 AND THE CONNECTICUT STATE ROUTE 169 NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Maximizing the Value of Land Use Regulations

It is common that land use regulations—zoning, subdivision, and inland wetlands regulations—miss their intended purpose. Commission can encounter pitfalls when their regulations and procedures are too flexible in sensitive areas of town, too stringent and prohibitive of compatible growth, or too reliant on certain powers, such as the special permit application procedure.

Three application scenarios are presented below. Regulatory commissions and boards should review their regulations relative to these scenarios to determine areas of strength and weakness, and assess the positive and negative effects of their power.

20-lot Residential Subdivision (all single-family homes)

- Are single-family homes a permitted use or specially permitted use in the zones along Route 169?
- What is the minimum lot size and frontage in those zones?
- What do the subdivision regulations require?
 - Is there a maximum length for a new road?
 - How many curb cuts are allowed along the existing road?
 - Are common driveways allowed, encouraged, or required?
 - How many houses can use one driveway?
 - How much open space must be set-aside?
 - Is there a plan for the placement of set-aside open space?
- What are the goals of the set-aside open space?
- Is there guidance that states when a fee in-lieu of open space should be required?
- Do wetlands or other features count toward open space requirements?
- Are interior lots allowed?

Retail/Pharmacy Chain Store (~8,000 square feet)

- Is this use allowed in the zones along Route 169?
 - What is the process? Zoning permit? Special permit? Is site plan review required?
- What are the dimensional requirements?

- What are the minimum lot sizes and setbacks?
- What are the maximum height and floor area?
- Is a landscaped buffer required?
- What are the required number of parking spaces?
 - Is parking required or encouraged in the rear of the property?
- Does the town use design guidelines for this zone or all zones?
- What types of signs are permitted?
 - How large may they be?
 - How may they be lit?
 - What materials may be used?
- What types of lighting are allowed for the building and parking lot?
 - Will this lighting impact neighboring properties?

New Manufacturing Facility (~65,000 square feet)

- Is this use allowed in the zones along Route 169?
 - What is the process? Zoning permit? Special permit? Is site plan review required?
- What are the dimensional requirements?
 - What are the minimum lot sizes and setbacks?
 - What are the maximum height and floor area?
 - Is a landscaped buffer required?
- Where is parking allowed on the property?
- Does the town use design guidelines for this zone or all zones?
- What types of lighting are allowed for the building and parking lot?
 - Will this lighting impact neighboring properties?

Areas along the Byway

Residential/ Agricultural

Agricultural activities are occasionally permitted throughout rural towns, but other times are permitted only in larger-lot districts. Agriculture not only has an immense, positive impact on community character and aesthetics, but it also contributes to the local economy, provides jobs, and has a net positive impact to a town's budget—even if landowners are benefiting from use-value assessed property taxes. Almost all rural towns in Connecticut have a variation of a “rural-residential” zoning district, covering most of the town, and the intention of which is to permit agriculture alongside low-density residential uses. Minimum lot sizes in these districts tend to be around two acres, and the proliferation of housing, especially in hastily designed subdivisions, as seen during the recent “housing boom”, has had the greatest impact on these areas.

Villages

Village centers along the byway have evolved over time. Larger villages may have been a town's only center for commercial and civic activity and, for that reason, supported a variety of uses now found in urban and suburban areas. Today, allowing the same variety of uses may have a detrimental effect on a village's character; suppose, for instance, a national-chain pharmacy or big-box store were plant itself alongside 19th century homes, across from the village green. One could imagine the community outrage. Conversely, though, allowing some commercial uses that blend with the existing community character can provide needed services and economic development, which can greatly impact the livability of a village, as well as the town's Grand List.

The Roadway

Ensuring the safety of drivers, their passengers, and non-motorized users of the byway should remain the greatest priority to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, utility companies, and local leaders, moving forward. Too often, however, maintenance and physical improvements to roads result in higher traffic speeds and reduced scenic quality. Context-sensitive roadway improvements are strongly encouraged to protect the scenic character of the byway.

