

Land Use Visioning Workshop Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Virtual Land Use Visioning Public Workshop
Date and Time	January 9, 2024 - 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Location	Online via Zoom
Invitees	All Members of the Public
Study Team	Katharine Otto, VTrans (Project Manager) Amanda Holland, VTrans Mike Winslow, ACRPC Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC Stephanie Camay, WSP Stephen Chiaramonte, WSP Annabelle Dally, WSP Delia Makhetha, WSP Maya Miller, WSP Laura Toole, WSP Kait Campbell, D&K Emily Lewis, D&K Dan Mallach, D&K Jim Gish, Community Liaison, VHB
Staff to assist Study Team	Melissa Stephen, D&K Donna Johnson, D&K Katie O'Sullivan, WSP Brendan Kelly, WSP Matthew Arancio, VTrans Jacqui Antonivich, D&K Jenny Austin, D&K

Number of public attendees: Approximately 50

Welcome, Introductions, Study Overview, and Current Status

Katharine Otto, Planning Coordinator with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and Project Manager for the Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages Study (Vergennes PEL Study) welcomed attendees, stated the purpose of the evening's meeting, and introduced the members of the Study Team in attendance that evening.

She then gave an overview presentation of the PEL Study's Purpose and Need, a timeline of the study and potential future work related to a new road if it were to be built, and next steps in the Study process.

"Land" and "Use" Overview

Dan Mallach, landscape architect and planner with DuBois & King (D&K) and Task 5 Land Use Lead for the Vergennes PEL Study, continued the presentation portion of the workshop with an overview of planning considerations as they pertain to "Land" (soils, rocks, waterways, wetlands, slope, contours, forests, fields) in the Study area, and "Use" types (residential, working lands, commercial, institutional/civic, industrial, open space/recreation), as these elements are informing Study decision-making and design processes. He then introduced the format of the evening's breakout group discussions.

Breakout Groups

As guided by Study Team facilitators, the breakout groups consisted of members of the public in several virtual rooms to brainstorm and discuss land use options for specific routes. Members of the public indicated via a "popup" question which route they were interested in, and were assigned to a virtual room based on that information.

The breakout room sessions began with the virtual "fly-through" visualizations of the route. Then, each room utilized virtual Zoom whiteboards that included an aerial map with the specific route overlaid (the same base image as with the in-person workshops), and virtual land-use icons and post-it notes.

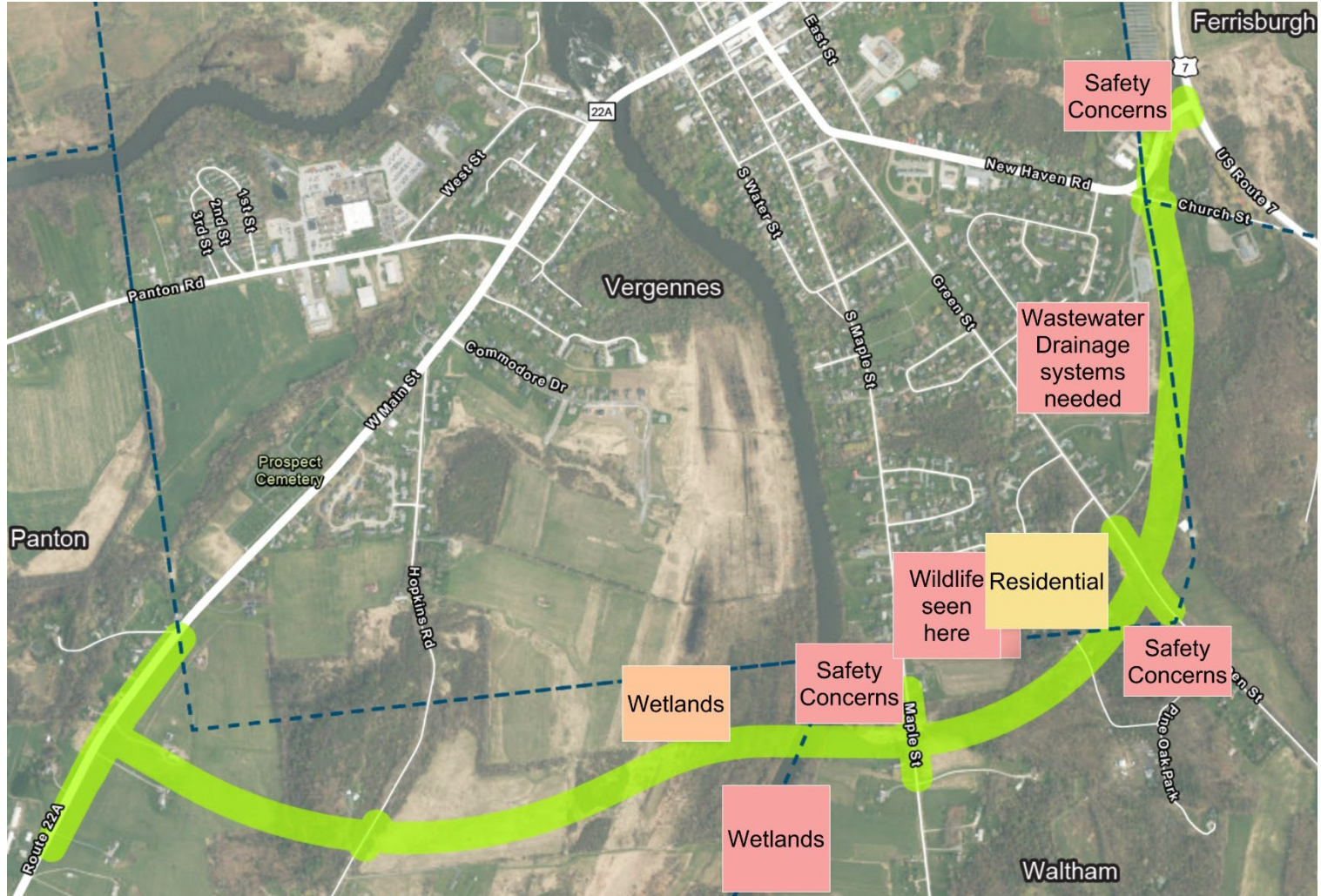
Discussion and corresponding documentation addressed existing natural features, current farm vehicle and truck travel, local history, desire for certain types of uses and not others, connectivity and accessibility, public safety and noise. The breakout groups lasted for approximately 30 minutes each; after the first breakout room session, people were again able via the popup question to select their route for the second session. Highlights, notes, and "screen shots" of the virtual white boards are included herein.

