

## **FY2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Essex**

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is a political subdivision of the State created by the municipalities of Chittenden County in 1966 for the development of policies, plans and programs that address regional issues and opportunities in Chittenden County. Its vision is to be a pre-eminent, integrated regional organization that plans for healthy, vibrant communities, economic development, and efficient transportation of people and goods while improving the region's livability. The CCRPC serves as the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and is responsible for comprehensive and collaborative transportation planning involving municipalities, state and federal agencies and other key stakeholders in Chittenden County. The CCRPC works to ensure implementation of the regional transportation plan and provides technical and planning assistance to its member municipalities and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

The CCRPC is governed by a 29-member board consisting of one representative from each of the County's 19 municipalities; transportation representatives from VTrans, Green Mountain Transit (GMT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Burlington International Airport (BIA), and a rail industry representative; and, at-large members representing the interests of agriculture, environmental conservation, business, and housing/socio-economic. The legislative body of each Chittenden County municipality selects its own representative and alternate. The full CCRPC selects the at-large representatives.

The CCRPC appreciates the continued opportunity to work with its municipal members to plan appropriately for the region's future to protect and improve the special quality of life that is shared throughout Chittenden County. In FY21, the CCRPC invested more than \$4.8 million in regional land use, transportation, emergency management, energy, natural resources, public engagement, training, and technical assistance. The program leverages more than \$4.3 million in Federal and State investment with \$250,400 in municipal dues and another \$242,500 in local match for specific projects—a 10:1 return on local investment.

Essex representatives to the CCRPC Board and other committees in FY21 were:

- CCRPC Representative: Jeff Carr | CCRPC Alternate: Elaine Haney
- Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Dennis Lutz
- Planning Advisory Committee (PAC): Darren Schibler
- Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC): Annie Costandi

Specific activities the CCRPC is engaged in with Essex, as well as CCRPC's regional activities, are discussed in the following sections.

## Essex Activities

In FY2021, the CCRPC provided assistance to Essex on the following projects and initiatives:

- **Tanglewood Drive Shared-Use Path and Stormwater Scoping Project:** The purpose of this multi-year project was to improve the drainage system along Tanglewood Drive and to provide safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities for users of various ages and abilities while maintaining safe and efficient vehicular conditions. This scoping project started in FY20 and took a hiatus for several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is expected to be completed early in FY22. In FY20 and FY21, the CCRPC worked with the Town and a consultant to collect data and evaluate existing conditions; conduct a Local Concerns public meeting; develop and evaluate draft alternatives; and develop a public survey to get feedback on initial conceptual plans for a multiuse path and stormwater improvements. This project will be completed in the fall of 2021 with a presentation to the Essex Selectboard to choose a preferred alternative and the drafting of the final report. Total consultant budget: \$39,000
- **Essex Stormwater CCTV Inspection (Phase 1):** This project consisted of working with a consultant to use a camera to inspect and inventory stormwater pipes and to generate a condition assessment report that the Town could use to create a stormwater infrastructure replacement plan; this could be used in both operational and capital infrastructure planning. After a consultant was hired during the fall of 2019 and the scope of work was finalized in early 2020, the video inspection of the stormwater system commenced in March of 2020. Due to working restrictions caused by COVID-19, this project was carried over into FY21, with phase 1 being completed in May. Phase 2 will start in FY22. Total consultant budget for phase 1: \$45,000
- **Water Quality Planning Assistance:** The CCRPC continued to provide assistance with Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) compliance and the Grants-In-Aid Program. Using FY20 Grants in Aid funding, RPC and town staff worked to complete the implementation of stormwater improvements on West Sleepy Hollow Road. Staff completed the planning and pre-construction site visit for FY21 Grants in Aid work on Catella Road and Hanley Lane although implementation won't start until FY22. Staff reviewed and sent Essex's REI Inventory updates to the DEC data portal before the April 1st, 2021 deadline.
- **Emergency Management – LEMP:** CCRPC staff offered assistance in preparation of the annual Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP), to ensure that Essex identified a chain of command for efficient response in the event of an emergency.
- **Geographic Information Systems:** CCRPC staff created an Urban Tree Inventory dashboard to assist with ash tree management: (<https://map.ccrpcvt.org/portal/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/73b5460e4e0f4224965e588d95b68bed>).
- **Traffic Counts:** Due to COVID-19, the CCRPC's ability to conduct traffic counts in FY21 was limited. Various planned counts requested through the UPWP process will occur in early FY22. Traffic counts conducted in previous years in support of Essex's transportation projects and studies can be found here: (<http://vtrans.ms2soft.com/>).

