

**Williston-Essex Network Transportation Study (WENTS)**  
**Public Meeting #1 (Hosted by the Williston Planning Commission)**  
<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/corridors/williston-essex-network-transportation-study/>

**DATE:** Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
**TIME:** 7:30 – 9:00 PM  
**PLACE:** Williston Town Hall, 7900 Williston Road  
**PRESENT:** Please see page 6

**1) Welcome & Introductions**

The meeting of the Williston Planning Commission was called to order at 7:30PM by the Chair, Jake Mathon. Ken Belliveau, Williston Planning Director, explained that the Planning Commission is hosting the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) tonight. CCRPC and its consultant, Resource Systems Group, will be presenting information and taking public input about the Williston-Essex Network Transportation Study (WENTS). This effort is part of the CIRC Alternatives Task Force in which the Town has been a participant.

**2) History of the Study**

Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC thanked the Planning Commission for hosting tonight's meeting. She introduced members of the WENTS Steering Committee and the CIRC Alternatives Task Force in attendance, as well as CCRPC staff and consultants. She encouraged participants to check the Task Force's website at: <http://www.circtaskforce.org/>

Michele explained that WENTS is the result of Governor Shumlin's announcement that the Circumferential Highway (CIRC) - as originally conceived - would not be built. The Governor asked CCRPC to convene a Task Force of CIRC-area towns, VTrans, and other stakeholders to develop an integrated, coordinated plan for addressing congestion and safety in the corridor. The Task Force began meeting last summer to create evaluation criteria and prioritize both planning and implementation projects in the CIRC planning area. The resulting implementation projects have been programmed and were included in the State's Capital Plan. These include: Transportation Demand Management projects, Exit 16 improvements, Crescent Connector, and the Essex 2A/289 interchange. The resulting planning projects are underway, including WENTS. The outcomes of WENTS will help identify projects that will move into detailed scoping and finally to the Capital Program. This fall, the Task Force will look at FY 14 projects for consideration by the Legislature in January. The outcomes of WENTS will likely be under consideration the following year for the FY 15 Capital Program.

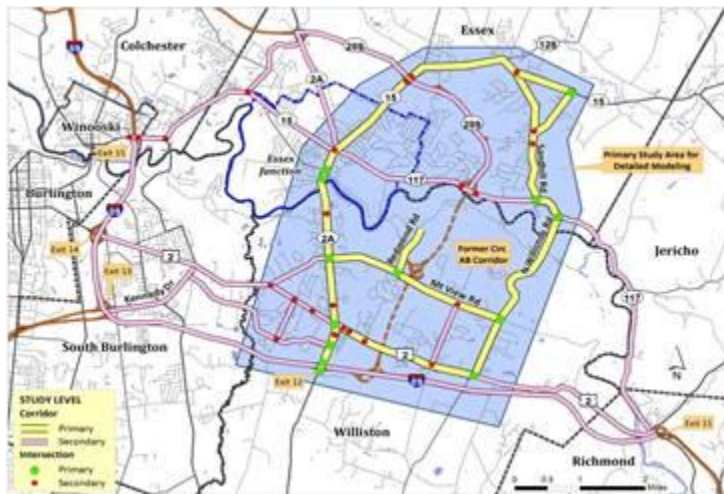
## **2) Presentation of Future Corridor Conditions, Vision & Goals, Issues & Potential Strategies**

Bob Chamberlin of RSG made a presentation about the project. He discussed the purpose of the meeting, study need and purpose, study area, scope of work, and existing land use. His presentation focused on land use and existing transportation conditions. He is interested in people's concerns in the study area and ideas to improve travel and safety.

### ***A. Study Need & Purpose***

The Study will be an integrated transportation planning process to address multimodal mobility and safety issues within the former CIRC EIS area. The result will be 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 will incorporate the Complete Streets bill (Act 34) that mandates transportation projects consider the needs of all users. The study will follow the State's "Corridor Management" planning process (<http://www.aot.state.vt.us/planning/vtcorridor.htm>).

### ***B. Study Area***



### ***C. Scope of Work***

In Phase 1, which is complete, two major network strategies were evaluated. Phases 2-5 will follow the typical Corridor Management Plan process. CCRPC and the consultant team will work with the Study's Steering Committee to develop a series of recommended strategies. Some of these strategies will move forward to more detailed analysis in the scoping process.