Residential/Agricultural

General Recommendations

The following should be considered by byway communities:

- Enact a Right to Farm Ordinance that codifies the town’s endorsement of agriculture in spite of its perceived nuisances
- Continue to permit agriculture throughout town without over-regulating through zoning
- Continue to utilize “Public Act 490”, Connecticut’s use-value assessment law, to reduce the property tax burden of farmers, foresters, and stewards of open space
- Establish, by ordinance, an Agricultural Commission that will advocate, on behalf of local farmers, for farm-friendly town policies
- Enact an ordinance establishing tax abatements for farm buildings, agricultural machinery, horses, and other taxable, personal and real property used for agricultural purposes
- Establish a fund to be used for the purchase of open space land and development rights
- Assist interested property owners in applying to open space preservation programs (*see Appendix for a listing of programs*)
- Provide for creative, “cluster” subdivision of land, pursuant to §8-25(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S), that awards density bonuses for designs that increase set-aside open space
- Hold pre-application meetings with prospective housing developers to consider alternative techniques and solutions to subdivisions that maximize aesthetics and value, and minimize negative impacts to open space, wildlife, and municipal service costs

Subdivision of Land

While growth in rural areas is inevitable, subdivision and zoning regulations and public improvement specifications often demand large lots, served by wide roads. When open land is subdivided and developed for single-family housing, there may be no consideration given to minimizing the development's impact on the town's rural character. When planners, commission members, and developers work together to achieve context-sensitive designs for subdivisions, the result will often go a long way in maximizing the developer's return on investment, preserving the town's scenic character, minimizing demand for services such as snow plowing, and minimizing conflicts between new residents and existing farmers.

Clustering Development

- In large subdivisions, encourage developers to choose a cluster subdivision option to maximize open space and increase the number of housing lots (*see page 9*)
- For small subdivisions, look at alternative options, such as the use of a shared driveway, that may shield homes from public view, afford owners privacy, maximize return on investment, and which may negate the need for a new road (*see page 10*)

Open Space

- Optimize minimum open space requirements in conventional and cluster subdivisions to balance property rights with environmental protection, maintenance of rural character, and preservation of home values

- Use set-aside open space in conventional subdivisions to minimize the amount of the development visible from the main road
- Encourage walking trails for community use in cluster subdivisions

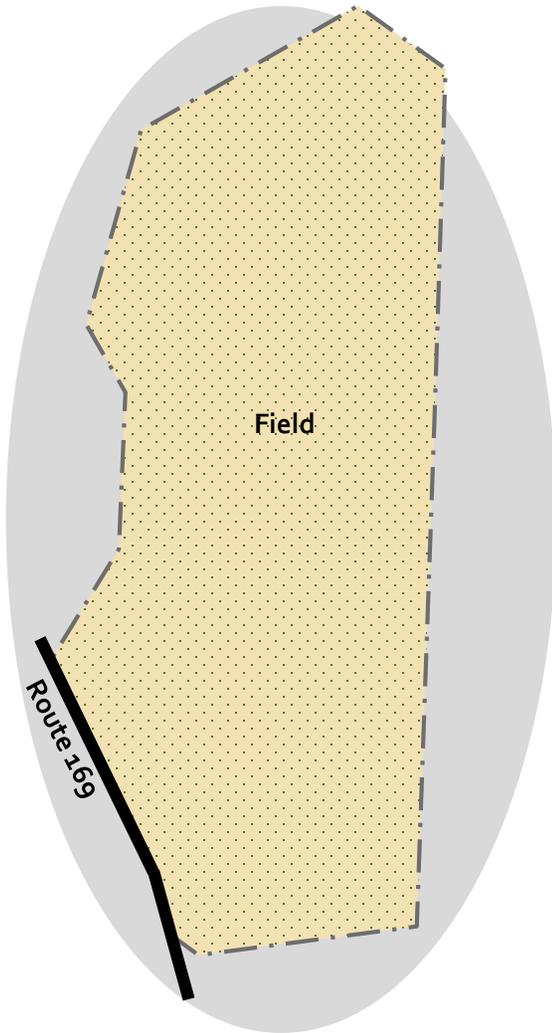
Roads

- Reduce the minimum width of a new road not to go beyond what is necessary for emergency vehicles and utilities
- Provide for unpaved roads to be made in new subdivisions
- Encourage road names with local and historic significance and use traditional suffixes such as, "Road", "Street", or Pike"

