

Williston-Essex Transportation Network Study Steering Committee Meeting #5

DATE: Thursday, October 25, 2012
TIME: 9:00 – 11:00 AM
PLACE: CCRPC Offices, 110 West Canal Street, Winooski
PRESENT:

Amy Bell, VTrans	Dennis Lutz, Town of Essex
Ken Belliveau, Town of Williston (9:35)	Kate McCarthy, VT Natural Resources Council
Michele Boomhower, CCRPC	Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates
Bob Chamberlin, RSG	Jeff Nick, JL Davis Realty (1:20)
Jason Charest, CCRPC	Robin Pierce, Village of Essex Junction
Eleni Churchill, CCRPC	Ken Robie, VTrans
Dawn Francis, GBIC/LCCC	Sai Sarepalli, CCRPC
Bruce Hoar, Town of Williston	Mark Smith, RSG
Sandy Levine, Conservation Law Foundation	Jason VanDriesche, Local Motion
David Libby, IBM	Brian Wright, Chittenden Solid Waste District

1) Welcome

Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda.

2) Status of the WENTS Project

Bob Chamberlin of RSG reviewed the project status, explaining that we are now in Phase 3, the development and evaluation of strategies. Finalizing the goals and objectives will complete Phase 2. Phases 4 and 5 will develop the WENTS Implementation and Transportation Management Plans, respectively.

3) Review and Finalize Network-wide Goals & Objectives

Eleni received numerous comments from committee members on the original Goals & Objectives draft and she incorporated the comments (to the degree possible) in a revised document sent to the committee prior to this meeting. She asked for comments on the revised document but she also stated that she would like to finalize the WENTS Goals and Objectives today.

Dawn Francis of GBIC/LCCC asked that “facilitating economic development” be added to the “Regional Mobility” goal. Jeff Nick, representing the business community, agreed. Sandy Levine of CLF noted that economic development is included under the “Economic Vitality” goal. Jason Van Driesche of Local Motion suggested that the goal be written as follows (*italic type added*): “REGIONAL MOBILITY. Create a safe, clean and efficient transportation network that minimizes congestion, improves safety, enhances intermodal connections and expands travel options to *and from employment and commercial destinations* and within selected corridors.”

Jeff Nick feels that the predominant transportation mode, single occupancy vehicles (SOV) is not addressed in the Goals & Objectives. He feels that improving road capacity and reducing congestion is the most crucial aspect of this study. Jason V. agreed that a substantial portion of travel will be in single occupancy vehicles for the near future. However, fairly small mode changes during peak hours can significantly reduce congestion. Others felt that SOV were overemphasized in the document. Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC suggested that the premise of the existing transportation system is travel by car and truck. The study acknowledges that most people will continue to travel by car but that we must include other modes too.

Dawn is concerned that the “Sustainability” goal, Objective “e” doesn’t acknowledge that small roadway links can help to reducing congestion. She wants assurances that the overarching goal of the study doesn’t preclude new links. Jason V. also welcomes new linkages for bicyclists; key connections can disperse traffic, moderate speed, and increase traffic flow.

Michele noted that CCRPC and VTrans policy is to prioritize maintenance of the existing transportation system before making new investments. Jeff is concerned about the language in the study documents could be used during the permitting process of projects/developments to limit road improvements. David Libby of IBM feels that we’ve been trying too hard to accommodate conflicting modes; when major arteries are shrunk down to accommodate bike lanes, greater congestion results.

Michele suggested adding a preamble to the Goals & Objectives stating that the major problem in the area is roadway congestion and the need to address key areas like mobility, access, etc. Solutions may include additional links in the system. Jeff was supportive of this addition. Jason suggested saying “timely, safe access” rather than congestion (an inherent vehicle bias). Dennis Lutz of Essex is concerned about the definitions of mobility and access in transportation lingo while at the same time watering down the statement too much.

Robin Pierce of Essex Junction believes that capacity of roads may be adequate, but that the way people use them is inefficient. He suggested that an educational component be added to the study.

The Sustainability Goal, Objective (e) was rewritten to state (italic type added): **Existing roadway system.** Maximize sustainability of the existing transportation network and *invest in critical connections and linkages where necessary to improve mobility* before investing in *major* new state or local roads.

Kate noted that the language used to talk about the road system is “car” language. She asked the group to be conscious of this when crafting the preamble and challenged the group to see this as an opportunity, especially for those who are willing to try alternative modes. Jason V. suggested that a common theme is that we don’t want solutions that benefit one part of the system at the detriment of another.

