

CIRC Alternatives Task Force Public Meeting #2 Notes

www.circtaskforce.org

DATE: Thursday, February 21, 2013
TIME: 7:00 – 9:00 PM
PLACE: Williston Town Hall, 7900 Williston Road
PRESENT: Please see attached

1) Welcome & 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 in the audience.

At tonight's meeting, VTrans and CCRPC staff will outline the projects and studies underway as a result of the CIRC alternatives process. This three-year effort will conclude this December with a final list of recommended projects for consideration by the Governor and Legislature for inclusion in the FY 2015 Capital Program.

2) CIRC Alternatives Implementation Projects Underway

Ken Robie of VTrans discussed the Phase I Implementation Projects underway:

- **Exit 16 Improvements**, Double Crossover Diamond (DCD) Interchange and additional turn lanes on US 2/7, Colchester: Preliminary design is complete; the right-of-way plans will be completed in March. Expected 2015 construction with a budget of \$6 million.
- **VT2A/289 Interchange**, Essex: Upgrade signal equipment (complete) and additional lanes. Expected 2015 construction with a budget of \$1 million.
- **Crescent Connector**, Essex Junction: Conceptual plans are under review; Environmental Assessment is underway; Railroad agreement is underway. Expected 2016 construction with a budget of \$3.5 million.
- **Vermont 2A/James Brown Drive**, Williston: Traffic signal and additional turn lanes on VT 2A. Public hearing is complete. Expected 2015 construction with a budget of \$2 million.

Ken listed the Phase II Implementation projects. They are all budgeted for engineering in FY14 with future construction totals expected at \$14 million: US 2/Trader Lane Traffic Signal, Williston; Severance Corners Improvements, Colchester; VT 15/Sand Hill Road Intersection, Essex; VT 15/Post Office Square to Five Corners Improvements, Essex Junction; VT 15 Multiuse Path, Winooski, Colchester, Essex and Essex Junction; and Regional TDM.

John FitzGerald asked if the electrical utilities will be put underground for the Post Office Square project. Ken responded in the negative. John responded that the new lighting in Essex Junction has ugly telephone poles above it; it's the same on Riverside Avenue and Main Street. We should underground the utilities if we underground the lights. It should be a policy that at certain densities the utilities go underground.

Bryan Davis of the CCRPC explained the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) aspect of the CIRC Alternatives projects underway. TDM programs target how, when, and where people travel (behavior change) and TSM measures make existing facilities more efficient (better use of the existing system). Benefits of TDM include: reduced congestion, energy conservation, reduced emissions, improved equity, parking solutions, safety, and reduced costs as compared to capacity improvements. Bryan provided statistics to show that TDM efforts can be very successful in reducing single-occupancy vehicle travel. For the CIRC communities, the following projects will be undertaken:

- Transit Shelters – 6 shelters in June and 10 additional in FY 14
- Signal optimization at 10 signals
- Pocket Park & Ride beginning with the VT 15 Corridor
- CarShare VT will analyze vehicle placement feasibility in CIRC communities
- CATMA Circuit Rider to work with area employers
- Bike Commuter Rack Program promotion underway by Local Motion
- TDM Outreach with the launch of Go! Chittenden County in early March

The TDM Partners have organized around the Go! Chittenden County program that includes a website (www.gochittendencounty.org) and a call center. The integrated program brings together multimodal regional transit hubs, bicycle parking, CarShare Vermont “pods,” park & ride, and an informational effort to entice employers and employees to take advantage of alternative modes. John FitzGerald asked if all the Partners are nonprofit organizations. Bryan replied that they are either nonprofit organizations or government entities.

3) Completed CIRC Alternatives Studies

3A) VT 15 Multiuse Path, Winooski/Colchester/Essex/Essex Junction

Christine Forde of CCRPC reported that the VT 15 path would be built in three phases. In the first phase, a south-side 10-foot wide path from Lime Kiln Road to Vermont National Guard Road would be built, including a pedestrian crossing of National Guard Road. The path would continue on the north side from Vermont National Guard Road to Susie Wilson Road, including a pedestrian crossing of Susie Wilson Road. The estimated project cost for Phase One is \$2 million. Phase Two continues as bike lanes from Susie Wilson Road to West Street Extension. Phase Three would continue the path from Lime Kiln Road to Interstate 89 Exit 15 in Winooski. Tom Joslin asked why the project is phased this way; he has commuted along Route 15 and found that the section through Fort Ethan Allen is a joy, while other sections are very difficult. Christine responded that the first phase is the most reasonable starting point due to funding and right-of-way issues.

