

*Darienite*

*News for Darien*

<https://darienite.com>

---

## **Avoid the Carnival of Errors When Replacing the Stamford Station Garage: Cameron on Transportation**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

**Categories :** [Opinion](#), [Transportation](#)

**Tagged as :** [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2017](#), [Jim Cameron 2017](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#)

**Date :** May 30, 2017

The state Department of Transportation is back again with another proposal to demolish the old parking garage at Stamford's train station and replace it with a new facility.

After the embarrassment of the first transit-oriented development (TOD) effort, which languished for more than three years before [being killed](#), let's hope they learned their lessons.

### **Ignoring the public and city officials**

There was zero public input last time on state DOT proposals. I hope there are many public information sessions this time and that the state DOT will actually listen to its customers, daily commuters who need access to their trains with close-by parking. This land is owned by taxpayers and they should have a voice in its development.

The state DOT thumbed its nose last time at Stamford, telling developers this was state-owned land not subject to city rules. The city [responded by rezoning the area](#) around the train station to protect its interests. I hope the state DOT this time works with the city for everyone’s benefit.

In its previous TOD effort, the developers’ bids and detailed plans were secret. The public never saw the specifics nor were they given a chance to comment. That is just wrong and cannot be repeated.

### **Lots of unknowns**

All we know so far is the DOT proposed a 950-1,000-car garage at the corner of South State Street and Washington Boulevard. There are no plans yet on its design, traffic flow or how the old garage across will be demolished while still keeping access to the station — the busiest on the line aside from Grand Central.

The construction and demolition will wreak havoc on traffic for months, probably years. There must be a plan to accomplish both with minimal impact on the thousands of daily Metro-North and [Amtrak](#) passengers. But so far, all the DOT says is “we don’t know” how the work will be done.

### **Bidding process needs to look fair**

Was it by chance the previous developer — John McClutchy — just happened to [donate \\$30,000](#) to the Connecticut Democrats days before being [chosen for the TOD project](#)? Perhaps, but the later [indictment of some of his business partners](#) on corruption charges did not make for good optics.

While the DOT still doesn’t know what will be built on the site of the old garage, whatever is designed and whoever is chosen must be above reproach and be seen as selected on merit, not money.

The saga of the Stamford garage began in 1983 when, during its initial construction, [cracks were found in beams](#). The DOT has been hemming and hawing since 2006 about its demolition and replacement. The agency has been secretive and arrogant in its deliberations the entire time.

Let’s hope this time planning for the future of the garage is an inclusive, transparent process. Commuters, taxpayers and residents deserve no less.

Like this article? ...

- Sign up for the [Darienite.com newsletter](#).
- Like [Darienite.com on Facebook](#).
- Follow [Darienite.com on Twitter](#).

---

**Jim Cameron on Trains and Metro-North**

- [Pay Your Fare Even When the Conductor Doesn't Ask — or You're Shoplifting](#) (Dec. 4, 2016)
- [Trains Slip Sliding on Wet Leaf Goo is a Bigger Mess Than You May Think](#) (Nov. 26, 2016)
- [Staying Safe on the Train](#) (Nov. 19, 2016)
- [The Billion Dollar Bridge](#) (Nov. 17, 2016)
- [Politicians and Promises](#) (Nov. 15, 2016)
- [Metro-North Hasn't Enforced Quiet Car Rules, But They're Expanding Quiet Cars](#) (Dec. 30)
- [How a 10% ConnDOT Cut Would Affect Connecticut: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 10)
- [Predictions for Planes, Trains & Automobile Traffic in 2017: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 14)
- [CT's Problem with Turning Commuter Drivers into Train Riders Is Lack of Station Parking: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Feb. 10)
- [Metro-North Could Learn a Lot from Amtrak: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Feb. 24)
- [A Train Station in East Bridgeport Would Be a \\$300M Waste of Money: Cameron on Transportation](#) (March 3)
- [Where the Good News Is for New Haven Line Commuters: Cameron on Transportation](#) (March 9)
- [ConnDOT Commissioner on Changes to CT Rails: Cameron on Transportation](#) (April 28)

---

*Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for 25 years. He is the founder of the Commuter Action Group and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column are only his own. You can reach him at [CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com](mailto:CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com)*

*Republished with permission of Hearst CT Media.*