

Williston-Essex Transportation Network Study Steering Committee Meeting #4

DATE: Tuesday, September 25, 2012
TIME: 1:00 – 3:00 PM
PLACE: CCRPC Offices, 110 West Canal Street, Winooski
PRESENT:

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

1) Welcome

Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC welcomed Brian Wright of the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) to the Steering Committee and introductions were made.

2) Presentation of Existing Conditions for Traffic

Bob Chamberlin of RSG described RSG's microsimulation traffic model that will be used to analyze existing and future conditions. It is primarily designed for assessing vehicular traffic. RSG will use other tools to develop multimodal strategies.

The microsimulation model is calibrated to existing traffic conditions and is ready to assess future conditions in 2035. The future transportation network used in the models (regional and microsimulation) will include projects from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC noted that her organization is updating the MTP/Regional Plan now and projects will be ranked using the ECOS Sustainability Index. Projects that score high, and mesh with existing funding streams, will be included in the MTP/Regional Plan. These projects will also be included in the modeling for 2035.

There was discussion of how to determine future traffic volumes, given recent shifts to alternative modes and the expected increase in density. Bob responded that the auto occupancy as it is now will be assumed into the future; however, the increase in density will be reflected in the land use component of the Regional Model which is the "parent" of the microsimulation model. Increases in public transit service will also be included.

Dennis Lutz of Essex asked that the modeling information presented to the public be clear about the importance of improvements and the extent to which they will improve overall travel in the corridor.

There was discussion of the comfort level of the committee with the model. In response, both Amy Bell of VTrans and Michele discussed the sophistication of the model – nationally, it is considered state-of-the-art.

Ken Belliveau of Williston asked that Zephyr Road be added to the short-term project list. It's a connection to Finney Crossing in Williston.

3) Discussion of Network-Wide Goals and Objectives

Bob reviewed the draft goals and objectives from Project Memorandum #2.

Sandy Levine of CLF felt the goals were too narrowly-defined to automobile travel rather than overall mobility and lack integration between land use and transportation. She worked with Local Motion and VNRC to incorporate other modes as well as Complete Streets legislation. Jason VanDriesche of Local Motion incorporated multimodalism into each goal, rather than it be a separate goal.

Jeff Nick spoke from the business community's perspective. Consistently, he hears that the problem is traffic congestion, especially at peak hours for employee commutes. When there is congestion, people take shortcuts through neighborhoods. Most folks are not interested in traveling to work by other modes and that's not going to change. The focus should be minimizing congestion.

The group briefly discussed "travel reliability." [Note: From FHWA: "A formal definition for travel time reliability is: the consistency or dependability in travel times, **as measured from day-to-day and/or across different times of the day.**"

http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/tt_reliability/TTR_Report.htm]. Bob explained that increasing travel reliability might include incident management to consistently clear disabled vehicles from a roadway.

There was general agreement that the goals should be organized as "regional" and "local," as suggested by the revised goals and objectives document prepared by CLF, VNRC and Local Motion.

It was decided that committee members should review both Goals and Objectives versions and send their comments to Eleni by **Wednesday, October 3rd**. She will incorporate the comments in a new Goals and Objectives version for the committee's consideration at the next meeting.

4. Presentation of Preliminary Strategy Packages

Bob presented five strategy packages that will be evaluated qualitatively to narrow the packages to three. Following that, a quantitative review will be done on the remaining three packages to then select a preferred alternative (likely a hybrid of the strategies presented).

A set of "Core Improvements" will be recommended for all strategy packages. These improvements include:

Core Improvements: Implement "Smart Corridor" (adaptive signal control); Close gaps in bicycle/pedestrian network; Eliminate shoulder discontinuities; and Incentivize use of alternatives (Transportation Demand Management–TDM).

Strategy Package 1: Redmond Road Connector

This package was selected by the Williston and Essex Selectboards. It builds a new bridge across the Winooski River to Redmond Road. Dennis asked if Essex Way would be included in this project; RSG responded that the intersection has been included in the study area.

Strategy Package 2: Comprehensive Intersection Geometric Improvements

This package addresses High Crash Locations (HCLs) to increase safety and intersection spot improvements to improve capacity and mobility. This strategy package might include turning lanes and roundabouts.

Jason asked that walk/bike improvements be added at the intersections and that intersections be evaluated for walk/bike even though they may not be HCLs. Ken asked that gaps in the walk/bike system be identified both for safety and to encourage alternative modes. The group discussed the difficulties associated with slip lanes for walkers/bikers and Jason noted new technology, like flashing beacons, can be very helpful for crossing while allowing use of the travel lane by vehicles when there is no one waiting to cross.

Strategy Package 3: New Highway System Connections

Part 1: Grid Streets in Williston Growth Center

Part 2: Innovation Drive - between Route 2 and Mountain View Drive

Part 3: Upgrade River Cove Road (between 2A and Lime Kiln Road) and Connect Fay Lane

Part 4: Add Parallel Connections north and south to Vermont 2A

Jason asked that walk/bike connections be evaluated where automobile connections aren't feasible or desirable.

Strategy Package 4: Western Corridor Reconstruction

Add capacity to 2A between Interstate 89 and Essex Junction

Strategy Package 5: East Corridor Reconstruction

North Williston Road/Sandhill Road reconstruction

The group discussed how best to evaluate the strategy packages, given the limited amount of time (due to the CIRC Alternatives Task Force schedule) and funding. It was decided that Bob will send the strategy packages (maps and more detailed description of strategies) to the committee. Members will mark the maps and send comments as to whether or not a particular strategy is feasible, to help narrow down the packages for quantitative analysis. The qualitative work will follow later.

Michele will recommend that some of the "Core Improvements" that could be advanced in the short time become FY 14 Capital improvements, to help Williston and Essex move projects forward in the CIRC Alternatives process.

5. Next Steps

Since the original plan has changed, Eleni and Bob will discuss how best to move forward and present a plan at the October meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20PM.

The next meeting is October 25, 2012, 9-11AM, CCRPC