- **Elders and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Transportation Program:** The E&D transportation program in Chittenden County has continued to adapt under the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout much of the fiscal year, the E&D program had been operating at around 50% of the original ride capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, despite these challenges, the E&D program still delivered vital transportation assistance to older adults and persons with disabilities in Essex. In FY21, 97 trips were provided to Essex residents as part of this program.
- **Technical Assistance:** CCRPC staff provided a variety of technical assistance to the Town, including:
  - Worked with ESRI's Business Analyst program to share/export employment data with the Town;
  - Met with Essex staff to discuss the Essex Senior Van Program and reviewed how a similar mobility program might function within the communities of Jericho, Underhill, and Cambridge.

### Essex Projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/transportation-improvement-program/>) is a prioritized, multi-year list of transportation projects in Chittenden County. To receive federal funds, each transportation project, program or operation must be authorized through the TIP. Essex projects included in the TIP are listed below. These projects are also identified in the FY21 Vermont Agency of Transportation Capital Program for design or construction.

- **Alder Brook Culvert on VT 117:** \$2.3 million for replacement of a failed buried structure on VT117 carrying Alder Brook. Construction scheduled to begin in 2021.
- **Pinecrest Drive Sidewalk:** \$286,216 Transportation Alternatives grant in 2015 and a \$86,280 Bicycle & Pedestrian Program grant for sidewalk from VT2A to Suffolk Lane. Construction scheduled for 2021.
- **Stormwater Detention Pond Design and Construction at LDS Church:** \$478,265 federal and \$598,683 state Municipal Highway and Stormwater Program award scheduled for construction in 2023.
- **Stormwater System Retrofit with Infiltration Systems and Stabilized Outfalls for Three Cul-de-sacs:** \$271,139 Transportation Alternatives award in 2018 to be constructed in 2021.
- **Susie Wilson Road Corridor and Intersection Improvements:** \$1.58 million CIRC Alternatives Phase III project to improvement the VT15 corridor including intersections with Susie Wilson Road and Kellogg Road. Construction to begin in 2024.
- **Sydney Drive Detention Pond:** \$243,954 Transportation Alternatives award in 2016 to retrofit a detention pond in a wooded area adjacent to Sydney Drive. Construction scheduled for 2020.
- **VT 117/North Williston Road Hazard Mitigation Improvements:** \$400,000 CIRC Alternatives Phase III project to install a box culvert, safety enhancements and armoring. Construction schedule to be determined.
- **VT 117/North Williston Road Intersection Improvements:** \$2.1 million CIRC Alt Phase III project. Construction scheduled for 2023.

- **VT 15 Sidewalk Old Stage Road to Essex Way:** \$160,000 CIRC Alternatives Phase III project. Construction schedule to be determined.
- **VT128/Alder Brook Culvert:** \$605,000 for replacing a culvert on VT128 in 2021.
- **VT 15/Sand Hill Road Intersection Improvements:** \$1.37 million CIRC Alt Phase II Project for installation of a signal. Construction scheduled to begin in 2023.
- **VT15 Multiuse Path:** \$1.9 million for path from Lime Kiln Road to Susie Wilson Road as part of CIRC Alternatives Phase II implementation project. Construction scheduled to begin in 2021.

**FY2022 CCRPC Work Program**

Project Name	Brief Description	Total Budget
VT15 Corridor Pedestrian and Road System Study	This project is a one-year scoping/planning study from the westernmost Circ Highway Intersection on VT15 to Essex Way with an expanded speed limit investigation from that area to the proposed new traffic signal location at VT15/Sand Hill Road	\$25,000 budget which includes a local match of \$5,000.
Essex Stormwater CCTV Inspection - Phase 2	The Town is requesting funding to complete Phase 2 of this project which will continue the framework established in Phase 1 and further develop a prioritization scheme into a schedule for capital planning.	\$50,000 budget which includes a local match of \$10,000.

