

SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2010

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

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

Others present: Bob Faller, Westminster; Kevin Marshia, VTrans; Jason Rasmussen and Katharine Otto, SWCRPC.

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

Acceptance of Minutes of August 18, 2010

Tom Kenyon moved to approve the minutes of August 18, 2010 as written. Second by Neil Daniels. Approved unanimously.

Acceptance of Minutes of October 20, 2010

Tom Kenyon moved to approve the minutes of October 20, 2010 as written. Second by Neil Daniels. Approved unanimously.

Discussion of Roadway Projects:

Kevin Marshia (VTrans Roadway, Traffic and Safety Program Manager) provided an overview of future VTrans funding for roadway projects, and projects proposed by FHWA and VTrans for deletion. Two projects are proposed for deletion in southern Windsor County:

- Reconstruct the roadway along VT Route 103 in Smithville (Cavendish-Ludlow);
- Scoping study for the Chubb Hill ledges along VT 131 in Cavendish.

The following points were discussed:

- In the past VTrans, has been making too many promises without enough funding to follow through on them. With the Road to Affordability effort, VTrans is trying to prioritize for on-time and on-budget projects.
- The two projects above are slated for deletion because they have not made sufficient progress in accordance with FHWA rules.
- There are \$900 million in projects budgeted, but only \$50 million a year available to get them done. It costs about \$3-4 million per mile to reconstruct a roadway. Therefore, VTrans is hoping to get rid of old projects that have been on the books for 25 years that will never get constructed due to a lack of funding.
- The Legislature will need to officially cancel them.
- If that happens, VTrans can start with a clean slate, and anticipates a process to identify a reasonable number of new projects. The process may be similar to the new candidate projects for the Town Highway Bridge Program.

Jason Rasmussen noted that the Cavendish Selectboard indicated on Monday night that they support deleting the Chubb Hill ledges project on VT 131. [The Selectboard is requesting advance warning and chevron signs to improve safety at this location.]

Kevin specifically discussed the Smithville VT 103 project:

- It would be cancelled, then re-programmed as a new project in order to start the federal time frame over again.
- Could use some of the background from old project (such as lane widths, signal locations, etc), but the project scope will need to be reconsidered, such as reducing the width of the originally proposed 8 ft shoulder.
- It is unique, as it is the only D&E project to be deleted – all other projects are categorized as Candidates.
- VTrans has already set aside funding for it in FY2012 under its old project number (and it would change to the new project number when approved).
- How can TAC help reprogram 103 Smithville? TAC has already prioritized it, as have VTrans, so keep reminding VTrans of that. When the House and Senate Transportation Committees review the new proposal, TAC and towns should support it.

Discussion of Public Transit

Mary Habig, Executive Director of CRT, provided an update on public transit in the region. The following points were discussed:

- CRT is taking over Brattleboro's Beeline on November 15.
- Writing a planning grant application for Brattleboro – which would be used to evaluate the public transit routes in the town, in advance of June 2011 when CRT can alter and improve service. TAC offered to write letter of support for Brattleboro project.
- New bus wash opened last Tuesday, which has cisterns that collect rainwater from the roof.
- Working on hiring a Safety Manager.
- In the last year passenger numbers have been increasing while the miles and hours have been decreasing.
- The Springfield to Ludlow to Rutland route is productive – although fewer riders are coming back at the end of the day (132 am riders, 89 pm riders).
- Park and Ride:
 - Exit 7 – VTrans' lawsuit is reportedly settled. Bus access/circulation is not good.
 - Exit 8 – The new, improved lot is a significant improvement.
 - Exit 9 – Bus access/circulation is terrible.
 - Exits 7 and 9 are in the state's budget to improve.
 - CRT is working to develop a lot adjacent to their facility at Exit 6.
- Mary is discussing the use of Rockingham's remaining earmark funding to build the Exit 6 park and ride facility as well as construct two additional garage bays.
- Difference between a fare and donation: a fare is taken off the bottom line from State funding, while a donation contributes to CRT's matching funds.

Regional Transportation Issues

Due to the new administration, Sue Clark (not present) asked about regional transportation issues. The TAC's brief discussion of region's transportation issues included the following:

- Improve funding for the Town Highway Bridge and Structures Programs
- Stop robbing the gas tax

- The State Aid that towns receive for Class 1 paving is insufficient – Class 1 town highways are not getting enough money to maintain, especially with added truck traffic as the sections of state highways travel through downtowns.

Other issues:

- Harry Hill's Bridge, North Springfield – Jason will ask VTTrans if it is feasible to replace the existing bridge with a large, multi-plate, bottom-less culvert.

Future Agenda Topics:

- Legislative items
- Smithville project
- Project prioritization
- Town Highway Bridge Program priorities

Next Meeting: January 19, 2011 at 7pm

Tom Kenyon moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. Second by Sharon Bixby. Approved unanimously.