1.0 EXIT 12 SCOPING PROJECT – PURPOSE & NEED STATEMENT

The definition of Purpose and Need of a project is essential for establishing a basis for the development and screening of alternatives and eventual selection of a preferred alternative.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Exit 12 Project is to develop transportation system improvements that enhance safety for all users; reduce traffic congestion and facilitate mobility for people and goods; improve bicycle and pedestrian network connectivity; and accommodate economic growth in the Exit 12 interchange area and VT 2A corridor (in the vicinity of the exit).

NEEDS

Improve safety for all users in the project area.

- *There is a need to address the High Crash Locations in the project area.* Based on the most recent VTrans High Crash Location (HCL) report, there are two identified HCL segments within the project area located along VT 2A at Marshall Avenue and adjacent to the I-89 southbound ramps. Also, analysis of forecasted traffic demand shows extensive off-ramp queuing leading to standing queues spilling back into the mainline of I-89, creating significant safety concerns.

- *There is a need to provide for safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian travel through the interchange area.* The missing VT 2A bicycle/pedestrian link between the State Police Barracks and Hurricane Lane creates significant safety concerns as pedestrians and bicyclists are currently using the unmaintained area behind the overpass bridge piers, and cross the interchange ramps at unmarked and unsignalized crossings. Experienced bicyclists that choose to travel on VT 2A, through the interchange area, are sharing the road with high volumes of cars and trucks due to the lack of adequate shoulders or designated lanes.

Reduce traffic congestion and enhance mobility for all users in the project area.

- *There is a need for roadway improvements to reduce congestion and improve efficiency of the highway system in the project area.* Currently, traffic at the intersections of VT 2A with the Exit 12 ramps and Marshall Ave is experiencing long delays, especially during the evening peak hour of travel. In addition, long vehicle queues are formed during peak hours of travel at certain intersection approaches that negatively impact traffic flows on VT 2A and Marshall Ave. Based on projected population and employment growth for the area (including the adjacent Williston Growth Center), traffic congestion is expected to worsen considerably by 2035.

- *There is a need to develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities that would connect the existing shared use paths and sidewalks north of Exit 12 with destinations south of the interchange.* Despite the fairly robust sidewalk and shared use path networks north of the State Police Barracks, there are currently no formal facilities through the interchange area to connect bicyclists and pedestrians to the various destinations located along Hurricane Lane (including hotels and offices) and the future Park & Ride location southwest of the interchange. Also, the existing I-89 overpass piers and adjacent Jersey barriers currently limit the available width of the VT 2A shoulders to approximately 1 foot through the interchange area which is not sufficient for safe on-road bicycle travel.

Accommodate Economic Growth in the project area

- *There is a need to provide the necessary infrastructure to support Williston's plan for dense mixed-use development in the Designated Growth Center and other high density parcels in the project area.* The Town of Williston was granted Growth Center status for the Taft's Corners area in 2007 and has made a concerted effort to focus the majority of future residential and commercial development in this area. Further, the Williston Comprehensive Plan calls for design conscious, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development and redevelopment patterns for the Growth Center as well as potential growth in the Ramsey and former Solomon parcels south of the interchange with reasonable transportation facilities to accommodate future mobility needs.