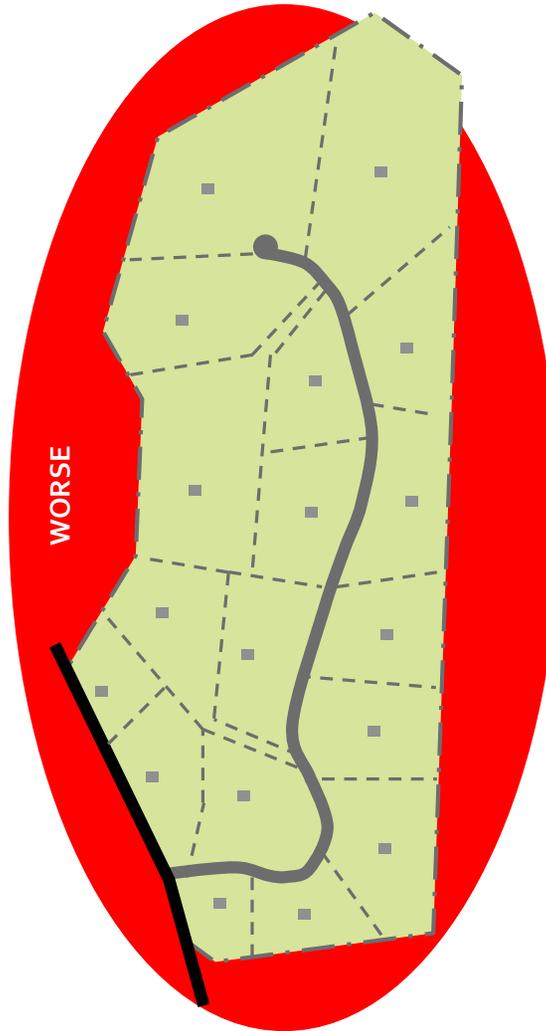
Housing Types

- Encourage architectural styles that are endemic to New England and the roadway (*see page 10*)
- Discourage attached garages visible from the road
- Encourage natural building materials

