

**Railyard Enterprise Project (REP)
Supplemental Scoping Phase of the Project
Steering Committee #2 Meeting Notes**

Presentation available at: <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/transportation/scoping/railyard-enterprise-project/>

DATE: Wednesday, May 30, 2018
TIME: 6:00-8:00 PM
PLACE: Burlington Department of Public Works, 645 Pine Street
PRESENT: Please See Attached

1) Welcome, Introductions, Changes to the Agenda

At 6:00PM, Chapin Spencer of the Burlington Department of Public Works welcomed everyone and introductions were made. There were no changes to the agenda.

2) Public Comment Period: Members of the public were offered the opportunity to openly participate in the meeting and no comments were made.

3) Status of the Project

Eleni Churchill of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) reviewed the project to date. At the conclusion of the Scoping/PEL phase of the Railyard Enterprise project (REP) in December of 2015, the Burlington City Council selected three REP Alternatives (1B, 2, and 5b) to move forward for consideration under the [National Environmental Policy Review Act](#) (NEPA) process. The NEPA process is required for all projects that use federal funds. In 2016, the City, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the CCRPC, with the City Council's approval, initiated a more in-depth/Supplemental Scoping of REP Alternative 1B with the goal of determining whether the project could be funded solely with state and local funding (thereby eliminating a possible costly and time-consuming NEPA process). Eleni provided a general overview of the REP Supplemental Scoping tasks completed to date including extensive data collection, City Council endorsement (November 2016), Steering Committee Meeting (January 2017), and numerous meetings with stakeholders. Under Task 3, the team has developed and evaluated preliminary 1B alignments for review by the committee. The remaining Task 4 (Alternative 1B conceptual three-dimensional plans) and Task 5 (Final Report and Recommendations) may move forward depending on the outcomes from Task 3. For more information please see the Steering Committee presentation posted on the REP web page: <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/transportation/current-projects/scoping/railyard-enterprise-project/>.

4) Outcomes from this Meeting

Eleni asked that the Steering Committee provide comments on the 1B Alignment (Variations 1, 2, 3) and a Pine Street Intersection Alternative (Signal, Roundabout, Tangent). These comments will be conveyed to the City Council for consideration. The committee is not expected to determine whether the recommended alignment/intersection should be funded solely with state and local funding; that decision will be made by the City and VTrans.

5) Review of Work Completed

Jonathan reviewed, in detail, the work completed including field data collection, City Council endorsement, development and evaluation results of three Alternative 1B alignments and Pine Street intersection options. The alignment variations are as follows:

