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## **CIRC Task Force Meeting #3 Notes – Approved October 20, 2011**

DATE: Thursday, August 25, 2011  
TIME: 8:00 AM  
PLACE: Williston Town Hall  
PRESENT: Please see last page

### **1) Welcome/Introductions/Announcements**

Cindy Cook of Adamant Accord welcomed everyone and expressed regrets from Brian Searles of VTrans and Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC who were unable to attend. She assured everyone that their input would be recorded for their review.

Cindy announced the Circ Public Meeting for October 4<sup>th</sup> at the Williston Central School from 6:30-8:30 PM. Bryan Osborne of Colchester may have a conflict due to a bond vote that day. [Note: after the meeting, Bryan determined that this would not be a conflict]. Others were comfortable with the date.

Cindy reviewed the agenda.

### **2) Overview of Long Range Transportation Goals**

Peter Keating of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) described the process of articulating the vision and goals for the Long Range Transportation Plan. They were created with significant public and Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) Board involvement. The vision articulates how people in the region envision their transportation system to work in the year 2025. It is intended to clearly and concisely describe the overall purpose of the transportation system, how that system should perform, and the system's role relative to the overarching themes of community, environment, economic vitality, equity, and cultural heritage (see attachment for more detail).

### **3) Desired Outcomes: Municipalities' and Other Stakeholders' Goals for The Task Force Process**

Cindy asked each Stakeholder Group to give a concise summary of what they would like to accomplish through this process.

- **Town Of Colchester:** Bryan Osborne (please see attachment)
- **Town of Essex:** Dennis Lutz began by saying that at the end of the day, in spite of the priority system, the bottom line is we need to go back to the purpose of the Circ EIS – “The purpose ...is to improve access to, from, and within the project area and remedy existing and projected deficiencies including congestion, safety, and mobility issues (including movement of both people and goods).”

Dennis stated that we need to include a “common sense” factor to the prioritization. Do the projects fit within the original purpose of what the Circ was trying to achieve? He noted that we are here because the Circ isn’t going to be built. Linda Myers continued with a prepared statement (see attachment).

- **Village of Essex Junction:** Dave Crawford supported the statements of the previous speakers. The Village is looking at the Crescent Connector both as a transportation and economic development project. He’s confident that the information necessary to rank the projects will sort itself out.
- **Town of Williston:** Terry Macaig offered three goals: 1) To develop a series of projects that provide relief from traffic congestion that would have been alleviated by the Circ project while doing no harm to congestion in surrounding communities; 2) To examine/explore options that would remove through traffic from the Route 2A, Route 2, North Williston Road, and Mountain View Road corridors; and 3) To develop projects that will improve the functioning of existing intersections and other improvements that will provide some incremental relief. He added that there is concern from people who live on routes that may be improved; they fear additional traffic. Chris Roy said that if one improves the function of an intersection/corridor and it increases the level of traffic, thereby decreasing Level of Service (LOS), then one hasn’t improved the overall situation. These projects will not increase capacity as the Circ was designed to do.
- **IBM:** Tim Baechle stated that IBM has three key interests: people, growth, and access for supplies/products. 1) IBM employees live in every county in the state and they need to travel to work; 2) In the last 10 years, IBM has applied for expansion permits. Although the expansion did not occur, projects were constrained due to transportation issues. Upgrades or the Circ are needed to expand; and 3) IBM needs improved access to the Interstate. IBM moves a large volume of product and supplies in and out of their facility, especially to and from New York and Canada.
- **Development Community:** Jeff Nick would like the process to be as simple as possible since traffic congestion impedes economic development. Jeff hopes the group can identify common goals as well as disagreements in order to reach consensus quickly. Simple suggestions are improvement of signage to direct motorists to 289, expand park and rides, and improve Exit 12. Large employers are unable to come to the area because they cannot find 10-20 acres that are accessible and available for development.
- **Agency of Natural Resources:** Mary Borg wants to support the process by assisting the group in early identification of resource and permitting issues.
- **Environmental Community:** Sandy Levine of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) supports and agrees with the comments of others. She hopes the group can achieve general agreement on a suite of transportation and mobility projects to move forward. She wants to support smart growth principles while enhancing natural resource protection. She supports improvement of existing roadways, especially those that provide access to downtown areas, support downtown development, expand transportation options, and decrease Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).
- **Chittenden County Transportation Agency (CCTA):** Meredith Birkett prioritized CCTA’s investments in three tiers. First, CCTA wants projects that support their existing network and make the service more attractive. High frequency service corridors with improved pedestrian and park and ride opportunities and added technology are high priorities. CCTA’s second-tier priority is the expansion of existing service, including longer operating hours and weekend service. CCTA’s third priority is to develop new service.

