



CIRC Task Force Public Meeting Notes

SERVING THE MUNICIPALITIES OF

Bolton
Buels Gore
Burlington
Charlotte
Colchester
Essex Junction
Essex Town
Hinesburg
Huntington
Jericho
Milton
Richmond
St. George
Shelburne
South Burlington
Underhill
Westford
Williston
Winooski

DATE: Wednesday, December 14, 2011
TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: Albany College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Colchester
PRESENT: Please see page 5

1) Welcome

Cindy Cook of Adamant Accord welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting purpose: *To inform the public about the CIRC Alternatives Task Force's recommendations for transportation system improvements.*

2) History of the CIRC Alternatives Task Force

Michele Boomhower of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) welcomed everyone and explained that her organization coordinates transportation activities in the County. CCRPC was charged by the Governor and VTrans to facilitate the CIRC Alternatives Task Force process. She recognized Task Force members and Legislators in the audience.

Chris Cole, VTrans Director of Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development thanked Michele and the CCRPC for undertaking the CIRC alternatives planning process. CCRPC and the Task Force accomplished a great deal of work in a short period of time.

The Governor announced that the CIRC will not be built as originally conceived primarily for two reasons: environmental permitting and funding availability (approximately \$100 million for segments A and B). The Governor suggested that the CIRC towns look for alternatives to reduce congestion and improve mobility.

Michele listed the Task Force members: CIRC communities (Colchester, Essex, Essex Junction, and Williston), environmental groups (Conservation Law Foundation, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Preservation Trust of Vermont), business community (Lake Champlain Chamber/GBIC, IBM, and an at-large member), State agencies (VTrans, Agency of Natural Resources, Agency of Commerce), and other transportation organizations (Chittenden County Transportation Authority, Local Motion). The Task Force began work in July and by December had prioritized a list of implementation projects to forward to VTrans and the Legislature for inclusion in the Capital Program. The Task Force also approved a short list of planning studies that will commence in January. Next fall, the Task Force will rank phase two implementation projects and planning studies.

3) Project Recommendations to the Governor & Legislature

A. Exit 16 Improvements, Colchester - Bryan Osborne, Colchester Public Works Director
The purpose of the project is to improve safety, alleviate congestion, and support further development and economic growth. The study area includes US Routes 2/7 from South Park Drive to Rathe Road in Colchester. Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC described the preferred alternative for the interchange area, a double cross-over diamond design and showed a traffic simulation. The project also includes additional turn lanes at Mountain View Drive, Hercules Drive and Rathe Road intersections.

Questions & Answers (Link to Study - <http://www.ccmpto.org/I89/Exit16/>)

- What happens when you have a power outage? All signals have auxiliary power.
- Where are the pedestrians? A separate sidewalk project is moving forward; pedestrians will be accommodated in the corridor.
- Did you look at roundabout alternative? Yes, but it performed poorly.
- I don't see any fewer traffic signals than what exists now. That's true, but there will be an improvement in the efficiency of the signals due to the elimination of left turns.

B. VT2A/VT289 Interchange Improvements, Essex - Trevor Lashua, Essex Assistant Town Manager

Vermont Route 2A is the terminus of the existing CIRC highway, although it was not intended to be the terminus. The interchange is experiencing significant congestion at peak hours and has safety issues. Essex is looking for a better, safer, more efficient movement of people and goods through this corridor. There will likely be an upgrade to the signals.

(Link to Study - <http://www.ccmpto.us/library/VT15/index.php?rept=3>)

C. Crescent Connector Road, Essex Junction - Robin Pierce, Village Development Director
The Crescent Connector—a new local road connecting VT 2A with VT 117 and through an existing connection to VT 15—will facilitate regional travel, improve local circulation in the Village center, improve operations at the 5 Corners, and open vacant properties to new development.

Questions & Answers (Link to Study - http://www.ccmpto.us/library/scoping/ejct_crescent_connector/)

- You're adding three more traffic signals. Yes.
- Was the "D" design from the 1960's considered? Robin didn't believe so.