Green Route Breakout Rooms

Green Route Group 1

Facilitator: Dan Mallach, D&K

Note-taker: Kait Campbell, D&K



Highlights:

- Concerns regarding wildlife habitat and wildlife crossings.
- Concerns about intersection design and safety.

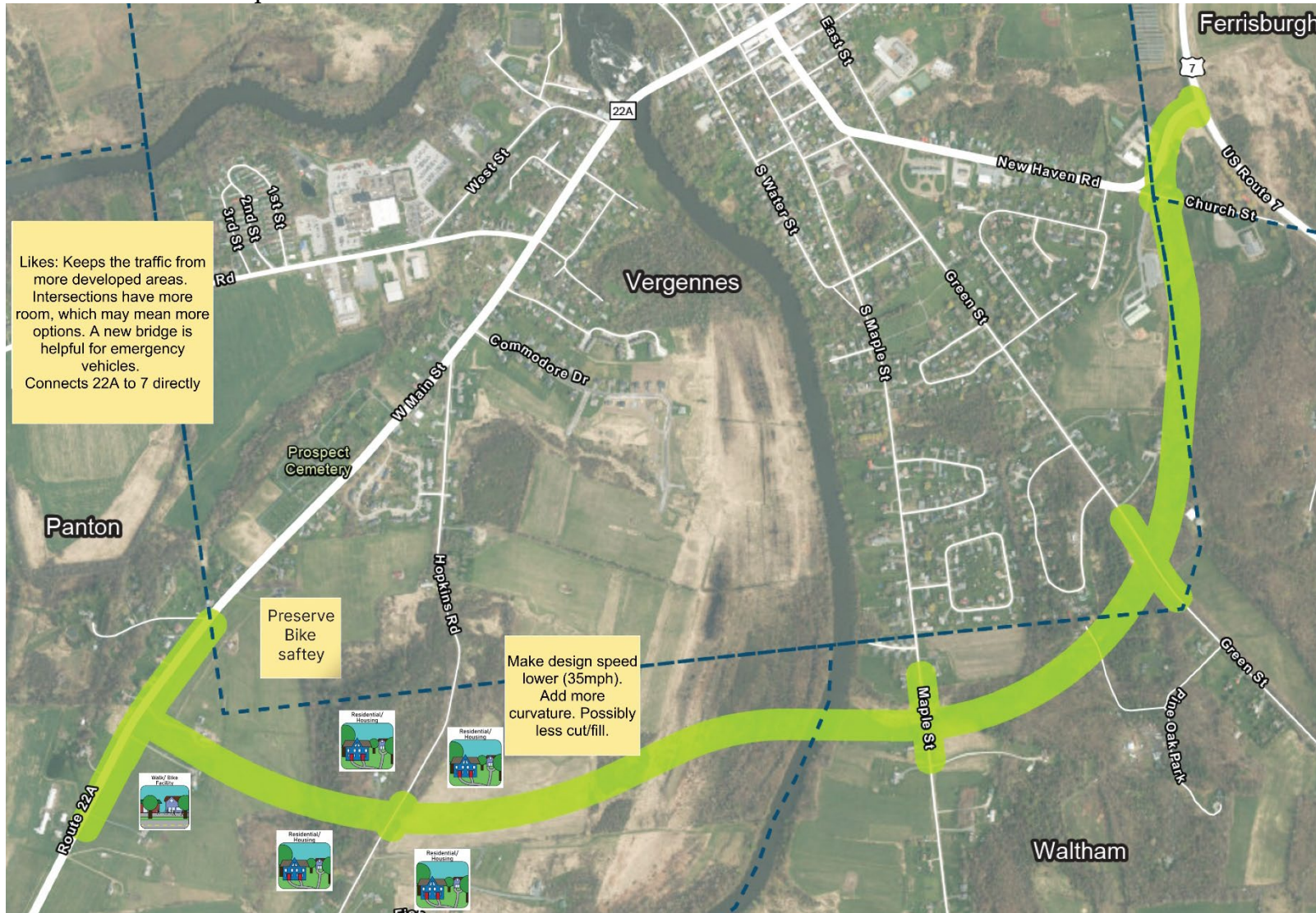
Notes:

- Concern was voiced about the Intersection with Route 7. It was felt that taking a right turn would be dangerous.
- Concerns noted about impacts to wildlife and wildlife crossing. Particularly in the area of the water tower and municipal property around it.
- The intersection of New Haven Road and Route 7 is challenging.

Green Route Group 2

Facilitator: Dan Mallach, D&K

Note-taker: Kait Campbell, D&K



Highlights:

- Concerns regarding wildlife crossings along a Green Route.
- Concerns about potential high speed limits along a new road.
- Desire for traffic calming and bike ped infrastructure that is separated from the roadway.