**Regional Activities**

- **ECOS Plan Implementation:** The CCRPC continues to implement the strategies of the [2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan](#). The ECOS Plan (Environment; Community; Opportunity; Sustainability) is the regional plan for Chittenden County and combines three plans into one: The Regional Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The 2020 ECOS Annual Report includes some of the data we report on annually, as well as indicators of disparities that have resulted from systemic racism in our nation and community, as well as indicators associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This intentional focus on race, equity, and the COVID-19 pandemic marks the commitment of the ECOS Leadership Team to address these challenges (<http://www.ecosproject.com/2020-annual-report>). In addition, the ECOS Scorecard hosts the ECOS Partners’ shared measurement and indicator system that monitors how Chittenden County is doing relative to achieving our shared ECOS goals (<https://app.resultsscorecard.com/Scorecard/Embed/8502>).
- **Legislative Forum:** On December 8th, the CCRPC hosted a Legislative briefing to serve as a forum for municipal representatives and legislators to connect on a few important topics for the upcoming legislative session, including: Act 250 changes, housing, broadband, water quality funding, regional dispatch, energy/climate, cannabis, the economy and workforce, transportation investments, property tax implications of Covid-19 and racial equity (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/commission/policies-positions/>).
- **Public Engagement & Racial Equity:** Achieving a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future for Chittenden County is the vision of our Regional ECOS Plan. However, the ECOS partners know we cannot achieve that future without addressing the systemic racism in our community. While

addressing inequity has been one of the eight key strategies in the ECOS Plan since 2013, there is much work to be done. Throughout the past fiscal year, CCRPC staff have started to plan for the update of the **2014 Public Participation Plan** (PPP: <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/public-participation-plan/>) with a renewed focus on analyzing inequities in all sectors of our work to ensure that we actively eliminate barriers and foster an inclusive and meaningful public engagement for all planning and policy work we do – this meaningful engagement is the foundation that leads to actions that meet the needs of our diverse community. In FY20, the CCRPC continued to address issues related to racial and economic disparities through the following actions:

- Hiring a consultant, Creative Discourse, to address racial equity within the organization.
  - Established a CCRPC Racial Equity Leadership Team.
  - Facilitating, providing, and/or taking advantage of educational opportunities for our staff, municipalities, and other local and regional partners that address inequities and advance anti-racism efforts.
  - Strengthening existing relationships and partnerships and forging new ones with Vermont organizations working to advance anti-racism efforts.
  - In FY21 we will be holding an Equity Summit and examining our organization's policies, practices, culture, and services through the lens of anti-racism and white privilege to ensure they reflect our commitment to racial justice.
- **Building Homes Together:** The Building Homes Together campaign was initiated by the CCRPC, Champlain Housing Trust, and Housing Vermont (now Evernorth) in 2016. The campaign, supported by over a hundred local and state officials, nonprofits, businesses, and individuals, set a five-year goal of 3,500 new homes in Chittenden County with 20% of them permanently affordable. This amounts to an annual target of 700 overall homes with 140 affordable; the average over the first four years is 787 homes, and only 112 of them affordable. While the 2020 annual progress report showed continued overall success in new housing being created, there is still a persistent lack of affordable homes in our region. More information can be found at <http://www.ecosproject.com/building-homes-together/>.
  - **Public Health:** In response to remote work, education, health care, and other needs prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency, the CCRPC has been assisting state agencies and municipalities with a number of pandemic-related planning efforts through the following actions:
    - Identification of locations with free public Wi-Fi for access to the internet.
    - Support with COVID-19 information sharing between Vermont Emergency Management, municipalities, and other partners.
    - Participation in the Governor's COVID press conferences and Vermont Emergency Management's municipal official meetings.
  - **Emergency Management:** During the unprecedented time of global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CCRPC staff worked with municipalities, state health officials, and the public to relay important updates, resources, and general information about the pandemic. A COVID-19 Municipal Response webpage was maintained (<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/covid-19/>). CCRPC staff assisted Chittenden County municipalities with applications for the Local Government Expense Reimbursement (LGER) grant program to help cover the cost of eligible COVID-19

expenses such as supplies, facility alterations and overtime compensation. In addition to focusing resources on addressing the pandemic in our region, the CCRPC hosted the final meetings of Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC 1, <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/committees/local-emergency-planning-committee/>) and worked with the state on the transition to a statewide LEPC starting in July 2021. CCRPC staff participate in a wide array of emergency management-related workshops and exercises to enhance resilience to disasters in our region. The CCRPC also served as the local liaison between municipalities and the state to collect damage assessment information after significant storm events, helped with emergency preparedness for hazardous materials incidents, collected information from each municipality on annual implementation of hazard mitigation activities, and worked with municipalities to complete Local Emergency Management Plans.