Sandy asked about the language that the CIRC is “on hold” rather than “cancelled.” Ken Robie

of VTrans explained that the CIRC remains a federal project, therefore “on hold.” The group agreed to change the language to include a reference that *Circ Highway, as originally conceived, would not be built.*

Eleni agreed to write the preamble, update the Goals & Objectives and send the revised document to the Steering Committee.

4) Discussion of Revised Strategy Packages

Bob thanked committee members for their comments. He began by discussing the “Core Improvements” that will be undertaken regardless of which strategy package is ultimately chosen.

Core Improvements in the US 2/VT 2A/VT 15 Corridors

a) Smart Corridor Signal Operations

b) Transit

- Add a mid-day trip on the Williston Route weekdays (Burlington-to-Williston)
- Implement a weekday peak hour Jeffersonville-Burlington commuter route (VT15 and 289)

c) Land Use/Travel Demand Management

- Trip Reduction Ordinances
- Investigate VT 2A Transportation Management Association (TMA)

d) Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements

- Bicycle/pedestrian connections from adjacent neighborhoods to existing CCTA routes

e) Williston Grid Streets

- Subject to Williston Street design guidelines (which are inclusive of the “complete streets” ideas)

The group offered small adjustments to the map and Bob showed a typical cross-section of a “complete” street. Jason V. noted the current recommendation for bike path width is 5 feet; 4 feet is the minimum. Bob showed a map of existing and possible pedestrian facilities, with the latter needing further review through a scoping study. The Industrial Avenue scoping study is nearing completion and the study’s recommendations will be included in WENTS.

Bob reviewed the strategy packages in order.

STRATEGY PACKAGE 1 (SP1): Bridge over the Winooski River

This strategy constructs a bridge across the Winooski River with ancillary improvements on VT 2A, Mountain View and Redmond roads. Michele noted that the Williston and Essex Selectboards decided, early in the process, to include analyses of the bridge strategy. Bob summarized the comments received for this strategy:

- Elements of SP1 (intersection, grid streets and Exit 12 improvements) should be included in any package that is ultimately developed—Town of Williston and IBM
- “LOW PRIORITY. It is our assessment that this strategy package is not needed as a stand-alone item. The bridge should be incorporated into SP3 (grid streets) and the improvements to Route 2A should be incorporated into SP4 (VT2A upgrades).” Local Motion

- “CCTA does not envision any of our existing transit services utilizing the Redmond Road Connector...”
- “Fix it first: Strategies that utilize the existing infrastructure and existing alignments...are going to be the most cost effective. SP1, with the new bridge, is inconsistent with this goal.” VNRC/CLF

STRATEGY PACKAGE 2 (SP2): Study Area Intersection Improvements

Comments from Steering Committee on Strategy Package 2:

- “(Many elements of SP2) are also part of SP1. Other intersections should be modeled to see what improvements...should be included.” Town of Williston
- “LOW PRIORITY. We have deep reservations about this package, as the benefits it provides accrue almost exclusively to car traffic to the detriment of all other modes.” Local Motion
- “...CCTA supports targeted improvements that will make increased densities along the existing transit corridors possible in the future.”
- “Many of these intersections are key to improving traffic in the corridor and should be addressed in any strategy package that is advanced.” IBM
- Combine elements of SP2 (the VT2A intersection improvements) with SP4 to create a Hybrid Package. CSWD
- Town of Essex: No roundabout for the Towers Road intersection—this area is historic and falls under a special design control district and also there is insufficient room to accommodate a roundabout at this location. Address issues at the Mountain View/ North Williston Road intersection.

Jason V. noted that this strategy would transform 2A into a very different type of road that emphasizes moving cars quickly to the detriment of those living and working in the corridor. Dave Libby (IBM) would not want to make this a high speed roadway if Innovation Avenue is built.

STRATEGY PACKAGE 3 (SP3): Grid Street Network

Williston is already undertaking the grid street design for Zephyr Road and at streets at Taft Corners. “Innovation Avenue,” between US2 and Mountain View Road is in the CIRC right-of-way (ROW). IBM sees this as a major commuter corridor. Bob recommends an arterial with no adjacent development. Jason V. suggested that an off-road bike path would make more sense than an on-road bike lane. Connections to the two existing neighborhoods were discussed. In general, the group was concerned that connecting to those neighborhoods could put the project in jeopardy, and likely wouldn’t provide a significant traffic benefit. A scoping study for Innovation Avenue would have to be undertaken and that’s the opportunity to study the corridor in-depth. Sandy and Kate McCarthy of VNRC are concerned and they don’t want to see the Circ Highway being built piecemeal. Ken Robie of VTrans cautioned the group that modeling results should be able to demonstrate the benefits of Innovation Avenue independent of other improvements due to major obstacles with permits (if this strategy moves forward) as this new roadway link is using Circ Highway’s ROW.

