

Orphan Bridges

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Issue

Provide information on orphan bridges, including a list of these bridges in the state and related state or federal laws.

Summary

Orphan bridges are generally bridges that were originally constructed and owned by railroads and no longer fall under the railroad's responsibility. According to the Department of Transportation (DOT), the state's orphan bridges are primarily located along the shoreline and the I-91 corridor, as well as various freight lines throughout the state (see list below). By law, the state must maintain and repair any structure (e.g., bridge) that spans a railroad and supports a municipal road. This law required the DOT commissioner to adopt regulations establishing a method for sharing the cost of repairing and maintaining these structures between the state and the municipalities where they are located ([CGS § 13b-283](#)). Additionally, state law sets a vertical clearance requirement applicable to orphan bridge projects ([CGS § 13b-251](#)).

The related DOT regulations specifically define an orphan bridge as any bridge that carries a municipal road and spans a railroad right-of-way not owned by the state ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-1](#)). Among other things, these regulations (1) require the commissioner to inspect orphan bridges according to the federal National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) and (2) make the state responsible for the maintenance of all orphan bridges (i.e. any interim work done to preserve the bridge's structural elements to ensure its continued safe utilization) ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-2](#)). According to DOT, the state is responsible for inspecting the structural components below the riding surface of these bridges (excluding bituminous pavement), while the municipality is responsible for removing snow and ice, inspecting and maintaining the riding surface, posting and

enforcing load limits, and notifying utility companies. (By law, the DOT commissioner may enter into agreements with municipalities for orphan bridge maintenance and snow and ice removal from footpaths or sidewalks on these bridges ([CGS § 13b-283\(f\)](#).)

DOT regulations require the state to (1) cover the full cost of orphan bridge inspection and maintenance (see above) and (2) share orphan bridge project costs with municipalities and railroad companies ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-5](#)). However, legislation enacted in 1994 eliminated railroads' responsibility for orphan bridge project costs. While the regulations have not been revised, DOT policy addresses this gap with federal funding (see below). The regulations also establish state, municipal, and railroad responsibilities related to orphan bridges and set various project requirements. If any municipality or railroad fails to meet its orphan bridge-related obligations, the DOT commissioner may take enforcement action as authorized by statute (i.e. by seeking enforcement through the court) ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-9](#)).

While it does not appear that federal law specifically addresses orphan bridges, the federal government generally provides funding for bridge maintenance and repair projects through various programs (e.g., the [Bridge Investment](#), [Bridge Formula](#), and [Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation](#) programs). According to DOT, many orphan bridges qualify for funding the state annually receives through the latter program. Additionally, the general requirements for the inspection, evaluation, and load rating of U.S. bridges are defined in the [NBIS](#).

State, Municipal, and Railroad Responsibilities

In addition to the inspection and maintenance provisions discussed above, DOT regulations required the department, by July 1, 1986, to (1) create a priority list for each orphan bridge making up the basic order that projects are considered and (2) issue to the affected municipalities and railroads a list of projects based on this prioritization for which funds would be requested in FYs 1987 and 1988. The regulations also require DOT to annually issue to the affected municipalities and railroads an updated priority list for the entire orphan bridge program and a priority list for the next fiscal year ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-2](#)).

Under DOT regulations, a municipality where an orphan bridge is located must keep in a suitable condition the wearing surface and all non-structural elements on the bridge, including by removing snow and ice ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-3](#)). The regulations require railroads, when given reasonable notice, to provide (without cost) right of entry and needed protection services and equipment for DOT personnel doing any inspections or maintenance the regulations require ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-4](#)). The municipalities and railroads must (1) cover the cost of carrying out the responsibilities established in regulation; (2) hold the state harmless for personal injury and

property damage resulting from their failure to carry out these responsibilities; and (3) by demand, but no sooner than 30 days before the contract advertising date, deposit with the state their full share of each project cost if they are legally obligated to participate in at least one project during that fiscal year ([Conn. Agencies Regs., §§ 13b-283-3 & -4](#)). (As discussed below, railroads are no longer required to share in these project costs.)

Orphan Bridge Projects

Project Cost Sharing

Under the DOT regulations, the state must pay 70% of orphan bridge project costs, while the municipality where the bridge is located and the railroad over which the bridge passes must each pay 15% ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-5](#)). However, in keeping with the 1994 legislation that eliminated the requirement that railroads share in these costs ([PA 94-188, § 8](#)), under DOT policy, orphan bridges that qualify for federal participation are funded as follows: 80% federal, 5% state, and 15% municipality (though an exception may be granted if using federal funding would require an unreasonable project scope or result in unacceptable advertising delays).

