

**SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)**

Meeting Minutes of February 15, 2012

A meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was held at SWCRPC in Ascutney, VT, at 7:00pm.

Attendance – TAC members present: Bruce McEnaney (Chair), Chester; Sharon Bixby (Vice Chair), Ludlow; Kristi Morris, Springfield; Gordy Eastman, Reading; Neil Daniels, Weathersfield; Tom Kenyon, West Windsor; and Mary Habig (CRT).

Others present: Jason Rasmussen and Katharine Otto, SWCRPC.

Meeting Opened: Bruce McEnaney opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Acceptance of minutes of October 10, 2011 minutes

Kristi Morris moved to approve the minutes of October 10, 2011 as written. Seconded by Sharon Bixby. Approved unanimously.

Review of November 16, 2011 meeting notes

Reviewed notes from last meeting in November 16, 2011.

Project Prioritization List

Jason Rasmussen reviewed the prioritization process for this year, including both prioritizing projects in VTrans' budget as well as identifying new "pre-candidate" needs for the Town Highway Bridge program. Jason presented the list of transportation projects, including programmed projects the TAC prioritized last year. The list of pre-candidates has not yet been released by VTrans and will be prioritized at the next TAC meeting.

The TAC established a list of the Region's project priorities by consensus (listed by category):

Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

1. (Joint) – Ludlow bike path project

Park and Ride Lots

1. Springfield Park and Ride

Paving

1. Weathersfield – resurface VT-131
2. Chester-Springfield – resurface VT-10

Roadway

1. Cavendish-Ludlow (Smithville)
(Not ranked – Weathersfield land acquisition and Windsor TCSE projects)

Safety and Traffic Operations

1. Springfield to Hartford. Replace signs on US-5.

State Highway Bridges

1. Weathersfield BR15 (big culvert) on VT-131
2. Weathersfield BR11B (big culvert) on VT-131

3. Ludlow BR102 (big culvert) on VT-100
(Not ranked - Cavendish Bridge 1 on VT-100)

Town Highway Bridges

1. Ludlow Br25 (Walker Bridge)

Discussion points:

- Why is the Ludlow bike and ped path still on the list?
- Harry Hills bridge in Springfield came off the Town Highway Bridge list because it is being constructed this year
- Hartland Park and Ride Lot (I-91 exit 9 which serves Windsor) is being prioritized by TRORC region
- Paving projects – considered high crash location, but repaving would not significantly help reduce crashes in the area. Both roads are used by trucks. Both road surfaces not great, but higher traffic on VT-131 so that is the higher priority.
- Roadway projects – Did not prioritize the Scenic Byway grant project for land acquisition next to Mt Ascutney State Park since it was very different from the other projects and the funds are already allocated. Did not prioritize Windsor TCSE project since it is part of a federal earmark.
- TAC and staff were unsure whether to prioritize the Emergency Relief bridge project for Cavendish. Ranked top of the list if meant to be included, above the other 3 projects. *Note: Discussion with Matthew Langham on 2/16/2012 confirmed this project should not be prioritized.*
- Springfield – Hartford sign projects. Do the signs need to be replaced? Yes – some are very old.

High Risk Rural Roads Program 2012

Katharine Otto explained how the High Risk Rural Roads program works. The High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) program is intended to implement the VT Strategic Highway Safety Plan in reducing crashes on local roads and rural state highways. VTrans is funding only projects on local roads, even though certain state highways are eligible under federal rules. This year, following review of the newest crash location data, no clear projects came to the top. This was for several reasons:

- Many of the highest concern areas have already been addressed in HRRR and other projects within the last 5+ years
- Several roadways which come near the top of the list are ineligible
- Some roadways had higher crash numbers but there was no clear location along the roadway
- When looking into the reasons for crashes in some places, the crashes were more due to speeding or other risks taken by drivers rather than problems with the roadways which could be solved by signage, road markings and guard rails.

For this year the TAC agreed that the SWCRPC would not be submitting a location for inclusion within the HRRR program.

Discussion points:

- Recommendations from last year's projects - French Meadow Road in Springfield, and the Wellwood Orchard Road and Reservoir Road intersection in Weathersfield – are due to be implemented this summer
- Chester is due to have a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) project implemented this summer near the intersection of Grafton Road and Popple Dungeon Road
- Are the projects having an effect on crashes? In the coming year or so, the RPC will begin to look at whether the projects have had an effect on the number of crashes. Some of the oldest projects were around 2006 so we are starting to have enough of a time lag that changes in the 5 year crash summaries should become noticeable.