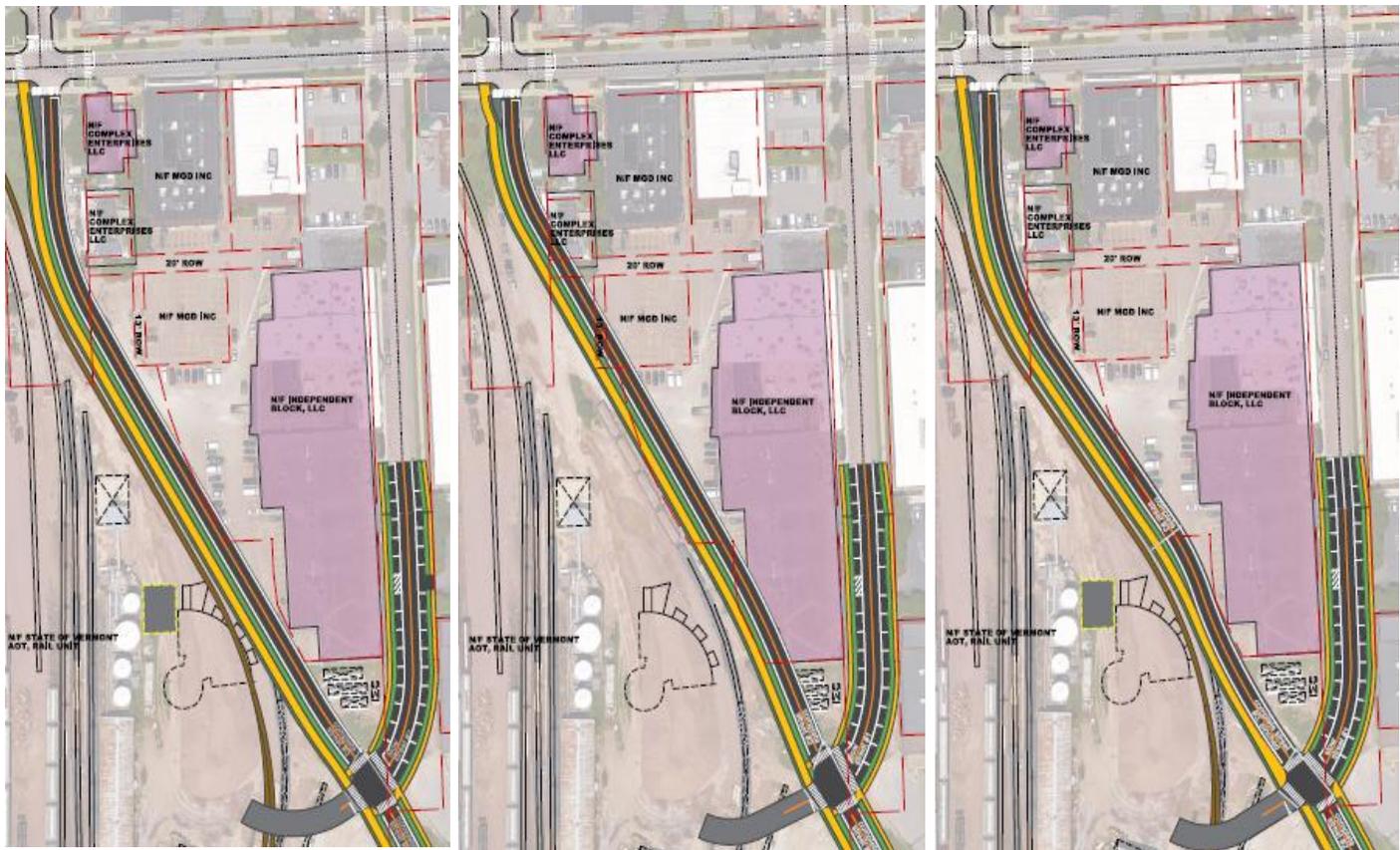
- Variation 1: This variation impacts the Vermont Rail Systems' horn track by relocating westward over the buried roundhouse. There is no impact to buildings.
- Variation 2: This variation impacts the southwest edge of the Independent Block's loading area and the "Rambler" building. There is no impact to the horn track or roundhouse.
- Variation 3: The "Pinched Cross-Section" impacts the horn track and minimizes impacts to the roundhouse and buildings. It provides a narrow cross-section (37-foot minimum) at a pinch-point between the roundhouse and the Independent Block. There is no green strip in the "pinched" segment.

Alignment Variations North of Pine Street Intersection

Variation 1: Impact Horn Track

Variation 2: Impact Buildings

Variation 3: Pinched Cross - Section



Alternative options for the Pine Street/new REP roadway include a signalized “T” intersection, a roundabout, and a “tangent” (realignment of Pine St.) – see figure below.

Signalized T-Intersection

Roundabout

Tangent: Realignment of Pine St



Michael Jager, a property owner, supports this project because it provides relief for the neighborhood. He asked if the amount of new growth in the city and particularly in the South End currently underway combined with the time it will take to actually complete the roadway will still offer the same traffic benefit to the neighborhoods after it’s built. Jonathan responded that the general traffic growth may increase; however, with the REP, there will be less traffic at the Maple St and King St neighborhoods than if the project were not to be built. The Tangent intersection diverts more traffic out of the neighborhoods and onto the REP new road than the other options.