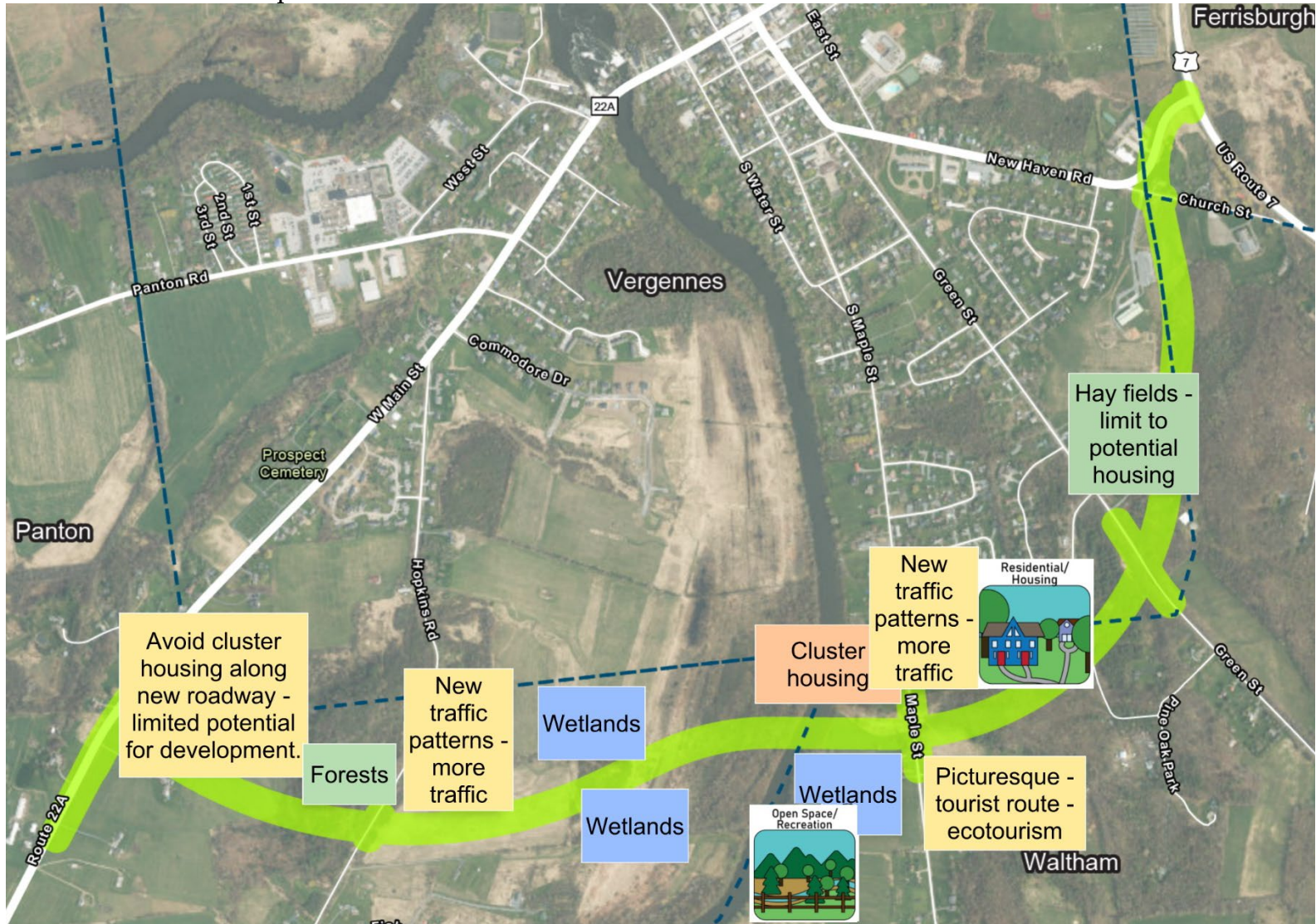
Notes:

- Support for a design speed of 30 MPH would allow for a more natural and rural style road, one that included curves, etc. for traffic calming purposes.
- A separated bike lane was discussed.
- Support for the Green Route was voiced because it stays out of the more significantly populated areas in Vergennes and it requires a new bridge, which Vergennes needs.

Green Route Group 3

Facilitator: Stephanie Camay, WSP

Note-taker: Melissa Stephen, D&K



Highlights:

- Wetlands on the North and South sides of the proposed Green Route in Waltham.
- Desire to keep land uses between Route 22A and Maple St. largely as they are.
- Maintain open space.

Notes:

- Residential housing could be encouraged closer to Vergennes (near Green St.)
- There are a number of natural resource constraints (wetlands, etc.) along the proposed route between Route 22A and Maple St.
- Open space/natural areas are preferred between Route 22A and Maple St.

