

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

**Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2015**

A meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was held at the SWCRPC office in Ascutney, VT, at 6pm.

**Attendance** – TAC members present: Kristi Morris, Springfield (Chair); Tom Kenyon, West Windsor (Vice-Chair) Wayne Wheelock, Baltimore; John Saydek, Cavendish; Arne Jonynas, Chester; Sharon Bixby, Ludlow; Gordy Eastman, Reading; and Jeff Taft-Dick (At-large).

Others present: Katharine Otto, SWCRPC; Jackie Cassino and Amy Bell, VTrans Planning; Mike Fowler and Brandon Kipp, VTrans Pavement Design Unit; Rich Svec and Bruce McEnaney, Town of Cavendish.

**Meeting Opened:** Kristi Morris opened the meeting at 6:00pm

**Welcome and introductions**

**Changes to the agenda**

- Change agenda from “Wednesday” to “Thursday”
- Swap VT-131 repaving and Class 1 Town Highway items

**Acceptance of minutes**

*Gordy Eastman moved to approve the minutes of October 28, 2015. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. Approved unanimously.*

**Class 1 Town Highway White Paper**

Amy Bell from VTrans Planning gave an overview of a new study into the benefits and costs of class 1 town highways.

- Outlined the definition of class 1, and the responsibilities that the town and VTrans have
- Outlined the benefits of class 1 – including more design control and flexibility, speed management, ease of working on utilities in ROW, access management and coordination of maintenance activities
- Survey of existing towns with class 1s – 80% would keep them, 20% would give them back
- Town highway funding is currently defined by formula set by Legislature – with 6% allocated for class 1s, resulting in \$11,213.23 per mile in state aid to the towns.
- Does the state aid adequately reimburse towns for the costs? Only if a less complex road with few bridges or traffic signals. Surveyed actual costs from towns and calculated per mile averages.
- Next steps:
  - Will be incorporating findings into VTrans Orange Book (Guide for local officials)
  - Will be creating a spreadsheet where towns could calculate their potential costs if they took over a section of state highway
  - Will be publishing report
  - Will continue conversation about incentives for creating class 1s once the budget climate is better
- VTrans would like Towns to take over the state highway to become class 1 town highway, but will not force Towns

**Repaving of VT-131 in Cavendish and Weathersfield**

Mike Fowler and Brandon Kipp from VTrans Pavement Design Unit gave an overview of the preliminary plans for the repaving of VT-131 from VT-106 to VT-103. The following is a summary of the major discussion points:

- Timeline
  - The project currently has preliminary plans.
  - Still need to get environmental permits and ROW – which could take time, particularly since have a large box culvert replacement in the mix.