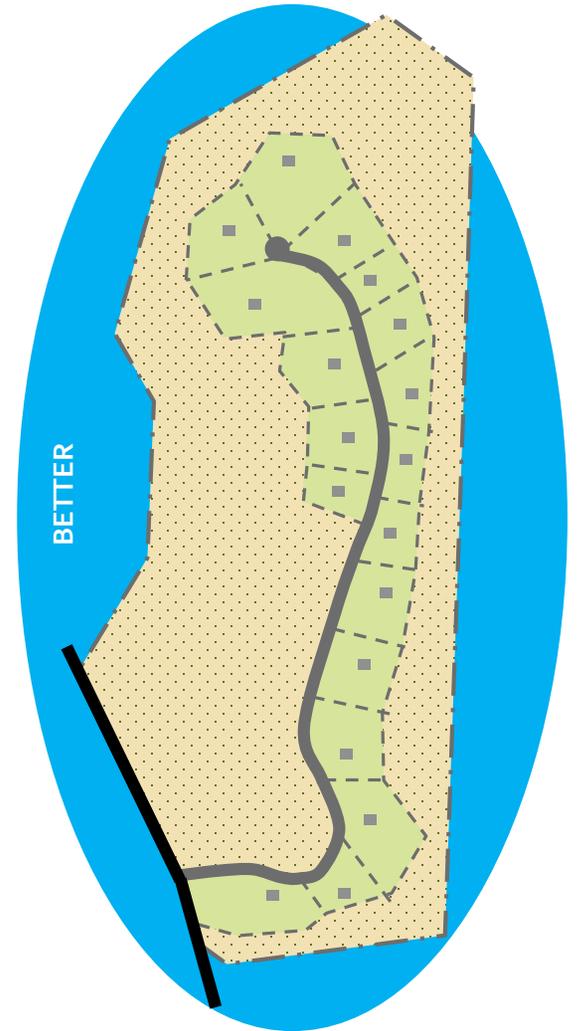
Existing conditions



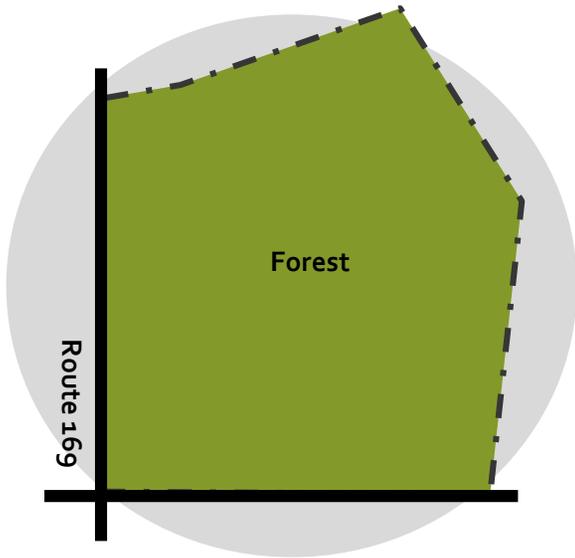
Conventional subdivision- 18 lots



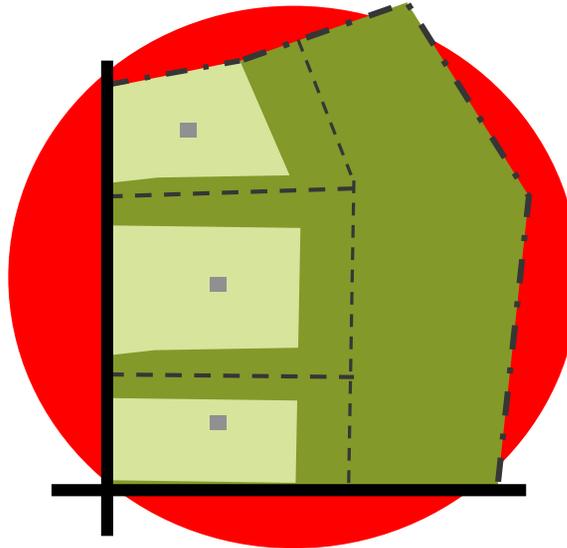
Cluster subdivision- 18 lots



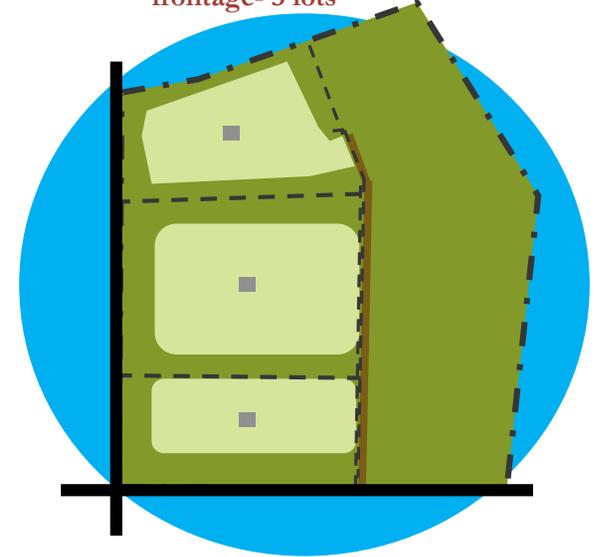
Existing conditions



Frontage on Route 169- 3 lots



Shared driveway with reverse frontage- 3 lots



“McMansion”



