

# Battery Street Corridor Scoping Study

## Advisory Committee #1

Wednesday, 3/8/23 – 4-5:30pm

In person at the CCRPC Offices, Winooski and online via Teams

### Attendees:

- Committee members: Barbie Alsop, Ward 3; Terry Rivers, Ward 5; Norm Baldwin, DPW; Phet Keomanyvanh, REIB; Gene Bergman, City Council; Brendan Hogan, Public Works Commission; Sophie Sauve, Parks Recreation & Waterfront; Ali Hamedani, Ward 3.
- Project Team: Anne Nelson Stoner, CCRPC; Dayton Crites, DPW; Jenn Conley, VHB; Karen Sentoff, VHB; Drew Gingras, VHB; Jason Charest, CCRPC; Ravi Venkataraman, CCRPC; Elisabeth Sundberg, VHB

### Welcome and Introductions

Drew welcomed the group and went over the agenda for the project. This included the scoping study overview, role of the advisory committee, vision and goals exercise and next steps

Drew Gingras from VHB introduced himself as the Project Manager.

Jenn Conley from VHB introduced herself as project advisor.

Karen Sentoff from VHB introduced herself as a transportation engineer and shared she will be providing the public engagement services throughout the project.

Jason Charest introduced himself as the project manager from CCRPC and shared that Eleni Churchill will be assisting with this project.

Ravi Venkataraman from the City of Burlington DPW introduced himself and shared that he will providing supporting assistance to Dayton Crites who is the project manager for this effort on behalf of the City.

Barbie Alsop introduced herself as a representative of Ward 3.

Terry Rivers introduced herself as a representative from Ward 5.

Norm Baldwin introduced himself as the City of Burlington Engineer.

Phet Keomanyvanh introduced herself as the REIB economic analyst for the City of Burlington.

Gene Bergman introduced himself as a City Council member.

Sophie Sauvé introduced herself as a planner with parks, rec, and waterfront department for the City of Burlington.

Phet shared that she recommends closed caption as a best practice for hybrid and virtual meetings.

Drew shared that they are in the process of scheduling the first public meeting, local concerns meeting, distributing a meeting notice for an April meeting.

Jason opened for general public comment.

Gene asked if this was supposed to be publicized?

Jason clarified that it wasn't, but it's not a closed meeting and members of the public are welcome to attend.

Gene added that if we wanted folks to join that we need to encourage them to join and make more effort to get the information out.

Jason shared that they are required to have a public comment period on the agenda for these meetings, but it is not the intent to invite the public to the meeting as it is an Advisory Committee meeting. We will be getting the website up and running for the meeting materials and announcements to be posted. It is not something that is geared for public input like the upcoming first public meeting and additional engagement efforts will be.

Jason provided an introduction of what a scoping study is, trying to combine a corridor and scoping study together. The project area includes Maple Street to Sherman Street, and the project will be working to develop corridor alternatives at key intersections. There will be scoping and feasibility level detail with the idea that we can get good consensus on those alternatives. The city could then proceed with implementing and fund those alternatives.

Jason added that higher level evaluation at some intersections and will require some future study. Subsequent efforts will follow this study. Similar to the process that Colchester Avenue went through that will keep building upon previous work done. This project will lay the groundwork for a lot of future things and some that will be implemented out of this study.

Drew went over the study area, Battery Street from Maple Street to Sherman Street. He shared that there are a lot of projects going on along the corridor currently. Railyard Enterprise, Main Street, Amtrak connections study, recent bike/ped improvements at Sherman, two-way block facility on Champlain Street, Bank and Cherry Street are in design. It is a very active corridor, and it is a critical north – south corridor.

Sophie added as a reminder that Battery Park is along that corridor, and the city is slated to do a comprehensive plan and noted that those connections to use are very important.

### Scope of Work

Drew went over the general scope of work that starts with an assessment of the corridor as it currently stands. The first public meeting will be a local concerns meeting to understand the concerns and ideas

that public has and use those to build alternatives to make sure that it is meeting the needs of the community. Drew shared the goal is to create a complete transportation system. Throughout the duration of the project, we will be meeting with the AC as well we will refine those alternatives and recommend a future Battery Street. Hopefully alternatives can then move to funding acquisition design.