6) Evaluation Results & Ranking of Three REP Alignments

Jonathan presented an evaluation matrix that provided scoring of the three alignment variations and intersection options based on the following criteria: cost estimates, transportation impacts, environmental resource impacts, private property impacts, railyard impacts, and local/regional issues. Based on the evaluation scores the alignments were ranked (from highest to lowest): Variation 3, 1, 2 and the Intersections were ranked Tangent, Roundabout, Signalized “T.” Preliminary total project costs estimates range from \$17.3 to \$21.5 million. Jonathan described the project risks at this point in the process:

Top Identified Project Risks

Hydraulic issues near Superfund area	Conducted field tests of soil and water quality monitoring and installation of test wells in the location of the road alignment
Stormwater	Stormwater management plan identifying ways to accommodate flows from road and surrounding area

Roundhouse location	Physical excavation and survey to confirm location and extent. Advisory Council was open to mitigation through excavation, documentation and capping
Hazardous soils on-site	Assume throughout and manage through cost estimates and construction/engineering
Historic nature of Independent Block	Confirmed that entire building is contributing resource. Advisory Council was open to discuss mitigation of partial physical impacts to the building.
Railyard Operations	VRS engaged throughout. Proposals and costs estimates for relocation certain services on and off-site.

Vermont Rail Systems (VRS) staff were unable to attend tonight so Eleni summarized their comments:

- There are still unresolved issues with mitigation options for railyard operations with all alignment variations
- Alignment variations 1 and 3 are the most disruptive to the operations of the railyard
- Access to the yard from the north is restricted with all variations but especially with 1 and 3
- Railyard operations might require a controlled (signal) access to the yard across from South Champlain St.
- Alignment variation 2 preferable to 1 or 3
- Prefer the “Tangent” option at the Pine Street intersection

In response to a question, Eleni noted that tonight’s conversation and comments from Steering Committee members will be conveyed to VRS.

Jim Lockridge of the King Street Neighborhood Revitalization Corp. asked about costs associated with environmental/safety issues such as idling cars and signals versus roundabouts. Jonathan responded that these issues were not explicitly included in this evaluation but other criteria used during the evaluation are partially addressing the environmental issues.

Neil Mickenberg, Burlington Resident, asked if the project team secured agreements from VRS and private property owners for impacts from the REP. Eleni answered that the team is still working with VRS and will also meet with private property owners in the very near future. Neil expressed concern that the committee cannot make an informed recommendation without understanding the position of the property owners. He’s concerned that we are ahead of ourselves in terms of going to the City Council and making a decision. Eleni responded that the impacts (on all resources) needed to be quantified to better understand the risks of the project. The property owners need this information before they can evaluate their options. Neil noted that the environmental and resource impacts are similar among the variations.

Chris Jolly of FHWA asked about the northern access to the railyard. Jonathan responded that there will be a security fence along the railyard and a break somewhere in the northern end for railway access. Chris asked if an Act 250 permit is required; Jonathan is not sure at this point but he will check and possibly add it to the risks of this project.

7) Discussion and Comments on Alignment Variations & Intersection Alternatives

Neil supports the Tangent intersection in order to reduce the impact on the King Street Neighborhood. There is no dramatic difference among the alignment variations; he suggests being pragmatic by choosing whichever option has the most landowner support to enable the project to proceed.

Jim sees himself as the neighborhood quality-of-life steward. There should be no intrusion on the private buildings and therefore he does not support Variation 2. He cares about safety for all users and therefore does not support Variation 3 because of the reduced green belt where the shared use path abuts the road. His philosophy, integrity, and concern for safety leads him to support Variation 1. As for intersections, there is a group of people in Burlington advancing best transportation practices including the increased safety of roundabouts over traffic signals. This information is critical for informed decision making. He supports the roundabout as the best option based on safety benefits and the best facility to act as a gateway to the downtown.