- **Regional Energy Planning:** The CCRPC has been continuing to move forward with initiatives to support the Region’s Enhanced Energy Plan (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/regional-energy-plan/>). Implementation activities funded by Efficiency Vermont in FY21 included: Weatherization Wednesdays, a Button-Up Vermont event, statewide RPC roundtables, energy data reporting and training, energy committee technical assistance, and electric vehicle education webinars.
- **Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study:** The CCRPC in collaboration with VTrans, municipalities, and other interested parties is conducting the I-89 2050 Study to assess safety, capacity, multimodal access, resilience, and other transportation and land use issues along the I-89 Corridor and its interchanges within Chittenden County; and to develop a comprehensive multimodal investment plan through 2050. A Vision was established for the I-89 Corridor, as an interstate system (mainline and interchanges) that is safe, resilient, and provides for reliable and efficient movement of people and goods in support of state, regional, and municipal plans and goals. To date, the study evaluated existing multimodal conditions along the I-89 Corridor and its interchanges; evaluated numerous new and improved interchange alternatives; conducted extensive outreach to the public including underserved populations, municipal officials, and other stakeholder groups; and developed bundles of multimodal corridor improvements that will be evaluated in the next phase of the I-89 2050 Study. For more information, please visit the project website at <https://envision89.com/>.
- **Transportation Demand Management:** In partnership with VTrans, CCRPC staff continued the **Way to Go! School Challenge** ([www.waytogovt.org](http://www.waytogovt.org)) as a school-focused K-12 program to encourage sustainable transportation and demonstrate the environmental and financial benefits of non-single occupant vehicle travel. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the program shifted online to provide resources and encouragement as families were remote, and a two-week spring event was open to all Vermonters to encourage active movement. In 2020/2021, 97 schools signed up, with 32 schools actively participating. Over the course of the 2020-2021 school year, these schools ran 186 events with 20,967 instances of student engagement and 1,988 instances of faculty engagement. The CCRPC participated in CATMA’s Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) Network program and events to learn from other ETC Network members about employee TDM benefits and programs. The CCRPC also continued to collaborate with regional TDM partners to evaluate strategies and policies to encourage sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, biking, ridesharing, vanpooling, transit, bikesharing and carsharing. TDM partners include: the Chittenden Area Transportation



Management Association (CATMA), CarShare VT, the University of Vermont, Green Mountain Transit (GMT), Local Motion, Greenride Bikeshare, Go! Vermont/VTrans, and United Way.