Orange Route Breakout Rooms

Orange Route Group 1

Facilitator: Laura Toole, WSP

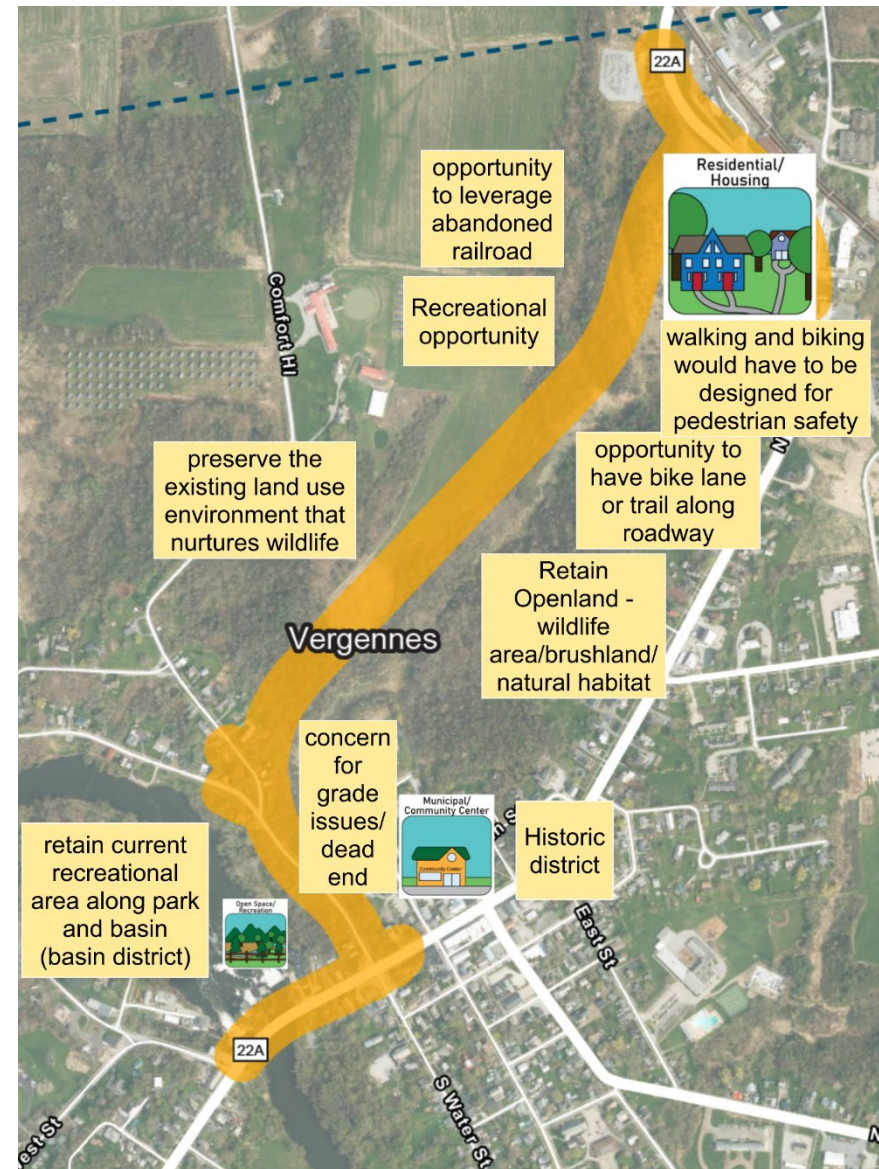
Note-taker: Maya Miller, WSP

Highlights:

- Concerns about impacts to existing recreational uses.
- Desire to maintain open space and enhance recreational uses.

Notes:

- Concerns about trucks getting stuck on the hill coming up from the Main Street bridge toward MacDonough Drive.
- The creek below the falls is considered a recreational “gem.” Any design of a potential Orange Route should maintain or facilitate public access to and from the creek.
- The area on the eastern side of where the proposed route enters MacDonough Drive is part of Vergennes’ historic district.
- Battery Hill would effectively be “dead-ended” due to changes in elevation with the proposed route.
- Potash Brook is used by wildlife, deer, bobcat, etc.; the area is largely “swampland.”



- There would be opportunities for separated bike path or walking trails.
- Generally in favor of keeping green space.
- There is a former railroad bed that could be an excellent walking path. It is currently used for that purpose, but is not an official trail.

Orange Route Group 2

Facilitator: Laura Toole, WSP

Note-taker: Maya Miller, WSP

Highlights:

- Focus creative energy on the entrance to MacDonough Drive to preserve and enhance the Otter Creek recreation area.

Notes:

- Concerns about “bisecting” existing farmland.
- Avoid diminishing the experience of users of the Otter Creek recreation area.
- This could be an opportunity to increase housing opportunities in existing residential areas around MacDonough Drive and Comfort Hill.
- Are there new ways to create separated bike/ped connectivity along the Orange Route?