According to DOT, the state annually receives federal Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program funding for bridges both on and off the federal-aid highway system, for which many orphan bridges qualify. The top priority for federal off-system bridge funds are state bridges that are not on the designated federal-aid system, while orphan bridges are the second priority.

For the portion of project costs that municipalities must pay, there are no restrictions on the source of funds, which may include any available through other federal or state programs. Services a municipality or railroad are required to provide under the regulations (see above) are considered “in-kind service” contributions for DOT inspection and maintenance expenses ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-5](#)).

When the physical condition of an orphan bridge requires its closure or a substantial reduction in its load carrying capacity impacting the accessibility of emergency vehicle services to a degree jeopardizing safety, the DOT commissioner may declare a public emergency and exercise full statutory authority in restoring access. In doing so, he is authorized to share costs as outlined above ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-8](#)).

Project Scope and Allowable Costs

Before project design begins, the regulations require the DOT commissioner to get input from the municipality and the railroad to define project scope, but the commissioner has final authority in determining the scope and allowable costs (which he must find reasonable and necessary based on certain considerations). The municipality or railroad may request additional work, which must be undertaken at their own expense.

In establishing project scope and related costs, the commissioner must consult with the affected municipality and railroad to determine the most cost-effective measure to ensure a safe, reliable, and long-term solution (alternatives to grade separation that can be done under state law or department policy may be considered). If an orphan bridge is replaced by an at-grade crossing, the state has no responsibility for the continued maintenance or repair of the crossing surface or protective devices and this responsibility instead passes to the railroad and municipality according to state law.

The regulations additionally specify that costs ordinarily considered allowable include (1) preliminary engineering activities; (2) property acquisition; (3) construction engineering studies, including inspection and materials testing; and (4) construction costs ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-6](#)).

The terms, conditions, scope of work, and obligation of funds controlling the administration of each orphan bridge project must be included in an agreement jointly executed by the state, municipality, and railroad ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 13b-283-7](#)).

Overhead Clearance Requirement

As orphan bridges cross railroad tracks, they must generally meet the statutory vertical clearance requirement. The minimum overhead clearance for any structure crossing over railroad tracks for which construction began on or after October 1, 1986, is 20 feet and six inches, with certain exceptions. For example, if the construction includes only deck replacement or minor widening, and the existing piers or abutments remain in place, the minimum overhead clearance is that of the existing structure. The law provides for various other exceptions for specified projects ([CGS § 13b-251\(a\)](#)).

By law, any proposed legislation granting an exemption from the minimum overhead clearance requirement must be accompanied by a written DOT statement that includes specified information (e.g., the impacts and cost of raising the bridge to meet the requirement) ([CGS § 13b-251\(c\)](#)).

List of Orphan Bridges

Table 1 below displays a list of orphan and adopted bridges in the state. “Adopted bridges” are those for which DOT has taken full maintenance responsibility (these are generally bridges over railroads the department owns, like the New Haven Line).

Table 1: Orphan and Adopted Bridges in Connecticut, by Town

Bridge Number	Classification	Location	Facility Carried by Structure	Feature Intersected
06018	Adopted	Beacon Falls	Lopus Road	Metro-North Railroad
04082	Orphan	Berlin	Camels Back Road	Amtrak Railroad
04109	Orphan	Berlin	Orchard Road	Amtrak Railroad
04341	Orphan	Berlin	Norton Road	Amtrak Railroad
04137	Adopted	Bolton	Notch Road	DEP Trail Abandoned Railroad
03881	Orphan	Branford	Hosley Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
03883	Orphan	Branford	Kirkham Street	Amtrak Railroad
04083	Orphan	Branford	Bridge Street	Amtrak Railroad
05738	Orphan	Branford	Pine Orchard Road	Amtrak Railroad
05740	Orphan	Branford	Birch Road	Amtrak Railroad
05749	Orphan	Branford	Pleasant Point Road	Amtrak Railroad
03860	Adopted	Bridgeport	Central Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
03988	Orphan	Bristol	Blakeslee Street	Pan Am Railroad
04086	Orphan	Bristol	North Pond Street	Pan Am Railroad
06125	Orphan	Bristol	Curtiss Street	Pan Am Railroad
04057	Orphan	Brookfield	Stony Hill Road	Housatonic Railroad
04265	Orphan	Brookfield	Grays Bridge Road	Housatonic Railroad
05747	Orphan	Brookfield	Silvermine Road	Housatonic Railroad
06195	Orphan	Clinton	Liberty Street #1	Amtrak Railroad
05901	Adopted	Columbia	Flanders Road	abandoned railroad
05870	Adopted	Coventry	Pucker Street	DEP State Row
03705	Orphan	Danbury	White Street	Housatonic Railroad
03694	Adopted	Darien	Noroton Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
03847	Adopted	Darien	Hollow Tree Road	Metro-North Railroad
03989	Orphan	East Hartford	Long Hill Drive	CT Southern Railroad
03899	Orphan	East Lyme	Columbus Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
04611	Adopted	Essex	Dennison Road	CT Valley Railroad
04354	Adopted	Fairfield	Mill Hill Road	Metro-North Railroad
05432	Adopted	Fairfield	Black Rock Tpke	Metro-North Railroad
05646	Adopted	Fairfield	Grasmere Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
05788	Adopted	Fairfield	Unquowa Road	Metro-North Railroad
06756	Adopted	Fairfield	Ash Creek Blvd	MNRR and Const. Comment Way
03674	Adopted	Greenwich	Byram Road	Metro-North Railroad

