

Williston-Essex Transportation Network Study Steering Committee Meeting #3

DATE: Monday, July 30, 2012
TIME: 1:00 – 3:00 PM
PLACE: CCRPC Offices, 110 West Canal Street, Winooski
PRESENT:

Tim Baechle, IBM Burlington	Kate McCarthy, VNRC
Amy Bell, VTrans	Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates
Bob Chamberlin, RSG	Jeff Nick, JL Davis Realty
Jason Charest, CCRPC	Bruce Nyquist, VTrans
Eleni Churchill, CCRPC	Robin Pierce, Village of Essex Junction (1:35)
Bruce Hoar, Town of Williston	Ken Robie, VTrans
Sandy Levine, Conservation Law Foundation	Mark Smith, RSG
Dennis Lutz, Town of Essex	Jason VanDriesche, Local Motion

1) Welcome

Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC welcomed everyone.

2) Project Status

Bob Chamberlin of RSG updated the status of the Study. Phase 1, the evaluation of two Major Network Strategies (MNS), is complete. Both Selectboards voted to carry Major Network Strategy 2 to subsequent phases of study; MNS2 will be considered and evaluated among other strategies, but does not guarantee it will be a preferred strategy. We are currently in Phase 2, the “Analysis of Existing and Future Issues and Development of Transportation Network Goals.” Tasks include: 1) analysis of existing conditions and development of performance measures; 2) establish goals and objectives; and 3) determine future year performance. Phase 3 will develop and evaluate strategies; Phase 4 will develop an Implementation Plan for transportation corridors; and, finally, Phase 5 will develop a Transportation Management Plan.

3) Phase 2 Memorandum #1 on Existing Land Use & Transportation Conditions

Bob would like comments on Memorandum #1 (distributed last week) by **August 10th** (via email). The memo includes the following sections: land use, access management, safety, and alternative modes. There is no data on vehicular traffic because Bob’s team is calibrating the transportation model.

Eleni explained that prior to the next Steering Committee meeting in late September, the regional transportation model will be calibrated and the traffic data will be distributed. The September meeting will also feature a review of goals and objectives and a discussion of future conditions and the draft strategy packages.

Dennis Lutz of Essex is concerned that the land use terminology used in the memo does not coincide with the Town's terminology. The VTrans access management strategy categories do not necessarily reflect the Town's Road Management Plan. Essex uses different traffic thresholds than the state, which is illustrated on page 20 of the memo. For instance, the state does not categorize N. Williston Road; the Town designated it a Class 2 road. Bob and Eleni will investigate the discrepancy. Dennis would also like the maps to be larger. Dennis requested that the intersection of Essex Way and Route 15 be included in the Study. Bob will do so.

Kate McCarthy of VNRC asked how the transportation model will evaluate multimodal opportunities. Bob replied that transportation planning for multimodal elements doesn't necessarily use sophisticated models; he has begun to look at multimodal elements. Travel demand drives the transportation model; to the extent that improvements in alternative modes or land use density can be translated into travel demand, it will be captured in the model.

Kate asked about the limitations of the transportation model. Bob replied that vehicle movement is captured in the model; however, the model does not address other modes particularly well, like the ease of a pedestrian to cross the street. The input assumptions, like future land use, could also be a limitation. Most of the information available from local planners reflects short-term development.

Jason VanDriesche of Local Motion asked about the correlation of people to vehicles in the model and whether or not the model can test different carpooling scenarios. Bob responded that there are different trip types that correspond to different auto occupancy. For instance, home-to-work trips assume 1 person per vehicle. This information is derived from surveys of Chittenden County residents. To test Transportation Demand Management (TDM) efforts, we would need to make assumptions about different types of trips and vehicle occupancy.

Sandy Levine of CLF asked if Bob could summarize the assumptions in the model. Bob answered in the affirmative. The transportation network itself is being calibrated to existing conditions, like lane widths and signal timing. Sandy asked about the inclusion of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) improvements in the model. Eleni responded that the improvements that are highly probable will be included, like the Crescent Connector and improvements at Exit 16. Exit 12B will not be included. All TIP projects, except the Circ Highway, will be included. **Eleni will provide a list of improvements included in the model to the Steering Committee.** The Committee will review and accept the list before the modeling moves forward.