- Still need to get utility info and other details.
- Currently scheduled and budgeted for 2018 construction, but will probably take 2 years with all the underdrains, culverts and slope work that needs to be done ahead of actual paving
- This is the sister project to the other part of VT-131 that was repaved in 2013, but this project has a far larger scope. It will cost approximate twice the cost per mile as it did on the east side of VT-131
- Stabilities issues (Sheet 79 of the plans) – Will be installing a soil nail wall with netting to stabilize the slope. It's a long section of a quarter to a third of a mile – one of the longest done!
- River work and slope work (Sheet 85 and 240 of plans) – On the steep bend east of Chubb Hill and also ledge work on north side of road (areas where drainage issues and ice formations, so will be pulling back the slope to give more space for drainage off the roadway)
- Large box culvert replacement (sheet 372) – just west of Stone Way – new culvert will be much larger – so will involve ROW issues. Will also need environmental permits to work in the river.
- High Street intersection in Whitesville. Will be removing the island and consolidating into 2 lanes. Will also be lowering the grade of the intersection. This work will necessitate full reconstruction around this intersection.
- Raising the height of the road slightly along entire road – except in the villages where they are trying to keep the height the same so doesn't interfere with drainage, sidewalks, etc.
- No horizontal changes to where the road is location in the project
- Will be including some road cross slope changes where possible
- Project will be rehabilitation for the majority of the length – removing existing pavement, blend in gravel with the next layer down and then recycle in old top with new asphalt. The section from VT-103 to Maple Street will be cold planing – Mill down 2 inches and replace - a lot like class 1 town highway paving jobs where you have high sensitivity to drainage, sidewalks, etc.
- Scenic Highway designation will prevent some changes.
- Specific concerns raised by Town of Cavendish
  - Some dry well issues in Cavendish, as well as ponding and freezing issues
  - Sidewalks in Cavendish are already below road height
- Route is popular for bicycling and it needs shoulder widening. The corridor will get a minimum of 3ft shoulder with 11ft travel lane on each side for the majority of the length – some narrow areas will give issues since will not be changing the road footprint significantly. It will be hard to get the 4ft which VTrans usually prefers.
- TAC has concerns about potential safety issues after paving – like more speeding because the surface is better
- Next steps:
  - Mike and Brandon will do another field visit to Cavendish and meet with Rich Svec (Cavendish town manager) to chat about remaining issues – including utility locations
  - Not planning to have a formal public hearing, but will attend Select Board meetings if requested
  - Will be continue to do outreach to local people as the project gets closer – using a similar format to what has been done on other construction projects in recent years. Katharine will provide contact details for relevant people to whoever is assigned as Public Information Officer.

### **District Leveling Prioritization**

Katharine Otto gave an overview of the District Leveling Program and the input VTrans would like from the TAC. This does not include Class 1 Town Highways – which are in a separate program. The methodology has changed from the year before and was outlined in a handout. All state roadway segments were considered for condition – but only the top 54 in the state were given to prioritize. Katharine provided updates on recently completed and upcoming projects on roadways. The following priorities were assigned for District leveling:

1. VT-44 from VT-106 in Reading to VT-44A in Windsor – Note: West Windsor is making good progress with installing the sewer system due to the mild weather and so the road would be ready to pave by the end of June
2. VT-106 from VT-131 in Weathersfield to just beyond Woodstock townline
3. VT-11 from Windham town line through to Chester just west of Goldthwaite Road
4. US-5 from Class 1 town highway in Windsor to Hartland just south of the Hartford townline
5. US-5 from just south of Ferry Road in Weathersfield to Windsor class 1 town highway – stretched segment that was originally meant to end near the goat farm

6. VT-44A – entire length

The TAC likes the resources given to them to make their decision, but requested that in future years traffic counts be added to the resources given.

*Sharon Bixby moved to submit these priorities to VTrans. Seconded by Tom Kenyon. Approved unanimously.*

**Updates and Announcements**

- a) *Construction Updates* –Chester Class 1 Paving project is almost complete. Contractor has stopped work for the season and will be returning in the Spring to finish off a few remaining things
- b) *Grant Opportunities*
  - a. Better Backroads – Katharine forwarded an email this morning with details about the expansion of the program – with more funds and more types of projects eligible. It’s a good funding source for our towns
- c) *Scenic Route 100 Byway Expansion*

Readsboro was officially added to the Byway by the Vermont Transportation Board in September 2015
- d) *Meetings*

The Vermont On Road Bicycling Facility Meeting on 12/1 was really good. Phase 2 of that project will be starting in the new year.
- e) *Federal Transportation Bill*

The new federal transportation bill, known as the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, will be bringing some changes to our transportation programs - both on a state and town level. The federal Act provides funding for a significant amount of the transportation work in Vermont - both at a State and Town level - including planning, bridge construction, road paving, highway safety improvements, etc. Details about exactly how things will be changing will take several months to work through.

**Other Business**

None

**Future agenda items and next meeting date**

Next meeting – 1/27/2016

Agenda item requests – National Highway System, Project Prioritization, Annual Reports, Analysis on number of crashes on VT-131 before and after the 2013 paving.

*Sharon Bixby moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm. Seconded by Gordy Eastman. Approved unanimously.*