3B) Pearl Street/Post Office Square Intersection Improvements and Post Office Square to Five Corners Streetscape and Bike Improvements

Christine Forde described the Preferred Alternative approved by the Essex Junction Trustees. The proposal would maintain the existing three 11-foot wide travel lanes, add 4-foot wide shoulders, and include a buffer strip which varies from 1-5 feet. Roadway width would increase from 36 feet to 41 feet. There will be a new signal with a pedestrian phase and a new right-turn lane westbound.

3C) VT 127 Intersections in Colchester

<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/corridors/circ-alternatives-task-force/circ-selected-projects/vt-127-intersections/>

Jason Charest of CCRPC reported the project committee recommended adding a right-turn lane eastbound and a left-hand turn lane westbound at the Blakely Road/Laker Lane intersection. For the Prim Road/West Lakeshore Drive intersection, recommended improvements include: realignment of the intersection to make VT 127 the through-movement; signalize the intersection, add an eastbound left-turn lane; add a westbound right-turn lane; accommodate future shared-use path/sidewalks; and add crosswalks and pedestrian signals.

3D) Williston-Essex Network Transportation Study (WENTS)

<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/corridors/williston-essex-network-transportation-study/>

Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC explained that the WENTS Study is an integrated transportation planning study to address multimodal mobility and safety issues within the former Circ EIS area. The study produced a comprehensive and coordinated list of highway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and land use recommendations that satisfy an overall vision for the area. The Study goals include:

- REGIONAL MOBILITY - Create a safe, clean and efficient transportation network that minimizes congestion, improves safety, expands travel options within selected corridors and enhances access to and from major employment and retail centers.
- LOCAL ACCESS - Create a comprehensive multimodal transportation system in Village areas and Growth Centers that emphasizes safe and convenient access to local businesses, services and neighborhoods.
- ECONOMIC VITALITY - Support economic development in Chittenden County by enhancing travel reliability for freight, providing safe and efficient multimodal access to employment centers and retail facilities in the Study Area.
- SUSTAINABILITY - Emphasize policies and investments that build a sustainable transportation system.

Eleni described the study phases:

- Phase 1: Evaluation of two major network strategies
- Phase 2: Analyses of existing and future conditions; development performance measures; development of transportation network goals and objectives
- Phase 3: Develop and evaluate strategy packages
- Phase 4: Development of Implementation Plan for Transportation Corridors
- Phase 5: Development of Transportation Management Plan

Eleni described the strategy packages analyzed. The WENTS Steering Committee recommended a series of core improvements, a preferred strategy package, a new statewide congestion policy, and a series of scoping studies. The “Core Improvements,” with an estimated cost of approximately \$15-17 million, include:

- Williston Grid Streets
- Essex Town Center Connections
- Crescent Connector in Essex Junction; VT2A/James Brown Drive improvements in Williston; and Transportation Demand/System Management programs.
- VT15/Sand Hill Road intersection improvements; US2/Trader Lane signal, VT15 Improvements (Post Office Square to Five Corners); VT15 Multiuse Path; and TDM/TSM

- Addressing discontinuities and deficiencies to sidewalks, paths, and shoulders, and adding
- Transit Improvements: Add a mid-day trip on the Williston Route weekdays; weekday peak hour Jeffersonville-Burlington commuter route.

The WENTS Steering Committee endorsed Hybrid Strategy Package (HSP)2 as the preferred strategy package. HSP2 includes a reconfigured Exit 12 and related improvements (new grid streets and capacity improvements) for a cost of approximately \$30-49 million. The Steering Committee also recommended a series of scoping studies for Task Force consideration:

- Exit 12/Grid Streets (HSP2)
- Vermont 2A/Mountain View/Industrial Avenue and Vermont 2A mainline north to James Brown Drive (HSP2)
- Vermont 117/North Williston Road Intersection and flooding issues (HSP2)
- US 2 – Taft Corners to Williston Village Multimodal Improvements (Core)
- Bike and Pedestrian Scoping Studies: Industrial Avenue to Blair Park (including a crossing of Allen Brook), Vermont 15 (Old Stage Road to Essex Way), and Mountain View Road from Old Stage Road to Vermont 2A.

