

Purpose and Need Statement

I-89 Exit 14 Bike-Pedestrian Crossing Study

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to create a safe, visible, comfortable, convenient, direct and attractive year-round crossing for pedestrian and bicycle travel across I-89 in the vicinity of the Exit 14 interchange while maintaining safe and efficient vehicular conditions on the I-89 mainline; support healthy and sustainable lifestyles; promote compact growth and economic development in City Center; create attractive public spaces in support of the region's identity; enhance capacity of the US 2 corridor in a cost-effective manner; and reconnect neighborhoods within South Burlington that have been split apart by regional and national transportation corridors.

Need

- 1. Build an inviting travel corridor that reinforces the City's and Region's goals for pedestrian and bicycle mobility.** The present bicycle and pedestrian facilities do not reflect the area's priorities for quality of life of its residents and visitors, mobility, nor commitment to vibrant interlinked downtowns. The 2016 South Burlington Comprehensive Plan sets the following goal: "Develop a safe and efficient transportation system that supports pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options while accommodating the automobile" (p 1-1). Limitations on access across a broad spectrum of users undermine regional goals for bicycle and pedestrian friendliness.
- 2. Build attractive public spaces and a distinctive identity for City Center and Chittenden County.** Exit 14 is a gateway to the State, the region, and the community. The current facilities lend no distinctive identity to this entry point to some of the State's premiere destinations and do not meet community goals for such. Exit 14 is a critical area within the region, but fails to be a great place for all users. The 2016 South Burlington Comprehensive Plan states: "Establish a city center with pedestrian-oriented design, mixed uses, and public buildings and civic spaces that act as a focal point to the community" (p. 1-1).
- 3. Facilitate use by all age groups, experience levels, and purposes of trips.** The current facility is challenging for all users including the most experienced and confident pedestrians and cyclists. This discourages would-be commuters and recreational cyclists and pedestrians needing to cross I-89.
- 4. Remove a barrier in the regional network.** This location has been identified as a principal barrier to within the regional bicycle and pedestrian network. I-89 splits South Burlington neighborhoods and three of the region's most significant nodes of activity: City Center to the east, and UVM and downtown Burlington to the west. Improvements need to seamlessly link the existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian network in South Burlington on both sides and be designed in a manner that is responsive to existing neighborhoods and activity areas.
- 5. Increase the regional transportation capacity.** US2 is the most direct means to travel across I-89 in the immediate vicinity; however, existing conditions reduce the viability of bicycling and walking as a regional transportation choice. This reduces the capacity of the system as existing sidewalks and recreational paths do not connect to places people need to go and they are therefore underused.
- 6. Create a safe, comfortable, user-friendly, desirable year-round bicycle and pedestrian connection across Exit 14.** The cloverleaf interchange configuration results in challenging accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists. It favors the high speed movement of many vehicles merging onto and across several lanes. Consequently:

- Pedestrian and bike crossings occur where it is not easy for drivers to anticipate yielding or stopping for pedestrians and cyclists and which due to higher speeds. This creates an uncomfortable condition for the driver and pedestrian/cyclist due to the potential for collisions.
 - Inconsistencies in the availability of on-street bicycle lanes, recreation paths, and sidewalk width foster uncertainty and create the potential for conflicts between all users.
 - Limited real estate results in a lack of buffers between users and traffic, no snow storage and limited flexibility to reconfigure facilities.
- 7. Maintain Interstate 89 safety and efficiency.** Modifications to ramp intersections with US2 have the potential to increase ramp queues which could result in backups on I-89. Modifications that increase the risk of high-speed, rear-end collisions on I-89 need to be avoided.

Approved by the South Burlington Planning Commission Tuesday, January 10, 2017