It was asked if there was a way to connect to the Champlain Parkway Project?

Drew shared that the forecasting done for the Champlain Parkway project will be implemented into the traffic modeling.

Karen went over the community engagement plan and shared they will be leaning on advisory committee to guide and shepherd this project. She added that the advisory committee is more connected to this area on a day-to-day basis than the project team. She added that targeted stakeholder outreach will be a tandem effort with VHB supporting to reach out to folks that haven't been engaged in the past and interact with Battery Street on a regular basis. Recognize that Battery Street can serve as a barrier and make sure people are at the table, and what is facing the corridor and what the envision for the future. She shared that there will be three public meetings and additional forums with TEUC and City Council and DPW commission. She added that spreading the message and ideas that have come up through the process to get collective buy in when finalizing alternatives is imperative. She shared that the project team will be casting the broader net to get input by utilizing an online survey and mapping tool to point out issues and opportunities throughout the corridor to comment on what is happening along the corridor. A lot of different issues and opportunities where folks can interact throughout the process.

Drew continued to share the project schedule and shared that the local concerns meeting happening in mid-April and the project team is currently working through the analysis of the future corridor conditions. After the local concerns meeting, we will define the purpose and need. This will nail down what we are working towards with this effort. As we get into the fall, we will meet with the public for a second time after we have our alternatives and then an implementation plan.

Sophie asked if there are plans for accommodations for translation services?

Drew shared that they will be working with the city to provide those services throughout the public engagement process.

Anne added that they have a couple translators that the RPC uses regularly.

Jenn asked if there are particular stakeholder groups to tap into because that information is always helpful.

Sophie shared she does not have any insights, but it is something they work on every comprehensive plan.

Norm added we need new ways to get at those groups that are underrepresented such as time of day and how often we offer touch points.

Jenn to follow up with Norm on the work they did for other nearby projects.

Phet added that outreach and interpreters doesn't mean we are going to get the people there. In past we have gone to the specific organizations, and she shared there are several different ambassadors who

share out our meeting information. There is a lot of discussion around and she feels that the project is behind on where it needs to be for this level of engagement.

Jenn shared that there is outreach set aside from the public meetings and try to do a focused outreach.

Gene asked if an openness is there to have more than one meeting. It is insufficient to just have one meeting. Consider perhaps doing extra be able to reach that many people over extended and unable to attend a traditional meeting.

Kenn shared the idea of a multiple hour open house, and we are in place that we can engage in a rolling phase. Trying to create a different approach than a traditional public meeting.

It was shared that in April people are not yet into worrying about what is going on during the summertime.

Jenn shared that they think we understand tourism use and what we are getting at is to understand the people who are using it day to day and capturing those peoples input. Some of that we know those answers between tourism and recreation connections.

Jenn asked if there are any community events in mind and if we can figure out how to get them? She added they are hoping to set up a table at the laundromat.

Norm shared he likes the idea having a project website for people to provide comments and give project updates. Some people don't like to come to meetings that can be available from that site.

Drew added that they can set up a constant open stream for public comment and mentioned that that is always available, so people know that is an open forum

Jenn added that we can create QR code to scan for information.

Phet shared that the social media campaign for the census was successful during the data collection. She said we should provide a number they can call for a question for interpreter.

Norm shared that they have that at public works website.

### Role of the Advisory Committee

Jason went over the role of the advisory committee which includes attendance of these meetings, sending materials for you to review and provide comment on. Some of those would be bringing them to the meetings and ask that we be respectful of others' opinions and be welcoming of other perspectives. You represent different entities and while promoting this project to your respective groups, we ask that you bring feedback and questions back to this group. At the end we'll hopefully get consensus on the alternatives.

It was added that if you are not able to make a meeting you are allowed to have someone to sit in for you.

Jenn added that your ongoing involvement and ability to share information about the project will improve the outcomes.

### Vision and Goals

Drew shared as we do background data analysis and study, they want to understand the following:

What is your vision for the future of Battery?

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing Battery Street?