D. VT2A/James Brown Drive, Williston - Rick McGuire, Williston Town Manager

One of the benefits of the original CIRC Highway was an alternate means of crossing the Winooski River. With that project gone, Williston is faced with traffic congestion on Route 2A, making it difficult to access the neighborhoods and commercial areas off of Route 2A. The project will improve side street access and safety, maintain traffic on the Route 2A Corridor, and accommodate alternative modes of transportation. The project includes a traffic signal at the James Brown Drive intersection and a two-way left-turn lane from River Cove Road north to Eastview Circle. (Link to Study - http://www.ccmpto.us/library/scoping/james_brown_drive/)

E. Regional Transportation Demand/System Management - Chapin Spencer, Executive Director of Local Motion

One of the ways to meet the CIRC Highway's original goals is to find other means of travel. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) encourages efficient use of the existing

transportation system, is environmentally-friendly, saves money, and provides more travel options. This effort will be undertaken by the Campus Area Transportation Management Association (CATMA), CarShare VT, Go Vermont, CCTA, and Way-To-Go. Projects include: 16 transit shelters on VT15, VT2, VT2A; 10 signal improvements; leased “pocket” park and ride lots; new CarShare VT locations; circuit rider focused on major employers; marketing/outreach; and a bike commuter program.

Questions & Answers

- Given the nature of what we’re trying to accomplish in the study area, there should be an expansion of CCTA bus routes to better serve Williston, Essex, and Colchester. If I’m in Williston and want to go to Essex Junction, I have to go all the way to Burlington. Chapin replied that there is a bus between Williston and Essex and CCTA has improved service in this corridor. Meredith Birkett of CCTA shared that her agency provided a list of transit projects to the CIRC Alternatives process. An issue for transit funding is the need for local funding. As funding becomes available expanded service will be added.
- How can we get the Park & Ride lot on Heineberg Drive built? It’s been on the list for 30 years. Marc Landry of the Colchester Selectboard responded that it’s on the town’s radar.
- Did you revisit the Wilbur Smith EIS for CIRC transit alternatives? Michele responded that the Task Force started the planning prioritization with studies that were ready-to-go, and the transit alternatives will be considered in the future.
- What about real-time rideshare? Go Vermont will be rolling it out statewide.
- I’m concerned about the buses that are out there. You have \$3 million for more buses that are bigger. I follow buses around and there isn’t anyone on the bus or getting on the 40 passenger buses. I think money is being spent wrong because you need smaller buses. I can see in downtown Burlington but into these communities, the market analysis isn’t correct. Chapin responded that the bigger buses are for the Link Express for commuter routes to Montpelier and beyond. Ridership is very strong. The local routes, like Essex Center, aren’t the strongest performers, but CCTA has seen a 63 percent increase in ridership over 10 years. CCTA needs the larger buses during peak times.
- Is there any bus service through Colchester Village? There is not, but CCTA hopes that Colchester will join CCTA.
- Are you going to service all Park & Ride lots with buses? What about near the landfill in Essex? For some of the smaller lots, no. The landfill location is in CCTA’s Transit Development Plan and they need funding to implement it.

4) Planning Studies & Next Steps

Michele addressed the concern that there aren’t bigger, more comprehensive projects on the CIRC Alternatives list. She reminded everyone that this is a multiyear process and it takes time to move projects through planning to implementation. Michele reviewed the Task Force-Recommended FY12 Planning Studies, noting that there are many studies in the queue:

- Transportation Network Analysis: VT 15/Allen Martin Drive/Sand Hill Road/VT 117 (Essex)
- Transportation Network Analysis: US 2/VT 2A / N. Williston Road/Mountain View Road/Mountain View Connector (Williston)
- Colchester Scoping Study: Two Intersections on VT 127
- Essex Junction Scoping Study: Pearl Street from Post Office Square to 5 Corners
- Regional Scoping Project: Multi-Use Path on VT 15

5) Q&A

Q: What is the estimated total cost of the implementation projects? A: \$11.5 – 13.5 million.

Q: Is any alternate type facility along the CIRC right-of-way completely off the table?

A: The State will retain the right-of-way and projects could be considered, including a “boulevard” concept.

Q: In Williston, there is a possibility that’s ready to go – all the land has been acquired. You should put in place the road that starts from IBM’s exit to Route 2 and stop there. You would need a berm on each side of the road to quiet the traffic.

A: We have talked about whether or not portions of CIRC A/B could be implemented, as you suggest. There are environmental permitting issues for both of those segments.

Q: As a commuter through Exit 16, I’m in support of the proposal. It’s a huge problem and I like the innovation and better traffic flow. It’s great. You mention environmental permits. It seems to me that not a lot of consideration has been made to the air pollution side of things.

A: It’s becoming more of a component of our project analysis. We’ll be integrating air quality concerns into our studies moving forward.

Q: My biggest concern is the “boulevard” plan – it doesn’t consider any of the implications that it would have on Colchester. I’m concerned that all this traffic is going to get dumped on Main Street in Colchester. The CIRC as planned would have made downtown Colchester impossible.