The WENTS Steering Committee took a slight departure from the normal Corridor Management Plan process by undertaking Phase 1. The CIRC Task Force asked that two strategies be studied at the beginning of WENTS - essentially the CIRC A alignment (Major Network Strategy #1) and a strategy similar to the CIRC B alignment to include a bridge across the Winooski River, accessed by Redmond Road to Mountain View Road (Major Network Strategy #2). These strategies were analyzed (using existing CIRC Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) data) for travel implications, environmental impacts, and cost. The legislative bodies in Williston and Essex voted to move Major Network Strategy #2 forward. This strategy will be studied along with other strategies that are developed; it will not necessarily be a recommendation of the final study.

#### ***D. Future Land Use***

Bob and the CCRPC staff met with the three municipal planners to determine projects in permitting or expected to be in permitting in the near future. Williston is planning grid streets and related developments in Taft Corners, a proposed VTrans Park & Ride near Exit 12, the Finney Crossing residential development, and plans for 70 percent of future residential growth to be located in the growth center area. Essex is working on development associated with the Interstate 289 ramp areas, Susie Wilson Road, Essex Center/Lang Farms, and the residential development at the terminus of Winooski River. Essex Junction is looking at possible IBM expansion to add 800-1,000 new employees.

#### ***E. Roadway Systems, Traffic Volumes, Safety, & Access Management***

Bob described the functional class of various roads, traffic volumes, and how they function in the study area. He showed maps comparing traffic volumes throughout the corridor and discussed the Level of Service (LOS) currently and what is expected in the future. He explained that in the last few years, traffic volumes have stayed flat or decreased, likely due to economic factors and high gasoline prices. The study area has five intersections that are High Crash Locations (HCLs) as well as road segments that are HCLs. He suggested that there are opportunities for the municipalities to improve access management as land use proposals are reviewed by planning commissions.

#### ***F. Transit***

CCTA has a number of routes that serve the area now and there will be some changes to transit frequency in the short term.

#### ***G. Bicycle Facilities***

Bob showed a map of existing and proposed bicycle facilities.

### **3) Comments & Questions**

Ken Belliveau (Williston Planning Director): Is there traffic count data for the section of Mountain View Road adjacent to N. Williston Road? If not, can we get data? Mark Smith: There is no data because it's a local road. Michele Boomhower: We can collect data if it's needed. Ken: We know that intersection is a problem. The Planning Commission is concerned about the queuing of traffic at the PM peak hour.

Meghan Cope (Planning Commission): Can you define a primary and secondary intersection? Bob: We developed these definitions for WENTS. A primary intersection is one that has been identified as most problematic and will be more intensely analyzed. A secondary intersection won't be analyzed as closely. For instance, Five Corners has been studied intensely already; we will not repeat that work.

Meghan Cope: Can your transportation model account for transit scheduling changes? Bob: Yes. If investments in alternative modes result in reduced vehicle demand, it will be accounted for in the model.

Charlie Dykes: What is the timeframe of your change in traffic volumes in last 20 years? Bob: 1994. Charlie: It doesn't feel like traffic is going down. I really wonder about the data. Bob: In the last few years, traffic volumes nationwide have stayed flat or decreased, likely due to economic factors and high gasoline prices.

Jake Mathon (Planning Commission): In the evenings, Mountain View Road has queues, which brings out the necessity of looking at PM peak as well as overall traffic levels. Bob: Our plan is to calibrate the traffic model to PM peak traffic. The rationale is that if we can improve travel at the PM peak hour, we are likely improving traffic at other times of day too.

Meghan Cope: The Planning Commission has been concerned about pass through traffic. We are very aware that Route 2 and N. Williston Road are a piece of a much longer commute. Can you account for that in these analyses? Bob: There are clear commuting patterns through the study area. We are accounting for this in the transportation model which is part of the regional model. We have data about regional as well as local traffic. What is challenging is the full mix of traffic – local as well as out of the area to businesses like IBM. That makes it challenging to satisfy all the travelers. Creating density in the town center gives people the option to take short trips without cars.

Shannon Hiltner (Planning Commission): Do we have estimated numbers for strategies 1 and 2 combined? Bob: The numbers are from the CIRC EIS and that information would be in the EIS. We didn't look at those together. Frankly, neither strategy is very effective on its own because it doesn't solve the traffic problems and there are environmental issues.