Pink & Blue Routes Breakout Rooms

Pink & Blue Routes Group 1

Facilitator: Emily Lewis, D&K

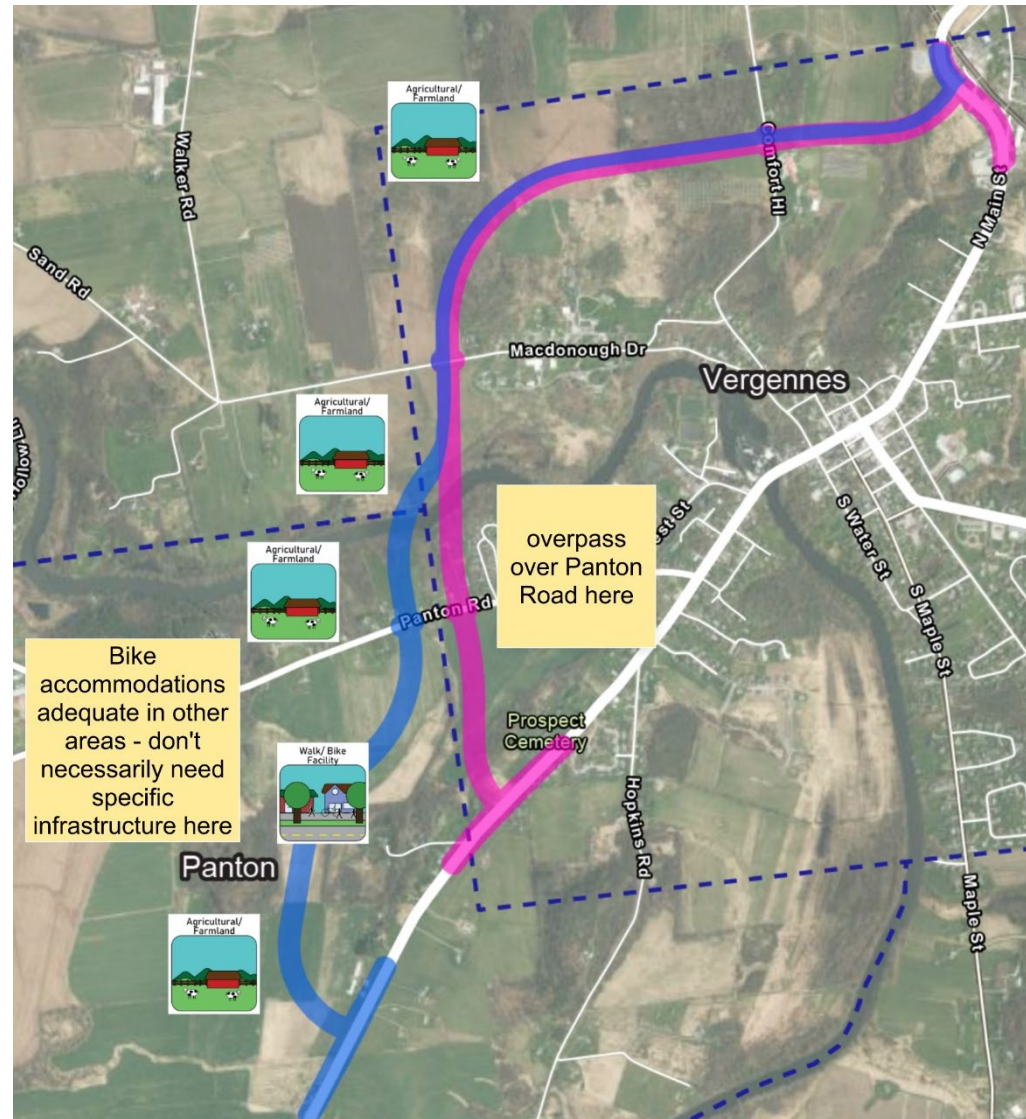
Note-taker: Brendan Kelly, WSP

Highlights:

- There is a vineyard in Panton that would be adversely impacted by the Blue Route.
- New commercial uses are not desired in Panton along a new Blue Route or near a new Pink Route.

Notes:

- The vineyard's owners would prefer to have Blue Route moved to avoid their property.
- There is interest in the inclusion of bike/ped infrastructure along the Blue Route.
- Preserve farmland, with no industrial or commercial development along these routes.



Pink & Blue Routes Group 2

Facilitator: Emily Lewis, D&K

Note-taker: Brendan Kelly, WSP

Highlights:

- Strong support for walkability along with a new road.
- Take care with building near natural features, including soft soils.
- Limit impacts to existing agricultural lands and support existing businesses.

Notes:

- Crossing through or near the cemetery would be strongly opposed, particularly by family members with loved ones there.
- Housing is desired, but it is challenging to make it happen in desired places.
- Bike/ped infrastructure along the Blue Route would be a positive.
- Preserve Farmland, no industrial or commercial development along these routes.
- Concern about proximity of Pink Route to the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park.

