

**TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LIMITS
1.253J/11.543J/ESD.222J**

Policy Problem Assignment 1

Building the “Super 7” Expressway in Connecticut

Building the “Super 7” Expressway in Connecticut presents a classic case of where transportation and environmental values are in conflict. Moreover, the politics are intense due to conflicting government agencies, active interests and confounded by experts and ambiguous data. However, despite these problems the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Leslie Carothers must make a final determination on approving or staying the project’s permit.

You are senior staff to the DEP Commissioner. She has asked you to prepare a memorandum based upon your understanding of the issues – including substantive technical, political and long range policy considerations – recommending how the DEP should rule on final permitting of the Super 7 project.

Your 10-page memorandum should reflect the following:

- Based upon the technical data and expert opinion presented – is the project a “technical and prudent alternative?” How should the Commissioner address the relative ambiguity in the data in her decision? You may use any of the data presented in the case packet to support your technical opinion.
- With respect to political pressure, what are the political realities of the situation? Identify the political issues involved and the relative power of the groups/actors involved? For example, how does she weigh the relatively intense opposition of NIMBY middle and upper income communities with a coalition of private firms, unions and the “belief” that the Governor is supportive of the project?
- Finally, your recommendation must provide long-term precedent-setting guidance. This is the first major highway project to be evaluated under the “feasible and prudent” standard. How this decision is made will clearly influence future transportation and environmental policymaking in your state. Consequently, the issues of equity, process, economic and environmental impact must be considered in a way that can be applied to future decisions.

Grading Criteria: Your paper will be graded based upon the integration and effective use of concepts in the readings, lectures and discussions to the case fact patten. In addition, your paper will be evaluated based upon the clarity of presentation, e.g. effective argument, clear writing. The paper is being written for a senior policy official with multiple demands on her time and attention; therefore, your presentation must be clear, concise and crisp.