

Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Technical Committee Meeting – Draft List of Alternatives and Screening Criteria
Date and Time	July 20, 2022, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Technical Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning Bruce Martin (VTrans), Pavement Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Planning Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Planning Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Planning*</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Planning, Observer Ashley Atkins (VTrans), Maintenance Chris Jolly (FHWA), Planning Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), Environmental Jacqueline DeMent (VTrans), Planning, Observer Nick Wark (VTrans), Structures Jon Kaplan (VTrans), Bicycle and Pedestrian*</p>
Study Team Attendees	<p>Ken Robie (D&K) Rich Tetreault (D&K) Bryan Pounds (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Annabelle Dally (WSP)*</p>

*Invited, but not present

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome
 - Katharine Otto, Chair of the Technical Committee, welcomed the committee.
 - Bryan Pounds, WSP, provided an update that Katharine Otto will serve as the Committee Chair following Joe Segale’s retirement. Jacqueline DeMent from VTrans will assist Katharine moving forward.
2. Review Purpose and Need Statement (P&N)
 - Bryan Pounds provided an overview of the (P&N).
3. Review the four groups of alternatives and screening criteria

- Bryan Pounds and Steve Chiaramonte, WSP, reviewed the four alternative groups and the screening criteria.
- Jeff Ramsey, VTrans, pointed out that Equity isn't identified under the P&N, but it is a screening criteria.
 - i. Bryan Pounds explained that equity is considered under "quality of life" in the P&N, but the team felt it is an important screening criterion that should stand alone.
- 4. Review public outreach
 - Bryan Pounds reviewed the three recent public workshops that were held in May and June 2022 to gather public feedback about the long list of potential alternatives and the screening criteria.
- 5. Discussion
 - Bryan Pounds asked the group what they liked and/or disliked about the long list of potential alternatives.
 - i. Chris Jolly, FHWA, asked the team if the Route 22A projects that VTrans is currently working on will be impacted by the alternatives proposed.
 - 1. Katharine Otto explained that there are 22A corridor projects on VTrans calendar – some quick projects (like resurfacing) and some more in-depth (like roadway redesign). These projects are planned to be completed by VTrans regardless of what is determined through the PEL Study.
 - ii. Chris Jolly stated that overall, the content presented sounds good, but he will need more time to review the screening criteria. He asked what process was used to develop the screening criteria?
 - 1. Bryan Pounds explained that the screening criteria are a combination of content from the P&N and public input.
 - iii. Jeff Ramsey pointed out the four new road alternatives on the map and asked if it is possible for all four to be considered as alternatives?
 - 1. Bryan Pounds acknowledged that it is possible for all four to be considered alternatives if they make it through the screening criteria process. Refining the alternatives and potential alignments will not be considered until the alternatives go through the screening criteria process.
 - 2. Katharine Otto also noted that the orange alternative on the new roads map was added more recently based on input received during the public workshops asking for a new road alternative that does not require a new bridge.
 - iv. Nick Wark, VTrans, expressed concern that the P&N "supports the community over, for example, the freight operator needs." He asked if the P&N is balanced between against all users – community verses road network users.
 - 1. Bryan Pounds further explained that we have heard from the public that they understand the importance of truck traffic in the