Michael Monte of the Champlain Housing Trust sees the Tangent intersection as the best choice for the King Street Neighborhood. He's not a fan of roundabouts especially for safe pedestrian access. Variation 1 has the least impact on property owners and provides the economic benefits expressed in the project's Purpose & Need. He hopes that the railroad, as a large entity can be flexible and resourceful and find ways to accommodate changes and improve operations in the yard.

Joan Shannon hopes we can bring attention to the historic aspect of the roundhouse; currently it is underground and out-of-site. She supports the Tangent intersection and she's not a fan of roundabouts. As a bike rider she finds roundabouts difficult to navigate. As for the alignment variations, neighborhood protection should be paramount including employment and economic opportunity and to minimize impact to private property and community.

Alan Hunt, a Burlington Resident, asked if the shared use path is negotiable. Eleni responded that the path meets requirements of the project's Purpose & Need and should remain in the alignments. It was pointed out that we might consider trimming the green belt north of South Champlain to minimize impacts to VRS and other properties— something that VRS also suggested.

Amy Bell of VTTrans noted that the shared use path is the most efficient way to serve both pedestrians and bicyclists. Chapin further noted that it makes important connections to the regional path system.

General conversation ensued which discussed attempts to reduce the overall cross-section. Jonathan replied that in Variation 1 and 3, with a narrower cross-section by eliminating the greenbelt, would still require moving the horn track but would reduce the overall area taken from the railyard and from private property. Jim expressed a strong objection to this potential option that would eliminate the green belt along the shared path.

There was discussion on the historic and archeological resources in the area and it was suggested there are many ways to honor the archeology of this area through interpretive signage and retaining some parts of the historic structures.

Chris asked that the northern entrance to the railyard be indicated on the drawings. Jonathan responded that the next iteration of plans will include this entrance/access as well as all other curb cuts.

Kirsten Merriman Shapiro is concerned that curb cuts are not indicated on the drawings; these are an important element to economic vitality. The Tangent intersection results in an odd triangle of land. She wants to maximize the use of limited land, promote new development, and keep property taxes down. She also posed the question on what will be the future use of 339 Pine?

Chip Mason, Ward 5 City Councilor, suggested that REP should be part of BTV South End. Chapin responded that it will be included when the project is more defined.

Michael Jager thanked the team for addressing all the various interests in this project. He is looking for relief currently from the poor condition of lower Battery Street which significantly impacts his business. Chapin agreed to look at this issue again.

8) Next Steps

This summer, the City Council will consider whether REP should progress with local and state funds only. If they support state and local funding, they will select an option (alignment & intersection) and may move forward with additional plan development (Task 4). If the City and VTrans decide the REP requires federal funding, then REP will revert back into the federal environmental permitting process (NEPA) to evaluate a broad range of alternatives, starting with the three Scoping/PEL Phase 2 REP Alternatives approved by the City Council in 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

ATTENDEES - Members Present

First	Last	Organization
Amy	Bell	VTrans
Rodger	Brassard	W5 NPA
Chris	Jolly	FHWA
Jim	Lockridge	King Street Neighborhood Revitalization Corp.
Kirsten	Merriman Shapiro	CEDO
Neil	Mickenberg	Burlington Resident
Susan	Molson	Burlington DPW
Michael	Monte	CHT
Joan	Shannon	City Council
Chapin	Spencer	Burlington DPW
Allegra	Williams	Local Motion

ATTENDEES - Others Present

First	Last	Organization
Sarah	Bartlett	Vermont DEC
Ilona	Blanchard	Burlington Resident
Scott	Burbank	VHB
Eleni	Churchill	CCRPC
Allen	Hunt	Burlington Resident
Michael	Jager	Burlington Landowner
Chip	Mason	W5 City Councilor
Diane	Meyerhoff	Third Sector Associates
Jonathan	Slason	RSG
Michael B.	Smith	Vermont DEC
Susi	Taylor	Burlington Resident