#### **4) CIRC Project Area and MPO Recommendations re: Task Force Project Area**

Christine Forde of the CCMPO provided a study area map from the 1986 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Sandy was concerned that the map focuses on areas that would have be affected by not building the Circ. She wondered if we are trying to solve a problem that isn't really there – are the shaded areas on the map the same ones that now experience transportation congestion issues?

Ken Belliveau of Williston would like to add the North Williston Road corridor to the affected area, due to the importance of the bridge crossing. Also, improvements to Industrial Avenue and Route 2 are on Williston's list to move forward. It's a major bus line and commercial corridor.

Eric Filkorn of the Richmond noted that the intersection of Vermont 117 and US 2 at Exit 11 experiences traffic congestion from those accessing the existing Circ.

Dennis wants to include major corridors, like Route 2, Route 2A, and Route 15 to the study area. He's also interested in adding a signal project that optimizes all the corridor intersections with new controllers. Signal optimization can be accomplished quickly with 100 percent federal dollars.

Jeff Carr of Essex wants to focus on projects in Circ communities. Other communities will benefit from the work done in the Circ corridor.

Bryan asked about utilizing the CCMPO traffic model to better define the Circ study area. There was discussion about how best to accomplish this and if the model was the most viable tool. Dave Roberts of the CCRPC will run the model and try to bring information to the next meeting.

#### **5) CIRC Task Force Prioritization: Overview of Comments and Discussion**

Christine reviewed the Task Force members' comments and provided a handout of revisions. She explained that this tool is a melding of two different processes – the qualitative and the quantitative. She's tried to use quantitative factors wherever feasible; however, it's not always possible.

Noelle MacKay of the VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development asked if there were cutoff dates for studies. She's concerned that 25-year-old studies are not relevant.

Christine reviewed her handout, explaining that it is structured with "high impact" given to growth centers/town centers/etc. but not necessarily across all categories/factors.

Ken asked about inclusion of the new state Complete Streets policy. There was discussion of whether to incorporate complete streets language or factors into our process. Generally, this work is done during project development and implementation.

Tim asked to move "enterprise" to "high impact economic vitality."

Christine will be scoring municipally-generated projects using this prioritization process. She will distribute the ranking prior to the next meeting to allow time for the stakeholders to review the results.

Jeff Nick asked about the definition of smart growth and how projects would rank in that regard. Sandy responded that smart growth projects focus on existing infrastructure, enhancing development in downtowns, and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Christine noted that new projects do not score

highly with this tool.

John Lajza of Essex Junction does not see alternatives to the Circ, rather he sees enhancements to mobility. Traffic congestion increases are inevitable. Some people are going to be offended by busier streets and some will be happy that we've made some improvement. We need to decrease traffic to improve the livability and desirability of our downtown areas.

Ken noted a new proposed facility, segment A of the Circ, was added by the State. The town is skeptical at best about that project due to its potential impacts. Cindy noted that segment A is the elephant in the room. The state is gathering information about the permitting issues and we will have a discussion about it in the future.

Bryan asked about the efficacy of using the readiness factor. Although it makes sense where there is a sustainable and predictable funding mechanism, it may not make sense here. The communities haven't looked at alternatives to the Circ and the fear is that small projects will move forward because more meaningful, long-term projects haven't yet been considered. There was general agreement to rank projects first and then look at readiness (high, medium, low).

Christine will revise the prioritization and put the readiness factor distinct from the others. She will take additional comments on the scoring sheet in the next couple of days. She'll then score the projects and distribute the results to the stakeholders for their consideration and review. We'll discuss it as a group at the next meeting.

Bryan asked if there would be a public meeting in each town; Cindy responded that at this point only one, in Williston, was planned.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 AM.

