

Williston-Essex Transportation Network Study Steering Committee Meeting #2

DATE: Friday, April 20, 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	Kate McCarthy, VNRC
Ken Belliveau, Town of Williston	Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates
Meredith Birkett, CCTA	Jeff Nick, JL Davis Realty
Michele Boomhower, CCRPC	Bruce Nyquist, VTrans
Bob Chamberlin, RSG	Robin Pierce, Village of Essex Junction
Jason Charest, CCRPC	Dave Roberts, CCRPC
Eleni Churchill, CCRPC	Ken Robie, VTrans
Bruce Hoar, Town of Williston	Mark Smith, RSG
Sandy Levine, Conservation Law Foundation	Jason VanDriesche, Local Motion
David Libby, IBM Burlington	

1) Welcome

Eleni Churchill of the CCRPC welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

2) Review Study Goals and Scope of Work

Bob Chamberlin of RSG provided a summary presentation of the Williston-Essex Transportation Network Study DRAFT - Phase 1 Report that was distributed earlier in the week.

Bob reviewed the study goal: To develop a multi-modal transportation improvement plan for the primary corridors in the study area to address mobility, connectivity and safety issues. The study will include a comprehensive and coordinated list of highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and land use recommendations that satisfy the overall vision and goals of the study corridors.

Bob summarized the upcoming phases of work:

- **Phase I: Evaluation of two major network strategies (current phase)**
- Phase II: Analysis of existing and future issues; transportation network goals
- Phase III: Develop and evaluate strategies
- Phase IV: Network implementation plan
- Phase V: Network management plan

3) Purpose of Today's Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to obtain the Steering Committee's input on the evaluation of the two Major Network Strategies (MNS) for the study area. The evaluation relies on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analysis. Steering Committee input and comments will be summarized and distributed to the Williston and Essex Selectboards and incorporated into the Final Phase 1 Report.

At issue is whether either Major Network Strategy advances to Phases 2-5 of the Study. The options are to advance Major Network Strategy (MNS) #1 OR #2; or to advance neither strategy. The plan is for this presentation to be made to the Williston Selectboard on May 7th and the Essex Selectboard on May 21st. It is likely the Selectboards will vote at the following regularly scheduled meeting. Both Selectboards must vote affirmatively for MNS2 for it to be advanced. The Boards will have time to discuss the strategies amongst themselves prior to the vote. Amy Bell of VTrans asked if it was appropriate for a regionally significant project to be voted on at the local level. It was explained that the Boards are voting whether or not to advance these strategies for further planning; not whether or not anything is actually built. ***Draft language on the "vote" will be offered to the Selectboards during the presentations.***

Ken Belliveau of the Town of Williston asked what would happen if the Boards cannot agree on which strategy to move forward. Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC explained that Williston's vote has primacy because both projects are in Williston.

Dennis Lutz of the Town of Essex is concerned that the Village of Essex Junction hasn't been contacted. Eleni responded that she met with Dave Crawford (Town Manager) and he recommended inviting the Village Trustees to the Essex Selectboard meeting and we have done so. ***Dennis asked that Eleni invite all the Boards to each other's meetings and Eleni agreed.***

4) Review of Phase 1 Results

Major Network Strategy 1 (MNS1): I-89 Connector to Mtn. View Road

Major Network Strategy 2 (MNS2): Redmond Road Connector

Bob reviewed the four evaluation criteria:

- Environmental Impact (18 elements)
- Traffic Impact at 5-7 Indicator Intersections
- Estimated Construction Cost
- Community Acceptance (as determined by Selectboards)

The two major network strategies were evaluated for projected 2025 conditions and compared to the "no build" scenario. In order to simplify the results, Bob used a visual depiction of "Better, Neutral, or Worse" as compared to the "do nothing" scenario.

Michele asked if there was consideration of taking the bridge crossing down to North Williston Road. Bob responded that this was not considered in the evaluation but it was discussed at an earlier meeting.

Amy asked about the feasibility of impacting land owned by the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) in light of a previous eminent domain action. Mark Smith of RSG explained that this strategy would skirt around the landfill and cross the transfer station. ***Michele asked that this be mentioned in the constraints analysis at the Selectboard meetings.***

Tim Baechle of IBM questioned the roadway cross sections, especially the MNS1 changing from four lanes to two. He feels the environmental impacts could be lessened by maintaining a constant two lanes. Bob responded that this Phase I evaluation is limited to previously completed studies.

Sandy Levine of the Conservation Law Foundation disagreed that the environmental impacts would change significantly with fewer roadway lanes. There was discussion of 2 versus 4 lanes and the accommodation of bicycle/pedestrian/transit access. ***It was decided that the Phase 1 Report and Selectboard presentation should: 1) Note the issue of 2 versus 4 lanes in MNS1; and 2) Remove the roadway cross sections from the summary sheets and add cost estimate ranges.***

Ken Belliveau of Williston sees one major decision as “build the bridge/don’t build the bridge.” Another is the roadway and how it functions – design speed, noise level, type of traffic, access for bikes, etc. How will the road interface with Route 2A and Mountain View? The Selectboard will take all these into account before voting.

Michele described this decision point as moving us about 10-15 percent of the way through this study. We could pause here and spend a lot of money on in-depth studies of the strategies and not address the larger network issues of the CIRC not being built. How do we avoid get mired in details that decision-makers might want and not reach our primary objective? We don’t have the resources to dedicate to answer all these questions, rather, that will happen in the next set of scoping studies. Dennis suggested we ask for input based on the corridor-level analysis already completed. We’re looking for a direction at this point. Kate McCarthy of the Vermont Natural Resources Council suggested that we look at how the attributes relate to the goals and objectives.