Table 1 (continued)

Bridge Number	Classification	Location	Facility Carried by Structure	Feature Intersected
03675	Adopted	Greenwich	Indian Field Road	Metro-North Railroad
03846	Adopted	Greenwich	Drinkwater Place	Metro-North Railroad
05808	Adopted	Greenwich	Riverside Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
05938	Orphan	Griswold	Lily Pond Road	P & W Railroad
03662	Orphan	Groton	Bridge Street #1	Amtrak Railroad
03664	Orphan	Groton	Fairview Avenue	P & W Railroad
03665	Orphan	Groton	Groton Long Point Road	Amtrak Railroad
03903	Orphan	Groton	Mosher Street	Amtrak Railroad
06181	Orphan	Groton	Meridian Street Ext	Amtrak Railroad
03888	Orphan	Guilford	New Whitfield Street	Amtrak Railroad
05542	Orphan	Guilford	Mulberry Point Road	Amtrak Railroad
05735	Orphan	Guilford	Moose Hill Road	Amtrak Railroad
03624	Adopted	Hartford	Sigourney Street	Central New England Railroad
03629	Orphan	Hartford	Broad Street	Amtrak Railroad and Busway
03779	Orphan	Hartford	Laurel Street	Amtrak, CNERR, and CTfastrak
03781	Orphan	Hartford	Walnut Street	Amtrak and Central New England Railroads
03784	Adopted	Hartford	Woodland Street	Central New England Railroad
03991	Adopted	Hartford	Edwards Street	Central New England Railroad
04018	Orphan	Killingly	Shepard Hill Road	P & W Railroad
05736	Orphan	Ledyard	Hurlbutt Road	P & W Railroad
04022	Orphan	Lisbon	Ross Hill Road	P & W Railroad
04023	Adopted	Litchfield	Campville Road	Naugatuck Railroad Co.
03892	Orphan	Madison	Horsepond Road	Amtrak Railroad
04345	Orphan	Madison	Copse Road	Amtrak Railroad
05270	Orphan	Madison	Fort Path Road	Amtrak Railroad
06174	Orphan	Madison	Old Route 79	Amtrak Railroad
03992	Orphan	Meriden	Hall Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
04028	Orphan	Meriden	Camp Street	Amtrak Railroad
04391	Adopted	Meriden	Westfield Road	abandoned railroad
05728	Orphan	Meriden	Hicks Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
03993	Adopted	Middletown	West Street	P & W Railroad
04031	Adopted	Middletown	Prospect Street	P & W Railroad
04032	Adopted	Middletown	Pearl Street	P & W Railroad
04033	Adopted	Middletown	Berlin Street	P & W Railroad
04358	Adopted	Middletown	High Street	P & W Railroad
05381	Adopted	Middletown	Jackson Street #1	P & W Railroad
03641	Adopted	Milford	Naugatuck Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
03642	Adopted	Milford	Naugatuck Avenue	Metro-North Railroad

Table 1 (continued)