**The Next Meeting will be held September 22, 2011 from 8-10AM at the  
O'Brien Community Center, 32 Malletts Bay Avenue Winooski  
(Please Note this is an update – the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting has been CANCELLED).**

## ATTENDEES

### Members Present

Last	First	Title	Organization
Baechle	Tim	Manager of Energy, Environmental	IBM
Birkett	Meredith	Manager	CCTA
Bruhn	Paul	Director	Preservation Trust of VT
Carr	Jeff	RPC Representative	Town of Essex
Crawford	Dave	Village Manager	Village of Essex Junction
Lajza	John	RPC Representative	Essex Junction
Macaig	Terry	Selectboard Chair	Town of Williston
Mackay	Noelle	Commissioner	VT Dept. Housing & Community Affairs
McGuire	Rick	Town Manager	Town of Williston
Myers	Linda	Selectboard Chair	Town of Essex
Nick	Jeff		JL Davis Realty
Roy	Chris	RPC Representative	Town of Williston
Scheidel	Pat	Town Manager	Town of Essex
Shupe	Brian	Deputy Director	VNRC
Voegele	Al	Town Manager	Town of Colchester

### Staff Present

Bell	Amy	CCMPO Planning Coordinator	VTrans
Belliveau	Ken	Planning Director and Zoning Admin.	Town of Williston
Borg	Mary		VT DEC
Carter	Curt		GBIC
Hoar	Bruce	DPW Director	Town of Williston
Langham	Matthew		VTrans
Lashua	Trevor	Ass't Town Manager	Town of Essex
Levine	Sandy	Senior Attorney	Conservation Law Foundation
Lutz	Dennis	DPW Director	Town of Essex
Osborne	Bryan	Director of Public Works	Town of Colchester
Pierce	Robin	Development Director	Village of Essex Junction
Robie	Ken	CIRC Project Manager	VTrans
Van Driesche	Jason	Education & Safety Mgr.	Local Motion

### Others Present

Abair	Marty		Corps of Engineers
Cook	Cindy	Process Facilitator	Adamant Accord
Filkorn	Erik	Selectboard/RPC Representative	Town of Richmond
Meyerhoff	Diane	Process Coordinator	Third Sector Associates

**CCRPC Staff Present:** Eleni Churchill, Christine Forde, Peter Keating, Dave Roberts

## 2) Overview of Long Range Transportation Goals (Peter Keating, CCRPC)

### Selection from the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, pages 11 and 12

## 2.2 Vision and Goals

### 2.2.1 Transportation Vision

Early in the 2025 MTP development process, the CCMPO and MTP Steering Committee crafted the following Vision statement and vetted it during the public involvement process. The Vision articulates how people in the region envision their transportation system to work in the year 2025. The Vision is intended to clearly and concisely describe the overall purpose of the transportation system, how that system should perform and the system's role relative to the overarching themes of community, environment, economic vitality, equity, and cultural heritage.

**Chittenden County MTP  
Vision for Transportation in 2025**

***Our transportation system enhances and connects healthy, vibrant communities.  
It is safe, efficient, multi-modal and accessible to all.  
It supports economic vitality and is designed and operated to complement and respect  
our cherished natural resources and cultural heritage.***

### 2.2.2 Regional Transportation Goals

The 2025 MTP Steering Committee prepared 12 supporting goals to articulate and expand on the Vision. These goals state regional desires and aspirations for the transportation system as well as for the people and communities served by the transportation system.

- Goal 1:** Preserve and improve the physical condition and operational performance of the existing transportation system.
- Goal 2:** Reinforce sustainable land use patterns, such as growth centers, as set forth in local and regional plans.
- Goal 3:** Create a transportation system that offers constantly improving safety, accessibility, flexibility, and comfort for everyone.
- Goal 4:** Establish a transportation system that minimizes the time and total cost of moving people and goods, allowing the region's economy to thrive.
- Goal 5:** Protect or enhance the region's built and natural environments.
- Goal 6:** Create a transportation system that builds community, enhances neighborhood vitality, and minimizes noise, glare, and vibration.
- Goal 7:** Provide levels of access and mobility that insure people and goods can travel when and where they need to go.
- Goal 8:** Consider ways to improve transportation system efficiency before increasing transportation capacity.
- Goal 9:** Establish a transportation system that uses diverse sources of power and maximizes energy efficiency and conservation.
- Goal 10:** Develop a transportation system that features a variety of travel modes and encourages the reduction of single-occupant vehicle use.
- Goal 11:** Educate the public—from children to seniors—about the implications of different development patterns and mode choice decisions.
- Goal 12:** Provide improvements to transportation facilities and services expeditiously through an inclusive and cost effective

process.