- area and know there is a need to balance the needs of the community with those of the trucking companies. The community doesn't want the freight industry to be negatively impacted.
2. Stephen Chiaramonte also noted that the trucking association was engaged early on in this process and will continue to be part of the discussion.
- v. Nick Wark asked if a PEL Study ends with 1 alternative or multiple?
 1. Bryan Pounds explained that the PEL Study is intended to recommend a set of alternatives for the subsequent NEPA process. The current long list of potential alternatives will be narrowed down through the screening criteria process, and future refinement of the alternatives will help determine which are advanced.
 - vi. Nick Wark also noted that the P&N seems to be skewed against truck needs. The P&N states “improve” quality of life for community, but “maintain opportunities” for movement and freight – these adjectives seem to show bias built into the P&N.
 1. Ken Robie, D&K, explained that this was intentional. The problem through Vergennes isn't a trucking problem. The problem statement is that there are impacts to Downtown Vergennes and how it impacts Vergennes. The Study is looking to improve the environment in Vergennes without causing disproportional harm anywhere else.
 - vii. John Bull, Town of Ferrisburgh), expressed that a new road alternative would be an improvement for the area.
 - viii. Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development, asked what does “*promote greater destination access to downtown Vergennes for all modes*” in the screening criteria mean?
 1. It asks if the alternative improves access to downtown Vergennes as a regional destination.
 2. He followed up and asked if this statement is meant to include all freight, including trucks?
 - a. Bryan Pounds added that local freight is an important component of the downtown and should be considered as part of destination access.
 - b. He followed up and suggested the language be changed to reflect access improvement and not traffic increase. He suggested changing the language to “improve” instead of “increase.”
 - ix. Ashley Atkins, VTTrans, asked when will the team get into the details of the alternatives?
 1. Bryan Pounds explained that after the alternatives have been vetted through the screening criteria process then the remaining

alternatives will be refined, and the alignments will be designed. The next step in the process will be the results of the screening which will be shared with the Committee soon.

- x. Chris Jolly noted that when the screening criteria say “reduce truck noise and emissions” that this statement will apply to not only Downtown Vergennes, but also the area around Otter Creek and surrounding areas.
 - 1. Bryan Pounds agreed and said it is important that the Study team considers not pushing the problem elsewhere.
- Bryan Pounds asked the group if there are alternatives or screening criteria that are not listed that need to be included?
 - i. No answer.
 - ii. Katharine Otto explained that we have heard from the boating community, and they are concerned about a potential new bridge. They want to make sure that the bridge would be passable by sail boats. With that she asked if there are any additional criteria that need to be considered based on this concern?
 - 1. The group reported that the Coast Guard will need to be consulted for permitting and potentially a study of waterway users.
 - 2. Shannon Haggett, City of Vergennes, expressed that having a second bridge would be good for safety redundancy.
 - iii. Ashley Atkins asked if there is a timeframe on the alternatives? Would some alternatives take longer to implement than others? Is there any opportunity to address low-hanging fruit alternatives while waiting on larger alternatives to be reviewed and implemented?
 - 1. Bryan Pounds explained that people have offered forward a combination of alternatives and that may be a possibility.
 - 2. The group asked if a screening criteria should be added to address the timeframe considerations of each alternative?
 - 3. The Study team explained that we have seen in previous studies where short-term, easy-to-accomplish recommendations were added into upcoming work happening as part of another project
 - 4. The Study team also explained that as part of the PEL Study, the team will create an implementation plan to help move the proposed alternative(s) along.
 - iv. Fred Kenney asked if the short-list of alternatives (that make it through screening) will be evaluated for the proposed length of time and cost to complete?
 - 1. Bryan Pounds explained that the short-list of alternatives that are screened out at this stage of the Study will be ones that don’t meet the P&N or are not viable based on the screening criteria. The length and cost go more into implementation planning.
- Bryan Pounds asked the group if the workshop feedback surprised anyone?

- i. Jim Larrow, City of Vergennes, asked if the new orange road alternative is new and if it was presented at the workshops?
 - ii. Katharine Otto explained that this option was not on the workshop boards but was recommended by workshop participants. The new orange road alternative does not require the addition of another bridge. This option is a middle ground, moving traffic out of Downtown, but not out of Vergennes. Based on the feedback the project team added this as an alternative.
 1. Jim Larrow expressed concern the new orange road alternative would add another steep hill. If the team is working to minimize the impacts of the steep hills adding another steep hill would be problematic. He would like this option to be removed from the possible alternatives based on the terrain.
6. Quorum
 - Katharine Otto called for consensus as to if the long list of alternatives and the screening criteria are thorough enough.
 - i. All 9 voting members present responded Yes.
7. Member Updates
 - Katharine Otto called for any member updates
 - i. No updates were reported.
8. Next Steps
 - Bryan Pounds stated that the team is looking to hold another Technical Committee meeting in early fall.

Katharine Otto closed the meeting.