A: Bryan Osborne: Each community has a suite of implementation and planning projects. One of our planning projects is looking at East-West corridors – Severance Road and Main Street/Route 2A corridor. We agree that we are the downstream community affected by the partial build out of the existing CIRC Highway. I hope we’ll get to look at those two corridors and figure out what to do with them. We won’t get rid of the traffic but we can look at how best to accommodate traffic and serve those who live there. This is a multi-year project. We went after low hanging fruit for this process due to the limited time.

Q: I see people in this room that was not even born when this nonsense started. I was a young man when this started. Unbelievable.

Q: This has been going on for a long time and we keep going back to eyes that are much bigger than our budgets. If you anticipate environmental legislation – like greenhouse gas emissions - how can any of these capacity improvements be considered? It doesn’t seem possible that we can sustain so much traffic. Continuing to go at congestion solutions – that highways are the solution seems like a futile struggle. Have you evaluated the goals and objectives of the CIRC highway? Congestion and vitality go together. The lack of congestion shows poor utilization of resources. Making decisions based on peak hour congestion is too simple given the complexity of traffic and congestion. What’s the budget for greenhouse gas emissions in the County?

A: We don’t have such a budget, but we are working on air quality modeling and preparing for future changes. We’re also doing TDM efforts. There is recognition that air quality needs to be addressed.

Q: Not to disparage hard work, but these band-aid solutions don’t amount to anything. You should build the CIRC.

Q: Tim Jerman, Essex: The Selectboard and Trustees have framed this issue. These are traffic projects, not truly CIRC alternatives. We all share the anger and the angst about the CIRC and we all wish it were different. It's important how we frame it. These are improvements, but not CIRC alternatives.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47PM.

ATTENDEES

Last	First
Aultman	Lisa
Birkett*	Meredith
Carriere	Jody
Condit	Hillary
Coolidge	Warren
Corson	Grant & Mateson
Crawford*	Dave
Dickinson	Roger
Dickson	Don
Duval	Peter
Dykes	Charlie
Fitzgerald	John
Frank	Steve
Jerman	Tim
Lajza*	John
Landry*	Marc
Lettieri	Carolyn
Levine*	Sandy
Marcotte	Bob
Munger	Jeff
Myers*	Linda
Osborne*	Bryan
Pierce*	Robin
Pumo	Dorothy
Spencer*	Chapin
Tyler*	George
Voegele*	Al
Wetzel	Lew
White	Denis
Wrenner	Irene

***Task Force Members and Staff**

CCRPC Staff/Consultants Present: Michele Boomhower, Eleni Churchill, Bryan Davis, Christine Forde, Dave Roberts; Cindy Cook, Adamant Accord; Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates

Written Comments Received at Meeting

CLF should foot the bill for these alternate projects since they are mainly responsible for the CIRC begin squelched.

Dennis White, Essex

From: ccmpous@box406.bluehost.com [mailto:ccmpous@box406.bluehost.com]

Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2011 4:49 PM

To: diane@thirdsectorassociates.com

Subject: CIRC Task Force

Name? Seth Maciejowski

Comments? As a resident of North Williston road I am distinctly aware of the traffic problems being created in the absence of the circ highway. The blatant disregard for pedestrian safety, bike safety, and traffic laws exhibited by the deluge of traffic on North Williston road is a burden carried by the residents. While I lament the loss of the optimal configuration of the circ A/B highway, I applaud the task force in working on some sort of plan other than the status quo and I encourage the task force to consider options that discourage intense use of secondary roads not intended for heavy volumes of traffic. The goal of the task force should not only be the improvement of traffic flow, but also the improvement of quality of life of people who live along Chittenden county's overused road networks. In the absence of the circ, I recommend heavy use of traffic calming devices on secondary roads and reduced speed limits in general.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2011 2:33 AM

To: diane@thirdsectorassociates.com

Subject: Circ Task Force

Hi Diane,

I was glad I attended Wed. night's meeting in Colchester!

Can you please tell me if a bike-ped path along the existing Circ route is on the larger list of alternatives for Essex? Michele mentioned that other projects may be part of phase two, and some folks are hoping that one's on your radar.

Thank you! Irene Wrenner, Essex

December 15, 2011

Hi Irene!

Indeed, a study of a multi-use path along the CIRC right-of-way is included in the Town of Essex's list of future planning studies. It is reference number 7 under Essex on the attached list of future planning studies.

The future planning studies have not yet been prioritized and approved by the CIRC Alternatives Task Force. However, there is likely to be a meeting in January where this will occur. We will post information on the website about this meeting: <http://www.circtaskforce.org/>

I would encourage you to contact the Essex Public Works Director, Dennis Lutz (dlutz@essex.org), if you'd like to know more about Essex's list of projects.

Thanks for your interest! Diane