Michael Alvanos (Planning Commission): If we move forward with strategies 1 and 2, would it help increase our density? Does the CIRC provide Williston the ability to grow the way it wants to grow?

Bob: This study will not look at CIRC A and B together. We looked at them separately and the municipalities decided to consider CIRC B as one strategy. Michele: The CIRC will not be built as originally conceived. A new I-89 interchange and road connecting to Mountain View will not be considered in this study or in any future analysis.

Iris Banks: Your bike map shows a major bike path. What is it? Bob: It is the designated Cross Vermont Trail. Some segments exist and some are planned. We will look at bike improvements as part of this study. Essex and Williston both have bike Master Plans that will be incorporated in the final recommendations. We are looking at biking as a serious mode. There is a bright future for bike transportation and we know that the networks aren't complete. Ken Belliveau: I've never seen the proposed bike facility from Mountain View north across river into Essex. Bob: I thought it was in your Bike Plan. We'll follow up.

Peter Duval: I've seen the STIP over many years and I'm amazed that people continue to think of the CIRC highway as a viable roadway. It's been for decades now way beyond the ability of the State to afford. I'm wondering how we can change the thinking that leads to the conclusion that the CIRC would solve all the problems. I see an assumption that PM peak congestion is bad. I'd like to know why that assumption is inserted into these discussions. Congestion is good – it's a mark of bigger, it's an indicator that a facility is being used well. The idea that we need to plan for LOS is so deterministic. Can you do an alternative analysis using an alternative methodology that arrives at a different way of thinking about transportation? Bob: I think the land use solution is the best long range solution to congestion. Congestion is bad in other ways – because High Crash Locations are found in very congested areas. Some of what we need to do is address the most hazardous conditions and some will require reducing congestion – those are too serious to ignore.

John FitzGerald: The CIRC highway was supposed to provide a fast movement around the area that you are trying to develop upward. One of the bottlenecks that causes that, is that planning commissions for

each little town ... I was on the Essex Junction planning commission and other boards ... wherever two roads cross there is an increase in traffic. We know that all our traffic is between Exits 16 and 13. We've rebuilt Exit 14 at least three times. We can add a lane between any of them to address peak hour traffic more quickly. We need to do that as a county. We have to think about the county and about what's happening in Hinesburg, Essex, Burlington. On all the committees Burlington has a weighted vote. Once we get this as a community as a county and treat it like a county then we could build it like a county. Housing could be at the interchanges so the buses could pick people up. There's a lot happening and a lot more going to happen. We have to start thinking like a county. South Brownell Road is not on your map. As soon as we mention South Brownell, someone will buy up the property and develop there. We would have a chance to get away from Route 116 and 2A if we looked at 116 where it connects with South Brownell and where it comes into the new Technology Park in South Burlington. Build density in those areas.

Iris Banks: Densitizing? What would that look like and does it change the nature of a place by making it more urban? Imagine a place where you could work and live and not use your car. What are the ramifications of that change? Response: Ken Belliveau talked about Williston's plans for the growth center and higher density there.

Michael Alvanos: Do you think that AB will eventually help the town's larger growth plan? Bob: It's highly debated. During the CIRC process there were strong opinions on all sides. There tends to be development proximate to the interchanges and that causes congestion issues. However, there is value to improving access to IBM who is a huge economic benefit to the state. It would be great if we can find a way to improve mobility to major employers and also to facilitate good land use planning and good transportation improvements. Michael Alvanos: We want to grow the way we want to grow and also support regional development. Bob: We are exploring a Smart Corridor Development with IBM on Route 2A. It involves adding detectors to roadways to optimize flows during peak periods.

Meghan Cope: Can time be considered more creatively in the analysis? We always talk about PM peak. What are some things that could be done to stagger work hours and provide incentives for off-hour trips? There must be other solutions to use our existing infrastructure more efficiently. Bob: That's Travel Demand Management (TDM) programming, which is underway in the County. IBM is on our steering committee and their shifts are already off peak.

Luke Baynes (Williston Observer): Now that you know what areas you will study, what kind of things will you be doing in Phase 2 to get this data to another level of specificity? Bob: Major Network Strategy 2 is just one of three possible packages of projects to achieve our goals. There will be a process to evaluate and compare strategies as we move forward.