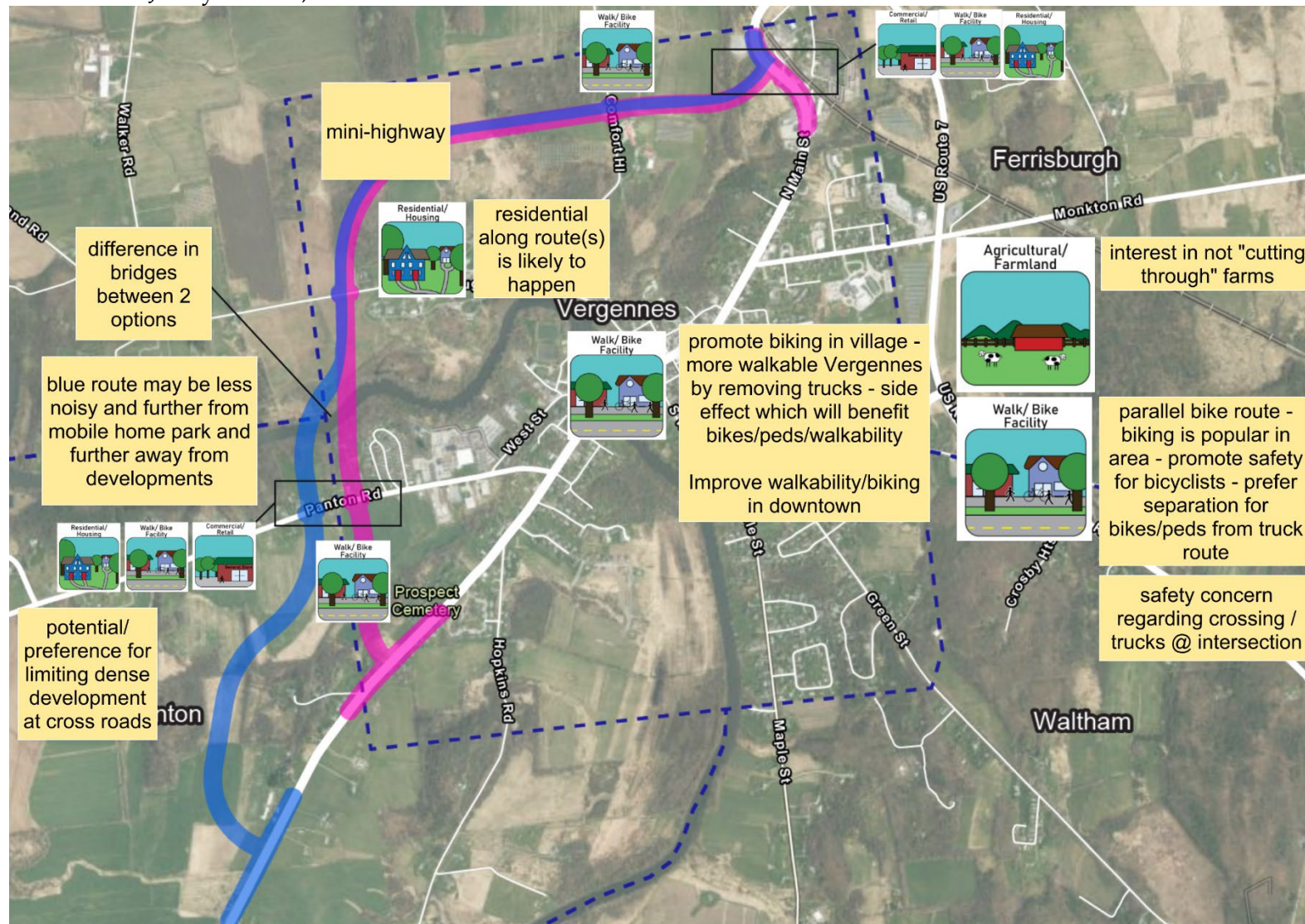


- Impact of a new road on the Comfort Hill Kennels should be considered.
- Bike/ped should be off the road.
- Housing is very expensive to build, even if we want it.
- Otter Creek is a wonderful place for recreation, and it should be supported with new accesses.
- The area of Comfort Hill should also include new access to nature and recreation.

Pink & Blue Routes Group 3

Facilitator: Mike Winslow, ACRPC

Note-taker: Jenny Austin, D&K



Highlights:

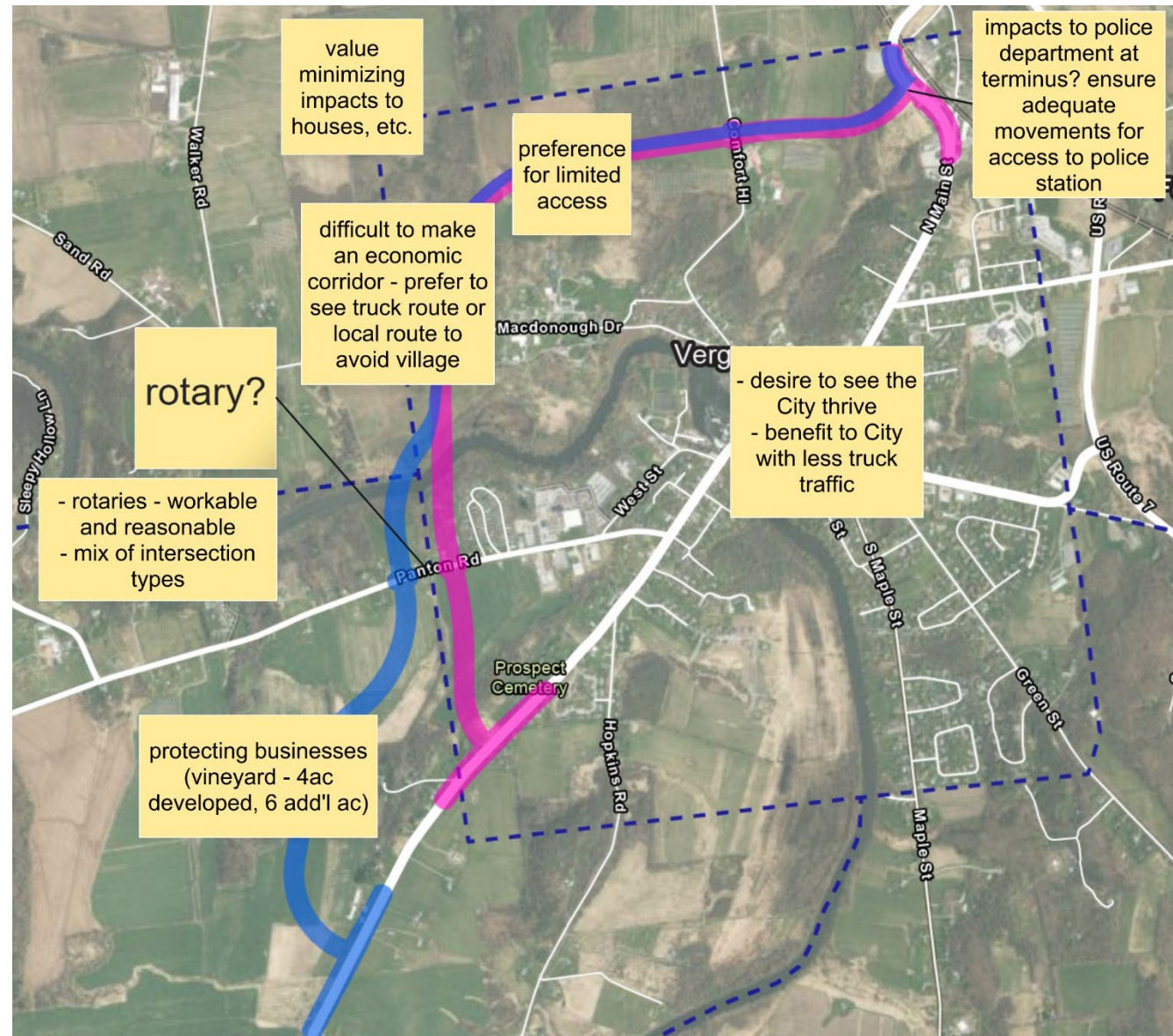
- A Blue Route would reduce noise impacts along Main Street and the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park (compared with the Pink Route).
- Protect existing businesses along a new route so they do not get impacted.

Notes:

- Likes the lower impact of the bridge on the Blue Route.
- Multiple attendees prefer the Blue Route as it may have less of a noise impact on the Mobile Home Park and the city.
- Main Road crossings (like Pantton and N. Main) would be great locations for walkable, higher density development. Both can be served by town water.
- Bike/pedestrians may find this route dangerous. Suggest not encouraging bike ped along route (except in areas where higher density development and walkability are encouraged).
- Any bike ped accommodations should have separation from Route.
- Creating a more walkable Vergennes is highly important. Removing the trucks from downtown can help achieve that.
- Farms should not be divided. Limiting development to existing intersections would make the most sense from the perspective of limiting impacts on farms.
- The road should be designed to encourage new development at existing intersections.