- Local locations with crash issues which are not showing up in the data – VT-131 and VT-106 intersection in Weathersfield, Weathersfield Center Road and VT-131, and Twentymile Stream Road in Cavendish.
- Katharine mentioned a system used by Minnesota Dept of Transportation whereby “high risk” locations were identified not just from places which had experienced crashes, but also from locations which had road characteristics which tend to have a high risk (e.g. steep curves). (No crashes does not mean that there is no risk of crashes.) We cannot use this for HSIP or HRRR programs at present. But that doesn’t mean we cannot use this approach when identifying needs and priorities as part of the Regional Transportation Plan Update.

Regional Park and Ride Needs

Katharine explained this task from VTrans to provide a list of regional municipal and state park and ride lot needs. This nomination is based upon a regional assessment of both existing and future/ new park and rides and needs.

The TAC reviewed the prepared addendum and re-confirmed the recommendations made in the 2010 Park and Rides Needs Assessment, with one change – to remove the potential new facility site in Reading at the intersection of VT-106 and VT-44. Mary Habig stressed the need to have good bus circulation added to all existing park and ride lots, and to be included in any future ones. 90% of bus accidents happen when a bus is reversing – which is what the CRT buses have to do at all of their current locations. Weathersfield have submitted an application to the Municipal Park and Ride Program for a lot at the intersection of VT-106 and VT-131.

General Recommendations

1. Prioritize improvements to existing lots over the construction of new lots.
2. Make improvements to the existing park-and-ride lots in the following priority order:
 - (1) Hartland Exit 9;
 - (2) Springfield Exit 7;
 - (3) Weathersfield Exit 8;
 - (4) Ludlow VT 103.
3. Coordinate with CRT, town officials and VTrans regarding identifying sites for potential new lots.

Hartland Exit 9

1. Improve by expanding, paving & providing amenities (lighting, shelter).
2. Provide adequate bus circulation.
3. Provide bicycle parking.

Springfield Exit 7

1. Make improvements by acquiring land, paving the lot & providing amenities (lighting, shelter).
2. Provide adequate bus circulation.
3. Provide bicycle parking.
4. Provide connection to Toonerville Trail.

Weathersfield Exit 8

1. Modestly expand lot capacity; the lot is very full, and it was over capacity during peak oil prices.
2. Provide adequate bus circulation.

Ludlow VT 103

1. Improve visibility of the lot.
2. Improve marketing of new transit services & use of this lot.

New potential facility sites:

1. Weathersfield – Intersection of VT-106 and VT-131
2. Proctorsville – Intersection of VT-103 and VT-131
3. North Springfield – Intersection of VT-106 and VT-10
4. Gassetts – Intersection of VT-10 and VT-103

Regional Bicycling and Pedestrian Needs

Katharine explained this task from VTrans to provide a list potential bike and pedestrian needs in anticipation of VTrans initiating a new competitive bicycling and pedestrian grant. This list is intended to assist VTrans in assessing the financial need.

The TAC discussed the prepared report and confirmed the following general needs and issues across southern Windsor County:

1. Expanded road shoulders for cyclists – very narrow shoulders in some places
2. Bring sidewalks to up to ADA standards
3. Enhance sidewalks to better support state planning goals, including Complete Streets
4. Make small sidewalk network expansions to make logical connections
5. River-related issues for multi-use paths

See attached report for specific town needs.

Regional Transportation Network Needs and Priorities for Regional Transportation Plan Update

Katharine introduced a new process for the Regional Transportation Plan Update – identifying project needs and recommendations for our major travel corridors. It is hoped that this process will record the variety of needs and recommendations that the TAC, local towns and the general public believe are important to consider over the next twenty years. Needs and recommendations will be collated on a google map before being transferred into plan maps. This map can be viewed at <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF&msa=0&msid=204794083331047901328.0004b7e8f045708cac52e>. Once the TAC has made recommendations over the coming month or two, this map will be shared with towns and other organizations and people who might be interested, so they can add points.