Cape Cod-style architecture



Saltbox roof with clapboard siding



Villages

General Recommendations

The following should be considered by byway communities:

- Encourage petition for a Local Historic District, pursuant to C.G.S. §7-147, if applicable, to preserve the character of existing and new structures
- Establish Village District zoning, if appropriate, pursuant to C.G.S. §8-2(j), which provides greater protection to the aesthetics of the village and control uses
- Adopt design guidelines—or use this document’s guidelines—to communicate to landowners and developer the preferred form to be taken by buildings, site features, and other site improvements
- Consider the appropriateness of all currently allowed uses in a village’s zoning district(s) and consider possible pitfalls
- Amend the municipal plan of conservation and development to express the need for architectural and historic preservation in village centers



Allowed Uses

The designated use or uses on a parcel of land is controlled by zoning regulations. Finding the correct regulatory balance will assure that land along the byway preserves its historic, rural character, while still providing a necessary level of service to community residents and travelers. [Sample uses are listed below.](#)

Village Remaining Primarily Residential

- Residential uses
- Religious, institutional, and municipal uses
- Bed & Breakfasts/inns
- Home businesses
- Businesses related to agriculture
- General stores
- Limited office space (e.g. law or doctors' offices)
- Stores accessory to a farming operation

Village Wanting to Allow Additional Services

- (Uses shown left)
- Small grocery stores and pharmacies
- Banks
- Restaurants
- Hardware stores
- Agricultural supply stores and dealerships
- Recreational fields

Law offices in an existing building



General store



Store accessory to an apple orchard



Compatible Form

The form taken by new development may be guided by zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, or Local Historic District regulations. Maximizing the effectiveness of a town’s regulatory capabilities, while respecting the rights of property owners, will help ensure that new development remains consistent with a shared community vision and the traditional characteristics of the byway corridor.

Building Types

- Ensure that architectural styles of new buildings match what is existing
 - Absent Village District zoning or Local Historic District regulations, request that developers use styles endemic to New England and that already exist in the village
 - Common styles along the byway include Cape Cod, Greek Revival, Georgian, Federal, Shingle-style, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Italianate
 - The architectural elements of buildings should be relatively simple
 - Encourage the use of natural building materials

Layout

- Preserve the layout and density of the village center
 - Optimize setbacks, or use build-to lines, to match existing building setbacks
 - Discourage large parking lots which disconnect buildings
 - Encourage and/or plan for pedestrian connections between buildings

Cape Cod-style chain restaurant



Shingle-style grocery store



Chain store in a pre-fabricated structure



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Signs

- Encourage the use of natural or traditional materials (e.g.: wood or metal (d))
- Encourage logos and sign displays that are simple in nature (a)
- Limit the size of free-standing signs and wall-mounted signs (b)
- Limit the height of posts for free-standing signs
- Discourage window signs
- Prohibit electronic signs and moving-type signs
- Require external lighting for signs (no internally illuminated or neon signs)

Lighting

- Require lighting that reduces light pollution and encroachment onto other properties
 - Encourage traditional lantern-style lamps for parking lot and walkway lighting with low illumination or shielded cutoffs (c)

Parking

- Encourage shared parking amongst neighboring, like land uses
- Encourage rear parking

Landscaping

- Add landscaped buffers and parking lot landscaping as conditions to a special permit
- Strongly encourage the use of native trees and shrubs (e.g.: White Pine, Gray Birch, Red Maple (e), Rhododendrons, Huckleberry)
 - Encourage deciduous trees with bright fall colors or large spring flowers (e.g.: Red Maple or American Plum (f))



The Roadway

Safety

Safety improvements along major roads include, for example, widening road shoulders and replacing guard rails. In regards to safety improvements, context-sensitive alternatives should always be considered to preserve the byway's unique character and to slow traffic.

Alignment

A key scenic feature of Route 169 is its historic curviness and interaction with the landscape. Changes to width and horizontal and vertical alignment should be those *critical* to the safety of users and should take into consideration future vehicle operating speeds given a wider and more-linear road.