Guy Morin: People who cross the Winooski River will end up where? Bob: At Route 2A and Mountain View Road. That will be a congestion point.

Charlie Dykes: We could do better with the design of intersections. The more you can flow them without stopping and idling would be great. Bob: It's hard to innovate in traffic. We design to the lowest common denominator for safety. The Double Crossover Diamond in Colchester is innovative and it takes guts to move that forward. A "counterflow" intersection, used in South America, is an innovation that would be difficult to implement here.

Jeff Nick: I speak from the business community's standpoint. Congestion is very frustrating for major employers and we hear they are unable to find suitable land accessible to the Interstate. We could do a lot of little things to improve traffic flows and I think taking some bold steps is in order here. We study things to death. Make bold, quick moves.

Peter Duval: Thinking about the future. The State has recognized the climate crisis. I haven't heard anything mentioned about that or about the long term vehicle miles traveled. We should see a drop off in traffic with real time rideshare. What's your plan for that? Bob: Greenhouse gas emission will be included in our traffic model. Trends include gas prices going up and that affects travel. There are new technologies, too. Electric vehicles will become more prevalent which might reduce the cost of travel. We will look at both the short term (not much traffic growth) and long term (some traffic growth) and evaluate the strategies.

John FitzGerald: The CIRC highway is a compromise. I told Marty Myers years ago that if you build the bridges someone will find a way to connect them. If the planning commissions and the RPC exert their power we'll have less speeches from government that the CIRC is dead.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15PM.

## Participants

Last	First	Affiliation	Town
Alvanos	Mike	Williston Planning Commission	Williston
Banks	Iris		Essex Junction
Baynes	Luke	Williston Observer	Williston
Bourgeois	Tim		Williston
Cope	Meghan	Williston Planning Commission	Williston
Duval	Peter		Underhill
Dykes	Charlie		Williston
FitzGerald	John		Essex
Hiltner	Shannon	Williston Planning Commission	Williston
Mathon	Jake	Williston Planning Commission	Williston
Michoud	Jay		Williston
Morin	Guy		Essex Junction
Skiff	Ruth		Williston
Waite-Simpson	Linda		Essex Junction

**Williston Planning Department Staff Present:** Ken Belliveau, Matt Boulanger

**CCRPC Staff Present:** Michele Boomhower, Eleni Churchill

**WENTS Steering Committee/CIRC Task Force Members Present:** Meredith Birkett (CCTA), Sandra Levine (CLF), Kate McCarthy (VNRC), Jeff Nick (Business Community), Jason VanDriesche (Local Motion)

**Consultants:** Bob Chamberlin and Mark Smith, Resource Systems Group (RSG), Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates

## Written Public Comments Received

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 6:53 AM

**To:** Eleni Churchill

**Subject:** WENTS Comments

Ms. Churchill,

I will be unable to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> WENTS public meeting. Please accept my following comments in lieu of my attendance and see that they are disseminated to the members of the Task Force.

I have reviewed the "Draft - Phase 1 Report" of the Williston-Essex Network Transportation Study and watched several of the most recent CIRC Alternatives Task Force meetings online. Yet nowhere amongst these primary documents is there any acknowledgement by the Task Force members that the transportation problems we face are not the result of a lack of new roads and bridges. Where is the admission that they result from poor public policy and lack of basic pedestrian infrastructure, the absence of which incentivize able-bodied people to utilize personal automobiles instead of relying on their own two feet? If the decision makers don't know what's wrong how will they ever be in a position offer appropriate plans to fix it? The majority of our planners and decision makers continue to beat their heads against a wall that has been shown time and time again as not being effective, useful or even remotely sustainable. Why do we continue to plan as though our love affair with the privately-owned automobile will go on forever? We never needed the Circumferential Highway. What we do need is to get people out of their cars.