Bridge Number	Classification	Location	Facility Carried by Structure	Feature Intersected
03646	Adopted	Milford	School House Road	Metro-North Railroad
03840	Adopted	Milford	Clark Street	Metro-North Railroad
05746	Adopted	Milford	Woodmont Road	Metro-North Railroad
04337	Orphan	New Britain	South Street	Amtrak Railroad
05884	Orphan	New Britain	Ellis Street	Pan Am Railroad
03746	Orphan	New Haven	East Street	Amtrak Railroad
03752	Orphan	New Haven	Olive Street	Amtrak Railroad
03867	Adopted	New Haven	Howard Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
03868	Adopted	New Haven	Cedar Street # 1	Metro-North Railroad
03870	Adopted	New Haven	Fair Street	Metro-North Railroad
03872	Adopted	New Haven	Chapel Street	Metro-North Railroad
03873	Adopted	New Haven	Court Street	Metro-North Railroad
03874	Orphan	New Haven	Grand Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
03879	Orphan	New Haven	Clifton Street	Amtrak Railroad
03998	Orphan	New Haven	Ferry Street	Amtrak Railroad
04025	Adopted	New Haven	Dewitt Street	Metro-North Railroad
04027	Adopted	New Haven	Lamberton Street	Metro-North Railroad
04058	Orphan	New Haven	Chapel Street	P & W Railroad
05886	Orphan	New Haven	Blatchley Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
05890	Orphan	New Haven	Wallace Street	Amtrak Railroad
04333	Orphan	New London	Montauk Avenue	Amtrak Railroad
06053	Orphan	New Milford	Old Pumpkin Hill Road	Housatonic Railroad
06156	Orphan	New Milford	Erickson Road	Housatonic Railroad
04036	Orphan	Newtown	Ethan Allen Road	HRR and private road
04038	Orphan	Newtown	Farrell Road	Housatonic Railroad
04043	Orphan	Newtown	Button Shop Road	Housatonic Railroad
05253	Orphan	Newtown	Turkey Hill Road	Housatonic Railroad
05429	Orphan	Newtown	Hanover Road	Housatonic Railroad
05729	Orphan	Newtown	Parmalee Hill Road	Housatonic Railroad
05732	Orphan	Newtown	The Boulevard	Housatonic Railroad
05748	Orphan	Newtown	High Bridge Road	Housatonic Railroad
06054	Orphan	Newtown	School House Hill Road	Housatonic Railroad
04045	Orphan	North Haven	Defco Park Road	Amtrak Railroad
04272	Orphan	North Haven	Beach Street	CSX Railroad
06299	Orphan	North Haven	Universal Drive North	CSX Railroad
03849	Adopted	Norwalk	Lowe Street	Metro-North Railroad
03850	Adopted	Norwalk	Bridge Street	Metro-North Railroad
03851	Adopted	Norwalk	Triangle Street	Metro-North Railroad
04046	Adopted	Norwalk	Burnell Blvd	Metro-North and Norwalk Railroads

Table 1 (continued)

Bridge Number	Classification	Location	Facility Carried by Structure	Feature Intersected
04048	Adopted	Norwalk	Wall Street	Metro-North Railroad
05304	Adopted	Norwalk	Highland Avenue # 1	Metro-North Railroad
05333	Adopted	Norwalk	ML King Jr Drive	Metro-North Railroad
04001	Orphan	Norwich	Sherman Street	New England Central Railroad
04346	Orphan	Old Lyme	Button Ball Road	Amtrak Railroad
05923	Orphan	Old Saybrook	Ingham Hill Road	Amtrak Railroad
06021	Orphan	Old Saybrook	School House Road	Amtrak Railroad
03643	Adopted	Orange	Marsh Hill Road	Metro-North Railroad
04050	Orphan	Plymouth	Greystone Road #1	Pan Am Railroad
05993	Orphan	Plymouth	South Eagle Road	Pan Am Railroad
05225	Adopted	Redding	Simpaug Turnpike	Metro-North Railroad
05657	Adopted	Sprague	Riverside Drive	P & W Railroad
05795	Adopted	Stamford	Selleck Street	Metro-North Railroad
03904	Orphan	Stonington	Masons Island Road	Amtrak Railroad
03908	Orphan	Stonington	Greenhaven Road	Amtrak Railroad
05447	Orphan	Stonington	Noyes Avenue # 1	Amtrak Railroad
05526	Orphan	Stonington	Palmer Neck Road	Amtrak Railroad
03906	Orphan	Stonington	Alpha Avenue	Amtrak Railroad and local roads
03751	Adopted	Stratford	Longbrook Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
04054	Adopted	Torrington	Forest Street	abandoned DOT Railroad
04055	Orphan	Wallingford	John Street	Amtrak Railroad
03730	Adopted	Waterbury	Huntingdon Avenue	DOT Railroad
04002	Adopted	Waterbury	South Leonard Street	Metro-North Railroad
04003	Orphan	Waterbury	East Liberty Street	abandoned railroad
04006	Adopted	West Haven	Allings Crossing	Metro-North Railroad
03894	Orphan	Westbrook	Old Clinton Road	Amtrak Railroad
03852	Adopted	Westport	Hales Road	Metro-North Railroad
03854	Adopted	Westport	Sasco Creek Road	Metro-North Railroad
04357	Adopted	Westport	Beachside Avenue	Metro-North Railroad
05527	Orphan	Windsor	Kennedy Road	Amtrak Railroad and parking lot

Source: CT Department of Transportation (August 2025)

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