Michele asked that we review the grid streets to decide which ones to carry forward. The group decided the following:

- Remove Fay Lane
- Include River Cove Road and improvements associated with James Brown Drive signalization
- Shirley Road is private, which is a potential negative for neighborhoods in that area. This grid street option should not be evaluated (Ken Belliveau)
- Include Innovation Avenue
- Include Taft Corners grid streets as depicted in the presentation
- Remove 2A east side connections

Comments from Steering Committee on Strategy Package 3:

- Town of Williston: Grid Streets #1, 2 & 3 create parallel routes to VT 2A which has potential to take traffic off the arterial with the undesirable consequence of putting traffic through residential neighborhoods. Also, some of these connections are private roads complicating the funding.
- “HIGH PRIORITY. We strongly support this package in its entirety.” Local Motion
- “CCTA feels that SP3 offers many benefits.” Add pedestrian connections from local roads to existing transit corridors (Industrial Avenue from US2 to VT2A; Harvest Lane from US2 to Marshall).
- “Innovation Ave and improvements to the configuration at Exit 12 would be key elements to improving access to the interstate.” IBM
- “I do not see value in a Fay lane connection to Redmond Road or to the Williston Woods connector to Fay lane...these are sleepy rural and residential roads, and the property that they give access to is fraught with wetlands (see Circ EIS).” CSWD

STRATEGY PACKAGE 4 (SP4): Vermont 2A Main Line Improvements

Comments from Steering Committee on Strategy Package 4:

- Town of Williston supports most elements of SP4. Some elements have already advanced under the CIRC Alternatives Phase 1 Implementation.
- “MEDIUM PRIORITY. We support improvements to Route 2A that improve safety and promote steady, predictable flow of traffic, so long as improvements do not result in a cross-section that exceeds three lanes...outside of Taft Corners.” Local Motion
- “CCTA supports targeted roadway and intersection improvements that will allow for increased development to the extent that current conditions might hamper it...”
- IBM supports improvements to VT2A at Industrial/Mountain View, US2, and Marshall Avenue.
- CSWD supports combining SP4 with elements of SP2 to make a hybrid package.
- VTrans: SP4 is very similar to an alternative studied under the Circ EIS.

STRATEGY PACKAGE 5 (SP5): North Williston Road Improvements

Comments from Steering Committee on Strategy Package 5:

- Williston: The Town is not interested in making North Williston Road an arterial (improve the alignment only).
- Acknowledge congestion at multiple intersections along North Williston Road: US2, Mountain View, VT 117.

Bob summarized the common themes and perspectives as: relatively broad support for new

interchange configuration for Exit 12 and capacity improvements at VT2A/Mountain View/Industrial Avenue. Comments from Steering Committee:

- CCTA-potential positive impact on land use density in service area (pedestrian access is very important to CCTA at this intersection)
- IBM-"...improving this interchange clearly meets the goals of the study and should be a primary focus area....(Improving the VT2A/Mountain View) intersection should be addressed in any strategy package..."
- CSWD-combine with other elements of SP2 (spot improvements) and SP4 (VT2A)
- Local Motion-Medium Priority(?)—consider a roundabout at VT2A/Mountain View

Bob recommended the following hybrid strategy packages for modeling:

- Future "No Build" with Core Improvements
- Hybrid Strategy Package 1: Combination of Strategy Package 1 and Elements of Strategy Package 2
- Hybrid Strategy Package 2: Combination of Strategy Package 3 (Grid Streets) with Elements of Strategy Package 2
- Strategy Package 4: VT 2A Upgrades

Next steps include further refinement and modeling of the hybrid strategy packages. Details about how the packages perform will be presented at the November meeting.

Dawn thinks it would be wise for CCTA to consider a future transit hub in Williston. Meredith Birkett of CCTA responded that CCTA does not currently have transfers in Williston, nor do they expect to in the future. Michele asked that CCTA take the lead if they are interested in considering a transit hub in the study corridor. Ken Belliveau of Williston sees opportunities for a park and ride lot by working with Vermont Tech.

There was discussion about whether or not the modeling can demonstrate which strategies are working best and are likely to be cost effective. In general, Bob felt that he could parse this information from the data and report the minimum improvements needed to reduce congestion. RSG will be modeling the hybrid strategies and it's likely there will be a new hybrid at the end of the analysis. Eleni indicated that at the end of the study process the strategies included in the Implementation Plan will be a hybrid package derived from the three packages selected today for modeling. Dave asked if we'd have an analysis of environmental, historic, etc. issues that we've seen in past studies. Eleni responded that information would be available during a scoping study, but not at this level of analysis.

