The Good, the Bad, the Unfinished

Produced using AI for "Talking Transportation" – November 2026. All opinions are those of Claude AI.

Original query: *"Itemize long promised studies by the Connecticut Department of Transportation seen over the last 15 years … comparing what was promised as a goal and what was delivered in terms of change to the better… which ones failed and which one still have not finished their work.*

Scorecard

Project	First promised	Promised outcome	Where It Stands Now	Verdict
Hartford Line	2004 study	New commuter service, New Haven–Springfield	Running since June 2018; 22 weekday round trips	Good
Waterbury Branch	2010 study	Better service, accessible stations	Signals and sidings by 2022; station rebuilds through 2028	Good, late
Let's Go CT	2015	$100B, 30-year rebuild	Never funded	Bad
Highway tolls	2009 onward	~$1B a year in revenue	Abandoned; truck fee budgeted at ~$62M	Bad
Danbury electrification	2006 study	Electric service to Danbury	Still diesel	Bad
Barnum Station in Bridgeport	2013–2014	Opening by 2018, then 2021	Still "planned"	Bad
I-84 Hartford viaduct	~2006	Replace the viaduct	Re-studied; federal funding dashboard says cancelled	Unfinished
Route 7/15 interchange	2005 construction	Full interchange	Construction may start 2027	Unfinished
Walk Bridge	2023 groundbreaking	Done by 2029	Now 2031; grant money runs to 2032	Unfinished
30-30-30 / TIME for CT	2019	10 min saved by 2022, 25 by 2035	Replaced by TIME-1, target 2035	Unfinished

Project	First promised	Promised outcome	Where It Stands Now	Verdict
Electrification study of branch lines	2023	Report by end of 2025	"Nearing completion"	Unfinished
Hartford Line additional stations	2004	Enfield, West Hartford, Newington, North Haven	Enfield opens 2030; others unfunded	Unfinished

The good: delivered, if late

Hartford Line. Service launched June 16, 2018, more than doubling trips in the corridor. It now runs 22 weekday round trips on top of Amtrak, and had fully recovered pre-pandemic ridership by 2024. The one genuine success. (CTDOT, Hartford Business)

Waterbury Branch. A 2010 CTDOT study identified fixes. Then nearly a decade passed before real money arrived. New signals and passing sidings let CTDOT add seven trips in summer 2022. All six stations are being rebuilt from 2025 to 2028 for about $193 million, with buses replacing trains July 2026 to May 2027. Good outcome, glacial pace. (NVCOG, Metro Magazine)

The bad: shelved or failed

Let's Go CT (2015). Governor Malloy proposed a 30-year, $100 billion program without saying how to pay for it. His own finance panel found more than $40 billion in options in January 2016. None stuck. (Bond Buyer, CT Mirror)

Highway tolls. The state spent over $20 million on CDM Smith and Cambridge Systematics studies since 2009, plus a $10 million study approved in 2018. The 2018 report alone cost $2,035,000, about $23,391 a page. It proposed 82 gantries raising roughly $1 billion a year. Governor Lamont dropped tolls for a truck Highway Use Fee that DRS said would raise about $90 million a year. The official forecast: $60.8 million in FY2025, $61.7 million in FY2026. (CT Senate GOP, Yankee Institute, News 12, OFA)

Danbury Branch electrification. Phase I wrapped in 2006; Phase II began November 2007 and ended with a final report in 2016. In 2006, electrifying South Norwalk to Danbury was pegged at $37 million, $127 million with new equipment. Never built. Still diesel. (CTDOT, Phase II site, Phase I report)

Barnum Station, Bridgeport. Bridgeport Mayor Finch hoped it would be built by 2018. By 2018 the target was 2021, at $300 million. It remains a "planned station". (News 12, CT Post, Wikipedia)

The unfinished: still studying, still building

I-84 Hartford viaduct. Planning began about two decades ago. In 2016 CTDOT settled on a lowered highway. In 2019 it pulled the I-84 study and swapped in a three-year regional mobility study. That report landed in late 2023; its big pieces still face state and federal environmental review. The federal permitting dashboard now lists the I-84 Hartford Project as cancelled. Meanwhile the old viaduct gets

bridge rehab through July 2027. (CT Mirror, Hartford Business, AASHTO Journal, Permitting Dashboard, CTDOT)

Route 7/Merritt Parkway interchange, Norwalk. Construction began in 2005, was stopped by a lawsuit, and was cancelled in 2006. A new study followed, then a May 2023 environmental assessment. The $175 million project may start in 2027. Twenty-two years from first shovel to second. (Project history, EA, CT Construction Digest)

Walk Bridge, Norwalk. At the May 2023 groundbreaking, completion was expected in 2029. CTDOT's FAQ now says 2031. The federal grant's end date moved from 2030 to 2032, and obligations rose 37% to $947 million. (Mass Transit, Walk Bridge FAQ, HigherGov)

30-30-30 / TIME for CT. Lamont's 2019 pledge became an $8–$10 billion plan promising 10 minutes saved by 2022 and 25 by 2035. The 2022 milestone came and went. Its successor, TIME-1 ($1.6 billion, 90 mph), targets 2035 and starts with a 3-mile Bridgeport–Stratford stretch. (CTDOT TIME for CT)

Electrification study (Hartford, Danbury, Waterbury lines). Launched August 2023 with a promised finish by end of 2025. CRCOG's June 2026 report says it is "nearing completion." No report yet. (CTDOT, CRCOG)

Hartford Line additional stations. Enfield was in a 2004 recommended action. It broke ground Oct. 28, 2026, with completion in fall 2030. Twenty-six years. West Hartford sits at 30% design with no construction money; Newington has concept drawings. (Wikipedia, Hartford Business, CRCOG)

The pattern

Studies finish on time far more often than projects do. When a study's answer is expensive, the fix is usually another study. The deadlines that slip are the ones riders and drivers actually feel.

Sources for details

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