John Lajza is concerned about the potential for serious accidents on Route 2A due to the left turns. Eleni responded that the scoping study will begin soon; we don't have the answers yet to how the roadway might be reconfigured. The Crescent Connector is expected to take some of the pressure of 2A. John's number one concern is the neighborhoods and moving more traffic through them, the bridge alternative makes sense. Ken Belliveau of Williston explained that the Selectboard considered the bridge strategy to ease traffic in the neighborhoods. However, when it was analyzed, the network performance was not improved significantly, especially when considering the cost. Ken feels the projects moving forward are good ones.

Eleanora Hood asked if the Finney Crossing development will include a traffic light. Ken responded that the traffic signals are already there in anticipation of the project being finished. There is also a signal at Simon's Plaza for the anticipated construction of Zephyr Road. Eleanora asked about the Essex Alliance Church permits. Ken responded that it is in the Act 250 process and they will likely need to add a turn lane on 2A. Eleanora is concerned about evening activities at the Church and its impact on 2A. Ken doesn't believe the evening traffic will come close to Sunday's traffic and there is sufficient capacity on 2A.

4) Upcoming CIRC Alternatives Studies – Attendees were invited to meet individually with staff at the following “Stations:”

- Colchester-Essex Network Transportation Study including Scoping of Kellogg Rd./Susie Wilson Rd. and VT15/Susie Wilson Rd., Colchester/Essex
- Route 15 Corridor Park & Ride Studies, Essex, Jericho, Underhill, Cambridge, & Jeffersonville
- North Williston Road/VT 117 Intersection Improvements and Flood Plain Elevation Analysis, Williston/Essex
- Exit 17/US 7/US 2 Interchange Circulation Analysis/Scoping Study, Colchester
- VT117/VT289 Park and Ride Lot, Essex
- Exit 12 Reconfiguration; New Local Roads; and VT 2A Improvements, Williston
- VT2A/Industrial Avenue/Mountain View and VT2A Improvements to James Brown Drive, Williston

- Multimodal Scoping Studies, Williston/Essex
 - US2 - Williston Village to Taft Corners
 - Mountain View Drive - VT2A to Old Stage Road
 - VT 2A - Industrial Ave/Mountain View Dr. to Blair Park

5) Q&A

Roderic Hood asked why beltlines work in other states successfully but not in Vermont. Michele responded that the CIRC has attracted expensive lawsuits and there has been difficulty in acquiring federal permits. Funding is very tight and the state will have difficulty maintaining what is already built. While a lot of hopes were pinned on the CIRC and people were impacted, the Administration realized that the pathway forward was going to be insurmountable and if we want to sustain the growth we need, we have to move down a pathway that is achievable. Even if the CIRC was built, many of these projects, like the Exit 12 reconfiguration, would be still be necessary.

The meeting was adjourned, to visit project stations, at 8:25PM.

PRESENT

Members of the Public: John FitzGerald (Essex), Eleanora Hood (Williston), Roderic Hood (Williston), Tom Joslin (Jericho), John Lajza (Essex Junction CCRPC Alternate)

CIRC Task Force Members/Staff Present: Ken Belliveau (Town of Williston), Meredith Birkett (CCTA); Bryan Osborne (Town of Colchester), Ken Robie (VTrans)

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

WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED

From: Marcel Beaudin

Sent: Friday, February 15, 2013 2:40 PM

To: diane@thirdsectorassociates.com

Subject: Re: CIRC Alternatives Task Force Update - Issue #2

Dianne, Not that most of the solutions that the CIRC Task Force do not have merit, they should be done even if the original Circ was built. These Alternatives will not begin to solve the problem that the original Circ would have provided. VTrans over the years has a great track record for solving problems but we let the nitpickers and lawyers in and millions dollars later we still will not have a viable solution. Marcel

From: John C. Fitz Gerald

Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2013 11:34 AM

To: diane@thirdsectorassociates.com

Subject: South Brownell Road

At a previous Circ Alt meeting, I asked (that) S. Brownell Rd. be included in the study, if for no other reason than as a better 12A interchange. It is less densely populated then its parallel section of VT 116 and could achieve the same industrial access to South Burlington and Williston. The handout map at the last meeting did not include South Brownell Road in the area of study. Fly it and see! Look at that and 6 lanes from Exit 13 thru Exit 16 while completing Exits 13 and 15. I am tortured by the number of times Exit 14 has been rebuilt, I 189 road to nowhere, and philanthropic thought in bridge replacement design near Exit 11 on US 2. Alas!

I'm sorry I can't be with you Thursday evening. Please enter this note to the record.

John C. Fitz Gerald, Essex, VT 05452-2909