### **Agenda Item 3) Desired Outcomes: Municipalities' and Other Stakeholders' Goals for The Task Force Process**

#### **Town of Colchester**

There are several goals and objectives we would like to see accomplished through this process. In the broadest sense, we would like to see the advancement of a carefully selected package of projects from the four circ communities, that 1) mitigate the damages caused to the circ communities as a result of the unplanned and unintended redistribution of traffic caused by building only a portion of the Circumferential Highway, and 2) provide the transportation benefits that would have otherwise been provided by the completion of the Circ Highway.

We would like to see a clearer and more refined position from the State's Administration on both the amount and sustainability of funding for this initiative. The maximum benefit to the county can only be achieved by a carefully designed system wide approach, much of which may take several years to develop. Selecting, developing and advancing the best combination of projects and initiatives to achieve this benefit in the absence of clearer financial opportunities or constraints would seem virtually impossible.

We would like to better understand the purpose of the readiness factor as proposed within the current prioritization process. Although logical within a reasonably sustainable plan such as the TIP, or within a unique situation such as the stimulus package, its purpose and value to this process is not entirely clear. Given that the amount and sustainability of funding remains undefined and uncertain, and that in the anticipation of the circ highway, the circ communities have not previously developed what would likely prove to be the more meaningful and beneficial projects, and that these types of projects typically take several years to develop, are we potentially advancing less meaningful and beneficial projects simply because they are ready to go? Additionally, if the funding to this initiative ultimately proves to be short lived, what have we really accomplished toward our original goals?

On a project specific basis, the Town of Colchester's most significant needs that will hopefully be addressed through this process, in no order of priority are:

1. Addressing the impacts to our east west transportation corridors that lay east of US rt. 7, caused by the partial completion of the circ highway.
2. Addressing safety, congestion and capacity needs of the Rt. 7 intersections within our current and future growth centers, which include Exit 16, Severance Corners and Exit 17.
3. Addressing the overall transportation inadequacies of the Rt. 127 Corridor through Colchester which serves as a significant regional commuter line and exists as the only east west corridor connecting the eastern and western portions of the community.
4. Implementing transit service into our growth centers and along other regional corridors throughout the community.

**Agenda Item 3) Desired Outcomes: Municipalities' and Other Stakeholders' Goals for The Task Force Process**

**Town of Essex  
Proposed for Discussion/Presentation  
8/25/11 Circ Task Force Meeting**

1. Identification and acceptance of alternative projects that collectively address the issues of current and future congestion, improved transportation system safety and continued economic vitality within the Circumferential Highway study area.
2. Confirmation through use of the CCRPC Transportation model or similar area-wide, quantitative evaluation system that the selected alternative projects will actually accomplish the desired outcomes.
3. A determination of those specific projects within the overall list of alternative Circumferential Highway projects within the Circumferential Highway study area that can go forward to construction with funding during the summer of 2012 and a commitment on the part of all parties to advance these projects through the funding and regulatory processes.
4. A determination of those projects within the overall list of alternative Circumferential Highway projects that are needed to meet the desired outcomes but require additional time and effort for design, public input and funding and a commitment to provide, at a minimum, funds for the next stage of implementation - either Scoping, Design, Right of Way or Construction.
5. Establishment of estimated but achievable time frames and estimated end costs --federal, state and local -- to bring all identified alternative projects to a completed state consensus among the Task Force members that, while costs are an important element of the decision-making process, costs should not be the driving force in determination of the final list of acceptable alternative projects.
6. Open and frank discussion among members of the task force to identify issues of potential concern as early in the process as possible.
7. An identification of the process and time frame for resolution of land issues arising from prior purchase of land for the Circumferential Highway.

Linda Myers  
Essex