What do you hope this study achieves?

Barbie shared that she is here as a pedestrian and doesn't own a car. My problem with Battery Street is that is a racetrack people drive fast, run stoplights, unpleasant experience of the day. She shared that her friends view Battery Street as the most unsafe Street in Burlington.

Terry added like Williston Road, how do we make it more walk or bike friendly.

Drew asked where along Battery Street do you feel unsafe?

Terry normally crosses at Main Street. Motorists coming up from Maple Street area aren't really a problem at the point, more that motorists coming down the hill are the problem.

Drew added that the lane configuration is confusing.

Terry shared that as a pedestrian you must stop and make sure people are stopping. Better chance going up to College or up to Sherman or Pearl Street.

Jenn asked if you are sharing south of Main is not as bad with speeding.

Terry agreed yes because most turns are left turns it creates more friction and it is not a comfortable place for pedestrian.

Maple to Main is not as bad given it's one lane in each direction. Coming down Maple and turning onto Battery and people are trying to turn right on red there, i.e. dangerous for pedestrians...

It was added that the crossing at Main Street feels unsafe.

Ali joined the meeting late and shared that he lives in Old North End, and he works in healthcare and drives for work to do home visits. He agrees with the speeds that people drive through Battery Street are too fast. He added that he bikes for enjoyment and commuting when he can, he also walks. He praised the temporary separated bike lanes that were along Battery during the Burlington Greenway detour. Hopefully something we can discuss. He added that he knows some teachers at Burlington High School, and shared that a student was recently hit by a car at Cherry Street on their way to the high school.

Phet added where the double lanes are, she has seen many times people turning when people are walking. Flashing signs should be added. In addition, it would be good to make things social for walkers. Something like rain gardens for people to sit and enjoy.

Norm added he is interested on others' opinions, effectively this treats four lanes of traffic. Would like to rebalance the space, figure out how this will interface with other streets and how this will be interfaced with public transit. Have heard for years for people using College Street to access the waterfront.

Sophie shared that Ali is the first time hearing positive feedback on bike lane change. She added that she is disheartened to hear someone was hit crossing. Connective part that is missing, that ability to safely

cross a green space that is right there for all those students and people working downtown. Does feel like the corridor is so wide it is an opportunity to create a boulevard like Street. Really looking forward to the improvements we can envision for Battery Street.

Drew added that the crossing of Battery Street at the northern section is difficult. He added that the Burlington bike path in the tree canopy and how separated you can feel so close by. He asked if that is an inspiration we could pull from? Replicate that feeling to streetscape to make the whole Street feel more inviting.

Gene added the reason it is pleasant is because no one is walking there at night. You cross the berm and gravel area. Coming from the north you got the traffic coming and it merges with park Street, backs up a lot. Building of these lanes are out of line with the size of cars. The connections with the railroad district mean that turns off of Battery into the neighborhoods we have to figure that stuff out to avoid negative impacts to the King Street neighborhood. Challenges for the neighborhood for environmental racism and classism.

Gene added that as we develop Main Street there will be more development near Lake Champlain, more development around the ferry, the connections with the Marina and Perkins Pier and the use of that becomes important. Would love to be able to ride my bike up Battery Street. Planning for what will be infill and future development. Pay attention to the TIF districts.

Barbie shared she is concerned about more housing in the future.

Jenn added that they will look at what expect growth to look like, and how will that impact vehicle volumes.

Karen added that the TIF piece is important to pay attention to.

Gene added that Main Street TIF district those connections will be important.

Ali added to work around the Main Street project coordination and have it less segmented with closures.

Drew added that VHB is the consulting engineers on the Main Street project.

Drew shared the project team is looking at the existing condition, but both of those projects will be complete before this project would be done.

Barbie added that Main Street will be even more utilized in the future and she gave up biking in Burlington because she didn't feel safe along streets like Battery Street.

### Next steps

Drew shared that next steps include finalizing the existing conditions and analysis and scheduled traffic counts. Build out a traffic model to assess the corridor. Prepare for the first public meeting, local concerns meeting. Follow up with scheduling our next check point which will be after the first public meeting.