Pink & Blue Routes Group 4

Facilitator: Mike Winslow, ACRPC
Note-taker: Jenny Austin, D&K



Highlights:

- Protect existing businesses along route so they do not get impacted.
- Minimize impacts on existing properties.
- Make a new route a limited access highway.

Notes:

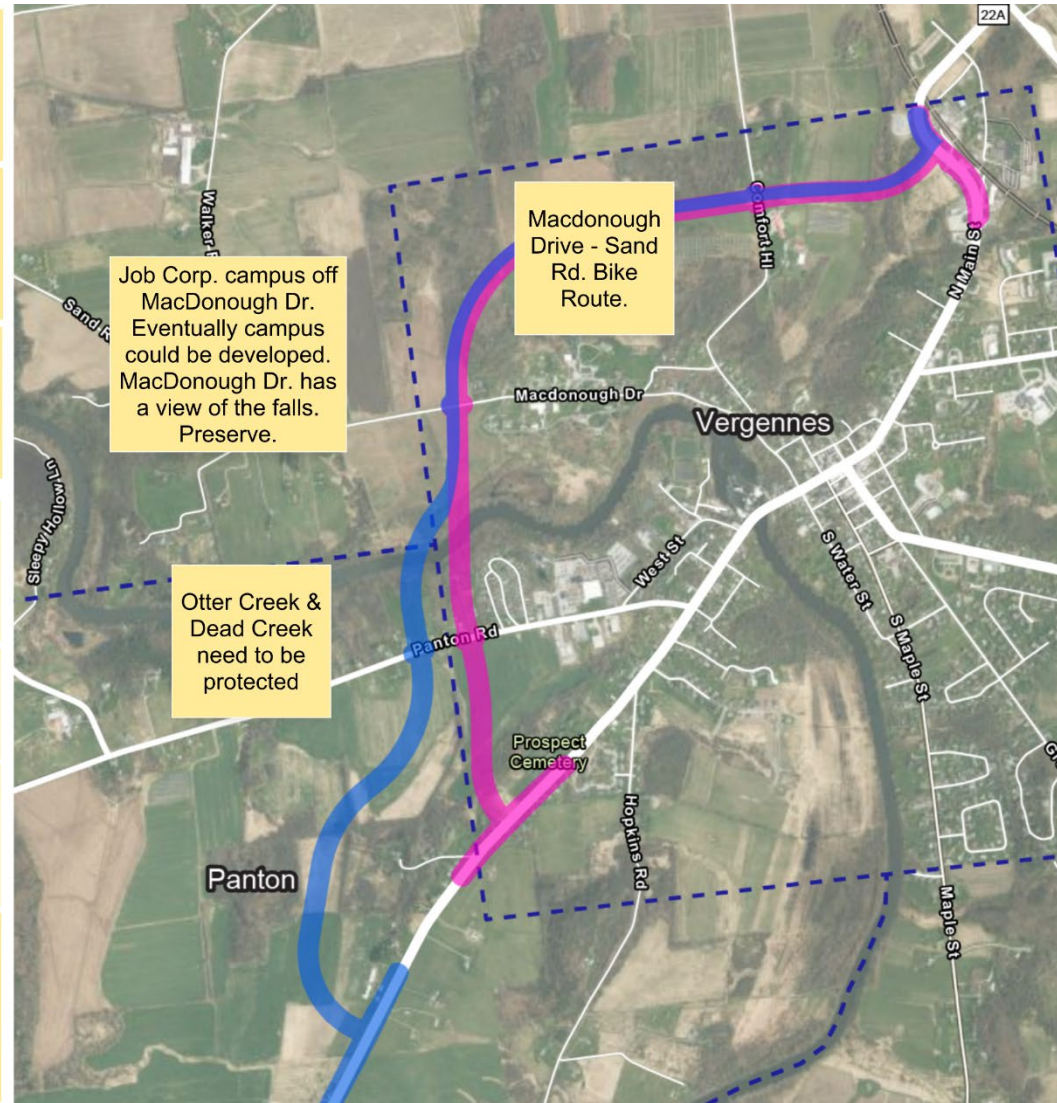
- Perception that the Blue Route impacts more homes, etc. than other Routes.
- It would be challenging to make the Pink or Blue Routes an economic corridor.
- General consensus is to maintain the route as limited access. This serves the purpose of removing truck traffic from Vergennes, but does not encourage development patterns that would take away from downtown Vergennes vitality.
- Mixed opinions on whether or not bike/ped access should be encouraged; bicycle activity is important to the vitality of Vergennes village.
- Preserve Farmland, no industrial or commercial development along these routes.
- At intersections, rotaries are generally desired, depending on the road.
- Design of intersection with North Main St. would need to be designed so as not to impact the police station.

Pink & Blue Routes Group 5

Facilitator: Katie O’Sullivan, WSP

Note-taker: Donna Johnson, D&K

A cultural outreach or cultural study, i.e., historic	What should be avoided. Keep somewhat as is.	Walk-along route ability more so - bicycles.
Eg, route 7 protected by environmental easements. Undeveloped and open	Crossing the route is a concern.	Trucks don't do well in roundabouts
Pedestrian? Comment: limited	Concerning roundabouts. City not rural.	What type of bike path? Wide Shoulders.
Concerned about crossover on Panton Rd. That could be very dangerous. Want trucks to be impeded. However traffic moves quickly. Ideally over or under. Expensive. Possibly traffic light.		
Bike riding is an industry in Vermont and in Addison County particularly. Due to our rural scenery. Emphasize whats attractive to bike riders.		
other models: less development, the better. All the open land, how much is owned by the state. How much is individual owners; how farm. Also environmental easements to maintain as developed.		
Additional Recreational Opportunities: This is a truck route. People may not want to be in this area due to truck traffic. Doesn't connect the dots. This area is not feasible for recreation. Getting the trucks out of downtown Vergennes then opportunity to improve downtown Vergennes.		