- **Public Transportation Planning:** Throughout the past year, the CCRPC has been engaged with GMT in a wide variety of public transit planning projects and initiatives to support the continued development of a transportation system that is efficient, equitable and environmentally sustainable. In FY21, the CCRPC staff participated in Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) meetings (<https://www.actweb.org/>), were involved in GMT's Operations Committee and Board meetings, served as a stakeholder for the Vermont Clean Cities Coalition's Future of Rural Transit Project (<https://vtccc.w3.uvm.edu/projects/future-of-rural-transit/>) and managed the Tri-Town Area (Jericho, Underhill, Cambridge) Transit Feasibility Study, which was completed at the end of June (<https://studiesandreports.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Tri-Town-Study-Final-Report.pdf>).
- **Elders and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Transportation Program:** The Chittenden County E&D Transportation Program supports community members through affordable transportation to medical appointments, access to fresh food at the grocery store, and social visits with friends and family. Following the comprehensive E&D program evaluation that began in FY19, the CCRPC has continued to collaborate with committee stakeholders, Green Mountain Transit (GMT), the Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA) and United Way of Northwest VT to evaluate program improvements for E&D transportation. In FY21, the E&D Committee held four quarterly meetings to discuss program funding, volunteer driver utilization and opportunities to enhance transportation equity within our region.
- **Neighbor Rides:** Beginning in 2013, the CCRPC started to invest in United Way's Neighbor Rides program to integrate volunteer drivers into human services transportation in order to increase access to transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities by offering a lower-cost option (<http://www.unitedwaynwvt.org/Neighbor-Rides>). In FY21, this program shifted its focus to work with community partners on a more collaborative volunteer driver strategy. However, as COVID-19 pandemic evolved, this goal was revised to focus on integrating health and safety strategies within the program.
- **Active Transportation Planning:** CCRPC staff collaborated with TDM partners and local municipalities to expand the Greenride Bikeshare system and convert the fleet to electric assist bicycles ([www.greenridebikeshare.com](http://www.greenridebikeshare.com)). The CCRPC also promoted TDM strategies and provided bike/ped-related technical assistance to municipalities and businesses, assisted municipalities with bike/ped grant and UPWP applications, managed bike/ped-related UPWP projects, and conducted bike/ped counts on paths, designated bike lanes, and other roadways. The CCRPC also continued to host the webinar series from the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycling Professionals for municipalities and regional partners.
- **Clean Water:** The CCRPC's water quality initiatives help to safeguard our clean drinking water, support our recreation and tourism industry, and make our municipalities more resilient to flood events. The CCRPC continues to host the Clean Water Advisory Committee and the MS-4 Sub-Committee (<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/committees/clean-water-advisory-committee/>) and provide guidance for the Vermont Clean Water Fund. CCRPC staff also joined the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee, participated in Vermont Clean Water Network meetings, assisted municipalities with developing stormwater master plans and

implementing Clean Water Block Grant projects, supported education programs such as the Rethink Runoff (<http://www.rethinkrunoff.org>), assisted with watershed resiliency mapping, participated in water quality-focused policy discussions, and was appointed by the Vermont DEC to become the Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for the Northern Lake Champlain Direct Drainages, Basin (5). As the Basin 5 CWSP, the CCRPC will oversee the development and implementation of non-regulatory water quality improvement projects that reduce phosphorus loading into these streams and Lake Champlain.

- **Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) Compliance and Water Quality Planning Assistance:** CRRPC staff continues to work with all Chittenden County municipalities on meeting their MRGP obligations. This includes evaluating segments through Road Erosion Inventories (REIs), tracking and documenting upgraded segments and outlets, and reporting to DEC. Staff also assists municipalities with the State’s Grants in Aid (GIA) program, which allocates money to participating towns for stormwater improvements related to the MRGP. In FY2021, 13 Chittenden County municipalities signed up to participate in the GIA program; an estimated 38 non-compliant segments will be upgraded using the allocated \$253,000.
- **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Bluetooth Technology:** Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies enhance transportation safety and increase mobility through the integration of advanced communications technologies into transportation infrastructure. The CCRPC has continued to monitor Bluetooth devices that were deployed along five high-traffic corridors in Chittenden County. Real time speed data from this system will be utilized by the VTrans Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS) and Traveler Information System (TIS) for the Tri-state 511 system. CCRPC has initiated an update to the ITS regional architecture including updates to the participant list, roles and responsibilities of regional interested parties, service packages, and the ITS project list.
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** With federal funding from the US Economic Development Administration, CCRPC began work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for our region and the Addison, Rutland and Central VT regions -- collectively called the [West Central Vermont CEDS](#). Ultimately this document will help identify priority economic development strategies and projects and will be used by a variety of federal and state funding programs when making grant decisions.
- **Regional Technical Assistance:** This includes, but is not limited to, municipal technical assistance for various transportation issues, GIS mapping, and bylaw revisions, Act 250/Section 248 application reviews, grant administration and grant application assistance for plans, projects and initiatives at the local level that help advance the ECOS Strategies, Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- **Lake Champlain Byway:** Chittenden County includes eight of the Byway’s 22 communities: Milton, Colchester, Winooski, Essex Junction, Burlington, South Burlington, Shelburne, and Charlotte. CCRPC staff maintained the Byway website (<https://lakechamplainbyway.com/>) including a helpful Interactive Map (<http://map.ccrpcvt.org/lcbyway/>).

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For further information about the CCRPC, please visit <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/> or contact CCRPC Executive Director, Charlie Baker: [cbaker@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:cbaker@ccrpcvt.org).