Ask anyone who's ever lived in a large metropolitan area in this country and they will tell you that the WENTS-area's traffic "problems" are rather inconsequential by comparison. I point this out to lend some relativity to this discussion. Relatively speaking, we in northern Vermont bathe in the luxury of not having so much a transportation "problem" as a great opportunity to institute the kinds of changes now that will have far reaching impacts on our ability to move around in the midst of our looming low-energy future. Luckily, the WENTS-area as it currently stands is not characterized by wall-to-wall skyscrapers, ugly industrial and commercial parks nor is it covered in concrete and pavement for as far as the eye can see. At least "not yet." This provides us with a unique ability to apply innovative and proven techniques to mitigate congestion. But as we stand on the brink of this precipice, some among would prefer we teeter over the edge and apply outdated practices and principles that do little to reduce congestion or effectively meet the defined objective of the WENTS study, namely, "...to determine a set of multimodal transportation improvements, and land use policies that will improve safety and mobility in the study area...."

The time has come to throw-out our autocentric playbook and instead implement a more sustainable and community centered approach. The knee-jerk response of "new roads and new bridges" in reaction to congestion is deeply flawed. Able-bodied people drive their cars because there is little visible incentive to do otherwise. If given the option, most people will take what they view as the easiest path. If society doesn't place limits on people's ability to drive, then even if we build roads until we are blue in the face, we will only find more cars than we had planned on plying their way on the additional lanes. Moreover, I really feel that our planners and decision makers must come to terms with the fact that "an abundant supply of cheap fossil fuels" is an outdated notion. Resources like these are by definition a finite supply. In other words, we won't have them forever.

In fact, just over a year and a half ago the [International Energy Agency](#) declared that peak oil, at least as it pertains to conventional crude oil production, [occurred in 2006](#). "Peak oil is..." to borrow the [Wikipedia](#) definition, "...the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached, after which the rate of production enters terminal decline." Amazingly, this stunning news has done nothing to curtail our excesses. In fact, global oil consumption has now reached an [estimated 88.1 million barrels a day](#), the daily



equivalent of over [3 billion gallons](#). Events like 2010's [Deepwater Horizon/Gulf Oil Spill](#) and controversial extraction methods like [tar sands refining](#), [mountain top removal](#) and [hydraulic fracturing](#) are but a few high profile examples of what happens when a certain desperation ethic enters into the mining of fossil fuels. What is it going to take for things to change?

*"We're at a crucial point in history. We cannot have fast cars, computers the size of credit cards, and modern conveniences, while simultaneously having clean air, abundant rainforests, fresh drinking water, and a stable climate. This generation can have one or the other, but not both. Humanity must make a choice. Both have an opportunity cost. Gadgetry or nature? Pick the wrong one and the next generation may have neither." Mark Boyle, [The Moneyless Man](#)*

Given the dire state we find ourselves in, I have little patience for new roads or the people who support them, particularly road projects whose primary purpose is to facilitate people to hop in their cars to engage in the type of short trips that result in much of the congestion that planners and voters alike view as "the problem." Looking in from the outside, it appears that the Task Force's process almost ensures that the car comes first and everything else follows. This approach will fail in the long term. Instead, we need to elevate human powered transport and effective & clean mass transit to the level currently occupied by the private automobile while we denigrate it to the waste bin of history.

Professional qualifications aside, the following questions have not apparently been asked of the Task Force members (in relation to able-bodied members):

- How many task force members have given up their private automobiles?
- How many Task Force members regularly commute to work by bicycle?
- How many Task Force members regularly walk to work?
- How many Task Force members rely solely on mass transit to get to work?
- How many Task Force members regularly use any of these low-impact means to get to and from meetings, to and from shops and stores, to and from schools and churches?
- How many Task Force members use one of these forms of transportation to get to the CIRC meetings?
- How many Task Force members have any intention of ever honestly taking advantage of any of the above?

Assuming the worst, how can we expect people who don't have any personal experience in transportation alternatives to plan our region's transportation alternatives? I would argue that we cannot. The composition of the Task Force is heavily weighted in favor of the status quo. A token environmentalist here or alternative transportation advocate there isn't enough to sway the obvious intentions of this group. I urge the Task Force to far more heavily weight the opinions of the environmentalists & alternative transportation advocates or add additional members who are qualified to think outside of the autocentric box and thus able to offer real and meaningful alternatives to the way we currently move goods and people around in this region. As Boston's Mayor Menino recently admitted, "...the car is no longer king."

In conjunction with this, I also urge the Task Force members to think long and hard about what truly is in the best long-term interests of their communities. Ultimately, I urge the group to oppose new roads and bridges and instead favor a revolution in our local transportation system.

Respectfully,  
Kai  
Kai Mikkel Førlie  
Burlington