There was discussion about the rate of growth, especially outside of the study area, and how it affects model output. Due to the limitations of this study, the plan is to use the growth rate in the existing model. **Eleni will determine the rate and inform the Committee.**

Jeff asked if Bob has square footage estimates for development at Taft Corners. Bob answered in the affirmative. Jeff described his new development and the Town's requirement that businesses participate in CCTA's Smart Business Program and provide bicycle racks and showers in order to reduce parking requirements.

4. Performance Measures

Bob explained that performance measures help to compare one set of improvements to another and against the existing conditions. The current transportation model provides a baseline to judge future conditions. Bob suggested the following performance measures:

- Auto Mobility & Safety
 - Average vehicle speed; corridor travel time; intersection delay; average vehicle queues; change in crash modification factors
- Multimodal Level of Service
 - Bicycle (facilities, connectivity, conflicts)
 - Transit (accessibility, service/headway, connectivity)
 - Pedestrian (facilities, connectivity)
- System-wide Measures (VMT, Green House Gas Emissions, Cumulative Intersection Stop Delay)

Bob provided a sample performance measure application for bicycle facilities and connectivity. Mark Smith of RSG explained the sample data. Kate asked if a 2-foot shoulder was adequate; Mark responded that it's actually "greater than 2 feet," or three feet, which meets the standard.

Jason asked if different standards can be applied to different road classes. Mark answered in the affirmative. Jeff asked if the calculation of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions takes into account improvements in electric and hybrid vehicles over time. Bob responded that this is not accounted for in the model; however the EPA model is very detailed. Basically, stop-and-go traffic creates high emissions, if one can reduce stop-and-go, emissions are decreased. Dennis asked if turning movements would be included in the model; Bob responded in the affirmative.

5. Process for Establishing Goals & Objectives

Bob explained that the next deliverable, a memo in early September, will propose draft goals and objectives. In order to do that, Bob suggested that we begin with the Municipal Land Use Visions/Goals and then define transportation goals/objectives for each primary corridor to support the land use visions. Bob provided an example using Vermont 2A:

- Efficient north-south vehicle mobility to/from Exit 12
- Promotion of Growth Center goals through multimodal investments
- Facilitate goods movement
- Address known vehicle and pedestrian/bike safety deficiencies

Amy Bell of VTrans suggested that the character of Route 2A changes significantly over its length. There was discussion of segmenting Route 2A for study purposes.

There was discussion of how literally to interpret "efficient vehicle mobility." One could cut off access to all businesses and achieve this goal. Bob recognizes that the corridor is trying to achieve many things and goals are not always consistent in their ability to serve all users. It may be that "Smart" corridor management and electronic monitoring of traffic may be successful in this corridor.

Bruce Nyquist of VTrans described their research into a Smart Signals project in Essex at the interchange of Vermont 2A/289/Susie Wilson Road. “Adaptive signal control” has potential to continuously optimize the corridor in real time. Bob suggested WENTS might be a good candidate for a future Smart Signals demonstration.

There was discussion about conflicts among goals and how best to address them. Sandy suggested using a cost/benefit analysis. Jason suggested that the goals might be clearer if we separate the “what” rather than “how.” The “north-south” goal presumes the mode, perhaps instead say “efficient north-south movement through mobility and access.” Eleni suggested that modes should be part of the goals and the objectives are more detailed (the “how”). Kate suggested that Bob define “goal” and “objective” for clarity purposes.

6. Next Steps

- **Phase 2 Draft Final Report (mid-Sept)**
 - Study Area and Primary Corridor Goals & Objectives
 - Calibrated Traffic Model
 - Existing and Future Conditions Evaluated Subject to Performance Measures
- **Steering Committee Meeting #4 (late Sept)**
 - Review Phase 2 Draft Final Report
 - Discuss Strategy Packages
- **Development of Alternative Strategy Packages (Oct)**
- **Screening and Evaluation of Strategy Packages (Nov/Dec)**
 - Steering Committee Meeting #5
- **Development of Network Implementation Plan (Jan)**

Sandy asked about the definition of a “strategy package.” Bob responded that it’s a group of alternatives; the corridor is big, so there will be a series of strategies. Dennis suggested that there should be a strategy to address the small improvements that are obvious – a base level group of core improvements. Bob agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50PM.