5. Next Steps

Quantitative Evaluation of Three Hybrid Strategy Packages

- Model Process: Model each hybrid package as specified, then iterate after observing system performance (i.e., address specific bottlenecks or remove capacity as possible)
- Steering Committee Meeting (Nov 28)

Development of Network Implementation Plan

- Development of the preferred strategy package which will include a comprehensive list of multimodal recommendations that support the Goals and Objectives
- Steering Committee Meeting (January 2013)
- Two Selectboard Presentations (January 2013)
- Public Meeting #2 at Williston Planning Commission (February 5, 2013)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20AM.

The next meeting is November 28, 2012, 1-3PM, CCRPC

PROJECT MEMORANDUM #2: FINAL DRAFT NETWORK-WIDE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

(Revised October 19th, 2012)

The Williston Essex Network Transportation Study (WENTS) was initiated to address multimodal needs within the Circ study area that resulted when the Circ Highway was put on-hold. This memorandum proposes network-wide goals and objectives for the WENTS study area. The proposed goals and objectives draw on prior studies, on analyses of Existing Conditions and on discussions to-date with the Steering Committee.

For the purposes of this study, the following framework is used:

Goals: General statements of long-range desired outcomes for the study area.

Objectives: Specific statements that identify approaches to support the goals.

Statements of goals and objectives are meant to guide the selection and prioritization of improvement strategies for the Study.

Network-Wide Goals and Objectives

REGIONAL MOBILITY. Create a safe, clean and efficient transportation network that minimizes congestion, improves safety, enhances intermodal connections and expands travel options to, from, and within selected corridors. VT 2A, VT 15, VT 117 and US 2 are significant regional mobility corridors that facilitate the movement of people and freight between the employment, civic and commercial centers of Chittenden County and areas outside the study area.

Key objectives are:

- a) **Efficiency.** Reduce traffic congestion and improve travel times along key mobility corridors within the study area.
- b) **Safety.** Improve safety of all modes; address High Crash Locations within the study area; and enhance emergency response capabilities.
- c) **Connectivity.** Expand travel options and improve intermodal connectivity along mobility corridors. Improve road, bicycle and pedestrian connections from the local transportation network to the existing mobility corridors.
- d) **Regional bicycle travel.** Plan and construct a regional system of connected bicycle facilities to provide safe and convenient regional bicycle travel.
- e) **Public transit.** Enhance public transit service to make it competitive with vehicle travel; Implement transit service in accordance with CCTA's Transit Development Plan.
- f) **Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** Support an effective TDM program to promote reductions in single-occupant vehicle travel.

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. The study area contains Williston's Village and Growth Center, the Village of Essex Junction, and the Town/Historic Center of Essex Town for which these goals apply.

Key objectives include:

- a) **Connectivity.** Improve local transportation system connectivity to provide viable and safe mode alternatives for local trips.
- b) **Local walk-bike facilities.** Develop safe and convenient neighborhood-scale bicycle and pedestrian networks to serve existing and future growth.
- c) **Local roads.** Promote low-speed local traffic circulation and multimodal access to businesses, neighborhoods and services.
- d) **Neighborhoods.** Limit negative impacts to neighborhoods from regional vehicle traffic.
- e) **Transit.** Improve transit service to village areas and growth centers consistent with CCTA's Transit Development Plan; maximize neighborhood access to transit stops and Park-and-Ride areas.

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. The study area contains several large retail developments in Taft Corners and in Essex Town as well as the Champlain Valley Technology and Innovation Park (CVTIP) which includes the IBM campus among others.

Key objectives include:

- a) **Efficiency.** Improve travel reliability for freight within mobility corridors; decrease employee commuting time to and from employment centers in the study area.
- b) **Access.** Provide safe and efficient multimodal access to major businesses and industrial parks in the area.
- c) **Connectivity.** Provide safe and attractive non-motorized connections between commercial/employment centers and residential areas.
- d) **Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** Develop TDM programs in partnership with major employers in the study area to reduce single-occupant vehicle travel.

SUSTAINABILITY. Emphasize policies and investments that build a sustainable transportation system. These objectives apply to all proposed investments across the study area as a whole.

Key objectives include:

- a) **Transportation choices.** Invest in transportation choices to reduce single-occupant automobile travel.
- b) **Land use compatibility.** Promote transportation policies and facilities that support municipal and regional land use plans and are appropriate to the context of future development plans.
- c) **Development patterns.** Provide transportation facilities that support land use development patterns capable of efficiently using non-automobile transportation.
- d) **Environmental impact.** Minimize the environmental impact of transportation investments, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and VMT.
- e) **Existing roadway system.** Maximize sustainability of the existing transportation network before investing in new state or local roads.