Jeff Nick of JL Davis Realty asked that if one strategy is chosen to move forward, are we guaranteed it will not be brought to court. Michele responded that we can’t know that now, but we are trying to engage all interested parties. We want to vet all the potential issues now and try to avoid or mitigate them. New issues may arise when we put a number of these strategies on the table together.

Meredith Birkett of CCTA asked if she should attend the Selectboard meetings to talk about CCTA’s needs to operate transit in this area. Michele suggested that she wait until there is more detailed information available.

There was discussion of the visuals for the environmental impact of the two strategies. All agreed that this was a great deal of information for a lay person to absorb. Kate suggested representative photos of each of the environmental criteria. There was some confusion over whether or not this information is a restatement of the DEIS conclusions or a new alignment for MNS2. Mark explained that the bridge is in the same location, but the approach on Redmond Road is slightly different. The data was adjusted for that new alignment. ***Michele suggested that Bob provide the draft Selectboard presentation to the Steering Committee for review and comment prior to the meetings. Bob agreed to do so as well as provide a summary of today’s comments.***

Dave Libby of IBM asked if air quality has been considered. Bob replied that the analysis isn’t available for all the alternatives – only the final one chosen in the DEIS.

There was discussion about the wetlands impacts of MNS2. Bob used the GIS analysis from the DEIS and superimposed the Redmond Road Connector. He looked at how the new alignment interacted with the wetlands map. Mark explained that the wetland issues were not as expansive because of the existing alignment. Sandy continues to have concerns about wetland and habitat impacts. This analysis is based on

previous faulty analysis. It's an issue to be flagged because she doesn't believe it's accurately represented. Dennis suggested a new map to make the analysis clearer.

Bob presented the traffic impacts for the "indicator" intersections that were previously agreed upon. He showed the volume/capacity (v/c) ratios currently and for both strategies. He explained that a low number is good; if an intersection is at "1", it's at capacity. Ken Belliveau questioned the dramatic v/c changes at Exit 12 and the variations over the intersections along VT2A—the results are not intuitive. Mark explained that Marshall Avenue and Route 2A are so over capacity now that that amount of change is small. The v/c results show a global representation of congestion at an intersection, but not all approaches will experience the same level of congestion. Bob noted that the modeling is from the DEIS, the no build year is 2025, and the Crescent Connector is not included. **Following discussion it was agreed that the Selectboard presentations will exclude the v/c ratios, but instead use a visual depiction so as not to confuse the issue when more concrete numbers are available. Tim suggested that yellow not indicate neutral.**

Dennis noted that for MNS2 to be valuable to Essex, traffic needs to be reduced on Route 15. If the strategy doesn't provide a significant level of service (LOS) increase at VT15 intersections with Routes 128 and 289, the support will not be there. **Michele suggested that we add those intersections to the study.**

Bob reviewed results from the MNS evaluation and summary sheets. **The following changes were suggested:**

- **The "v/c ratio" slide needs to have the dashed Circ A/B alignment removed.**
- **Change the costs to a range rather than a specific number.**
- **Remove the two "new" intersections from MNS1 for better comparison with MNS2.**
- **For Selectboard presentations, put both MSN lollipops together on the same handout or display for better comparison.**

Ken Belliveau asked about the effect of the strategies on the intersections of Williston Road/N. Williston Road and N. Williston Road/Mountain View Drive. Mark responded that congestion is a little better for Mountain View in MNS1 and a little worse for MNS2. **It was decided to add the N. Williston intersections to the study.** Ken Belliveau asked how an at-grade crossing on Williston Road would impact the Village. For MNS1, there is concern about additional congestion on Mountain View Road. He suggested Bob be prepared for these questions from the Williston Selectboard. **Bob offered to create a plan view design of traffic volumes to show the changes.**

Ken Belliveau explained that we're looking at a box that encompasses VT 2A. The reality is that we have a network with another competing north-south route—N. Williston Road. This is a big question for Williston. The US 2/North Williston Road intersection has already been the subject of heated discussions concerning how to address PM peak congestion. There is similar concern about the N. Williston Rd./ Mountain View Rd. intersection. These two intersections should be addressed in Phase 1.

Dennis asked about the direct economic impacts of MNS1 on IBM and of MNS2 on businesses in the town center. Tim offered to write a response from IBM's point of view and also solicit comments from the Chamber/GBIC in advance of the May 7th Selectboard meeting. Ken Belliveau would like to understand CSWD's position on MNS2. He agreed that the **CCRPC should talk to CSWD prior to the Selectboard meeting.** Meredith offered to prepare a statement regarding CCTA's needs for transit under the two strategies.

5) Information on Technical Approach to Modeling for Existing & Future Conditions

Bob's team will develop an area wide microsimulation model for the Phase 2 analysis.

6) Schedule Review - Phase II (May-July 2012)

Key Tasks/Milestones

- Analysis of Existing and Future Conditions
- Transportation Model Development
- Development of Study Performance Measures
- Public Meeting #1 (June)
- Project Memorandum #1
 - Recommended Performance Measures
 - Analysis of Existing Transportation Conditions
- Project Memorandum #2 - Transportation Network Goals
- Steering Committee Meeting #3 (July)

7) Upcoming Meetings

May 7, Williston Selectboard, 7:00PM

May 21, Essex Selectboard, 7:30PM

A revised PowerPoint presentation will be sent to the Steering Committee for review and comment prior to the Selectboard meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10PM