Needs and recommendations are currently divided into six categories, although we can add more:

- Safety (red)
- Pedestrians and cyclists (yellow)
- Hazard mitigation (blue)
- Transit and P&R (purple)
- Traffic (pink)
- Other (turquoise)

The TAC discussed the VT-131 corridor during the meeting and added and altered points on the map, including the following:

- VT-131 ~ Improve Safety - Ascutney. Wide roadway. Supported by Weathersfield Exit 8 Interchange Master Plan 2008.
- VT-131 ~ Improve Park & Ride Lot - Ascutney. Increase Park & Ride lot capacity. Supported by 2011 SWC Park & Ride Count Report.
- VT-131 ~ Improve Safety - Amsden. "Deadman's Corner". Tight corner. Identified High Crash Location in 2003-2007 data from VTrans.
- VT-131 & VT-106 ~ Potential new Park & Ride lot location - Downers Corners. Identified in 2012 SWC Park and Ride Needs Assessment.

- VT-131 ~ Improve safety - 5.3 mi - about 7 mins
- VT-131 ~ Improve Safety - Cavendish. Identified High Crash Location in 2003-2007 data from VTrans.
- VT-131 ~ Potential hazard mitigation site - Cavendish. Roadway lost in 1927 and 2011 when Black River avulsion ran next to the roadway.
- VT-131 ~ Support pedestrian projects in village - Cavendish Main Street. Completed sidewalk inventory in 2011.
- VT-131 ~ Support pedestrian projects in village - Proctorsville Main Street. Completed sidewalk inventory in 2011.
- VT-131 & VT-103 ~ Improve safety - Proctorsville. Identified High Crash Intersection in 2003-2007 data from VTrans.
- VT-131 & US-5 ~ Improve Safety - Ascutney. Identified High Crash Intersection in 2003-2007 data from VTrans.
- VT-131 & VT-103 ~ Potential new Park & Ride lot location - Proctorsville. Identified in 2012 SWC Park and Ride Needs Assessment. .
- VT-131 & VT-106 ~ Improve Safety - Downers Corners. Improve access management esp Gas station.
- VT-131 ~ Improve safety – Upper Falls Road intersection. Wide and confusing intersection near covered bridge.
- VT-131 ~ Improve safety - Chubb Hill Ledges. Poor drainage, esp in mud season. . Former project.
- VT-131 ~ Potential Hazard Mitigation Site - Between Cavendish and Proctorsville. River wants to takes out this stretch of road. Small amount of damage in Irene. .

Road reclassification in North Springfield

Jason presented information about the reclassification of two roads in North Springfield. The Town of Springfield wishes to modify the functional classifications of a section of Main Street (TH 6) and Mill Road (TH 740) in North Springfield. In 2001, the Town removed Bridge #59 on Main Street due to the structural condition. Since that time, Mill Road has been functioning as a Rural Minor Collector, connecting the villages of North Springfield and Chester, as well as connecting VT Route 106/River Street (Rural Minor Arterial) with VT Route 103 (Rural Principal Arterial).

The proposed changes are:

- Section of Mill Street
 - o Functional Classification - from Rural Local to Rural Minor Collector
- Section of Main Street
 - o Functional Classification – from Rural Minor Collector to Rural Local

Gordy Eastman recommends the proposed reclassification of the two roads. Seconded by Neil Daniels. Approved unanimously.

Updates and Announcements

- a. Biomass Plant Application – Going through Act 248 review now. Documents about the project are available on our website www.swcrpc.org, including the traffic study. The SWCRPC has hired John Bruno to review the traffic impact study for this project.
- b. New VTrans Rail GIS Database – introduced by the VTrans Rail Section. Website: <http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=3f6bc4b2ce17408aae146320d7588971>
- c. Ludlow – Walker Bridge Project – Alternatives Presentation likely to be on March 8th; more details to follow.

- d. Draft Report on Economic Impact of Walking and Bicycling in Vermont – VIT public meeting on March 15th
- e. Windsor I-91 bridges over VT-44 in the narrows. Project has been delayed by a year so construction would be 2013 and 2014. The project has gone out to bid. The TAC was pleased that their comments were included in the Design-Build scope.
- f. CRT bus routes: A \$2 fare will be replacing the \$3 donation on all remaining CRT routes which do not already have a fare on March 3rd. CRT has seen a significant jump in ridership within the last 3 months – the Ascutney lot is often overflowing and they are sending a second bus to pick people up from Exit 9. Increased ridership is partly due to increased participation by big employers in the Upper Valley – including Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Dartmouth College and Hypertherm.

Next Meeting: March 14, 2012 at 7 pm

Future agenda items

- Pre-candidate bridge list prioritization
- TAC bylaw amendments

Neil Daniels moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm. Seconded by Tom Kenyon . Approved unanimously.