The traditional methods of trying to improve safety on state highways may not be possible or appropriate for scenic roads. These methods have concentrated on physical modifications to the roadway and roadside such as widening lanes and shoulders, adding guiderail, cutting trees, and changing the vertical and horizontal geometry. These techniques will often destroy the visual quality that led to the scenic designation. In addition, by creating a more wide-open look to the road, these techniques reduce the apparent dangers for the driver and result in higher operating speeds...

- Route 169 Corridor Management Plan (1995)

Trees and Vistas

Tree maintenance is an important factor in ensuring the safety of drivers and the effectiveness of overhead utilities; however, context-sensitive solutions to these issues can help to ensure the future of Route 169's scenery and the character of its communities. The following municipal actions are universally recommended for towns along the byway:

- Establish a committee that reviews, and makes recommendations for alternatives to, tree trimming efforts by CTDOT and local utility companies
- Consider additional funding to the Tree Warden so that he/she can involve him/herself in planned tree trimming
- Ensure that the Tree Warden issues tree trimming permits only after careful review of the proposed work
- Develop an inventory of ecologically and scenically important, healthy trees along the byway
- Ensure that Planning and Zoning Commissions consider tree preservation when reviewing site plans for subdivision applications, zoning permit applications, and special permit applications, and ensure that zoning and subdivision regulations express the Town's intent to preserve roadside trees

Advocate for CTDOT and utility companies (regulated by the Connecticut Public Utility Regulatory Authority) to adhere to the following practices described in ANSI A300- Utility Pruning Standards by the American National Standards Institute and Utility Best Management Practices by the International Society of Arboriculture:

- No more than 25% of a tree's foliage, or of a single limb's foliage, should be removed within one growing season
- Selectively cut branches and trees which pose an actual and likely threat to utilities
- Continue to hear and consider citizen and municipal input in regards to positive and negative impacts of tree maintenance—public opinion matters

In addition, it is important that new tree growth be reduced or eliminated where it blocks existing, scenically important vistas.

Stone Walls

Too often, stone walls—icons of the southern New England landscape—are neglected and slowly become obscured by woody plant growth. They are also threatened by removal or relocation for sale or land development. On the byway, the right-of-way typically extends to a stone wall, if one exists, and maintenance between it and the road falls within the responsibility of CTDOT. CTDOT and/or landowners should maintain grass and vegetation in a way that does not obscure walls or cause woody growth to flourish. Maintenance of stone walls should include:

- Regular mowing and removal of small trees and shrubs
- Cutting of large trees, if needed, at the base, and removing the stump only after it has deteriorated
- Repairing of damaged portions of the wall
- Documentation and mapping of stone walls lining the right-of-way or integral to the character of Route 169

It is also important that municipalities work with landowners to clear walls and recapture scenically important sections of the byway.

A bare stone wall and scenic vista



Woody growth obscures both the wall and the field behind it



Guardrails

Today, most guardrails on rural routes are made from galvanized steel or use cable with wood or metal posts. Although effective and relatively inexpensive, these materials can detract from the scenic character of roadways while, at the same time, encouraging higher operating speeds. Using steel-reinforced timber beams, as is done on Connecticut's Merritt Parkway, or rust-colored, "weathering" steel, creates a more rural feel and blend with the surrounding landscape.

Bridges

The Connecticut Department of Transportation is responsible for the maintenance and repair of existing bridges and construction of new Bridges on Route 169 and other State roads. Because they are inexpensive and reliable, most new bridges are concrete and have no load-bearing superstructure. Normally, the only feature of these bridges elevated above the bridge deck are metal railings and concrete parapets.

Bridges should be designed to include elements that add visual character or reflect the natural setting of Route 169, such as:

- Timber railings
- Stone or stamped concrete abutments and parapets
- Material colors consistent with surroundings
- Trusses
- Wooden coverings

Wooden guardrail on the Merritt Parkway



"Weathering steel" guardrail on Route 169