Highlights:

- Desire to protect and preserve Otter Creek and Dead Creek.
- Encourage bicycle use. Keep pedestrian uses to a minimum.

Notes:

- The Blue Route's bridge appears to be less intrusive into the Otter Creek than the Pink Route bridge, which is preferred for protecting the creek.
- The Job Corps campus could be developed more fully. The land around it is a resource.
- Roundabouts are not preferred as they are not consistent with rural development.
- Need appropriate intersection treatments, unless a bridge can be installed. Signalized intersections would be better than roundabouts.
- Bicycling would be a concern with tractor trailer trucks, particularly at intersections. Bike tours pass through the area pretty regularly. MacDonough Drive/Sand Road gets a lot of bicycle use.
- Wide shoulders could be a design approach for supporting bicycle use.
- Limited pedestrian use. The priority of this route is for trucks.
- Vergennes to Middlebury is a good example of how the route should be developed – largely undeveloped and open.
- Desire not to develop further along this Route.

Purple Route Group 1

Facilitator: Steve Chiaramonte, WSP

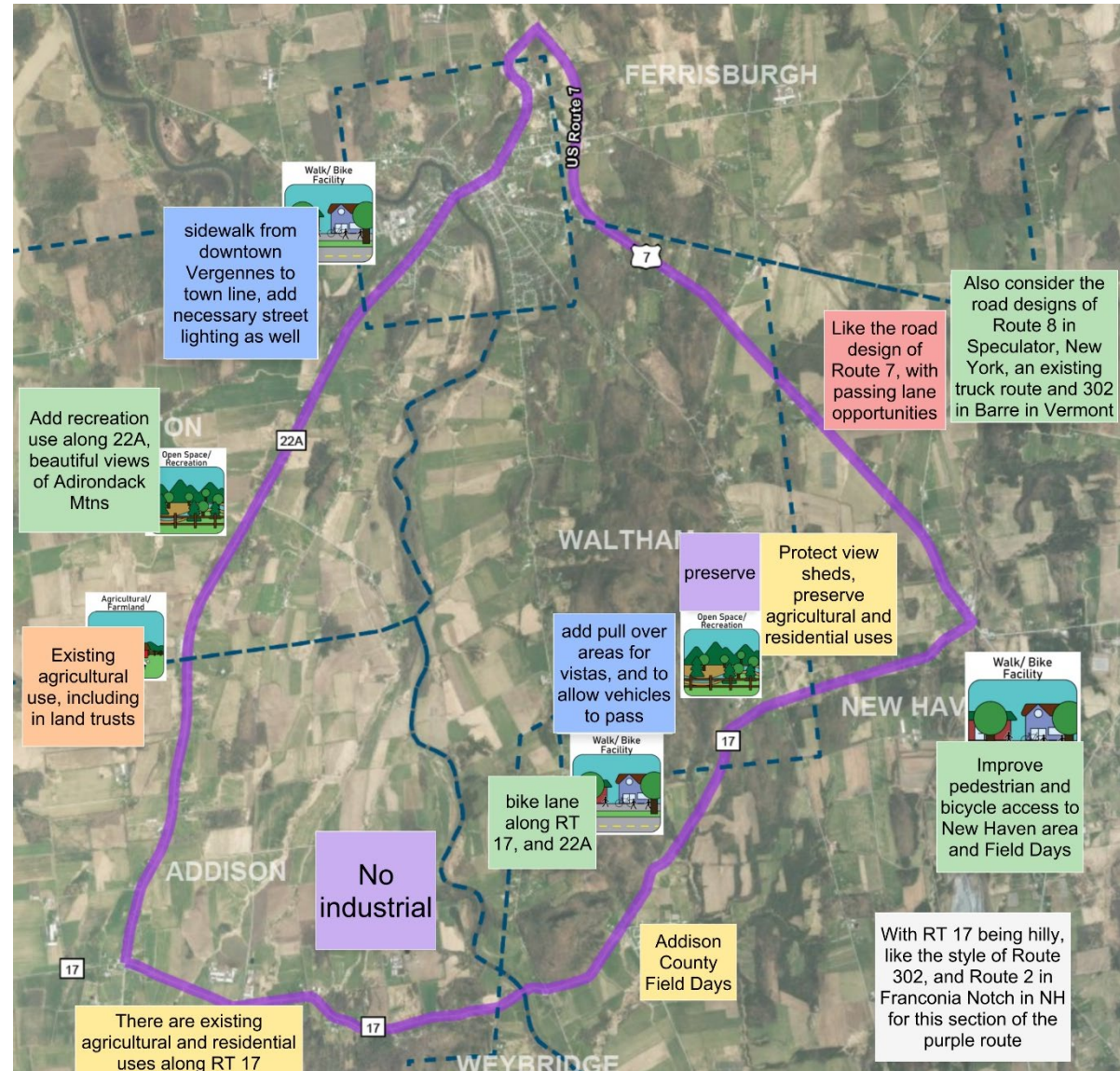
Note-taker: Elaine Ezerins, WSP

Highlights:

- Preference to maintain a similar style of agricultural and residential development (as currently exists) along this Route.
- Desire to preserve open space and encourage outdoor recreation.

Notes:

- Concerns about safety as it relates to intersections.
- Preserve existing agriculture.
- Create a walking or biking trail that takes advantage of existing views.
- Residential/agricultural along Route 17 is preferred. Preserve the open space.

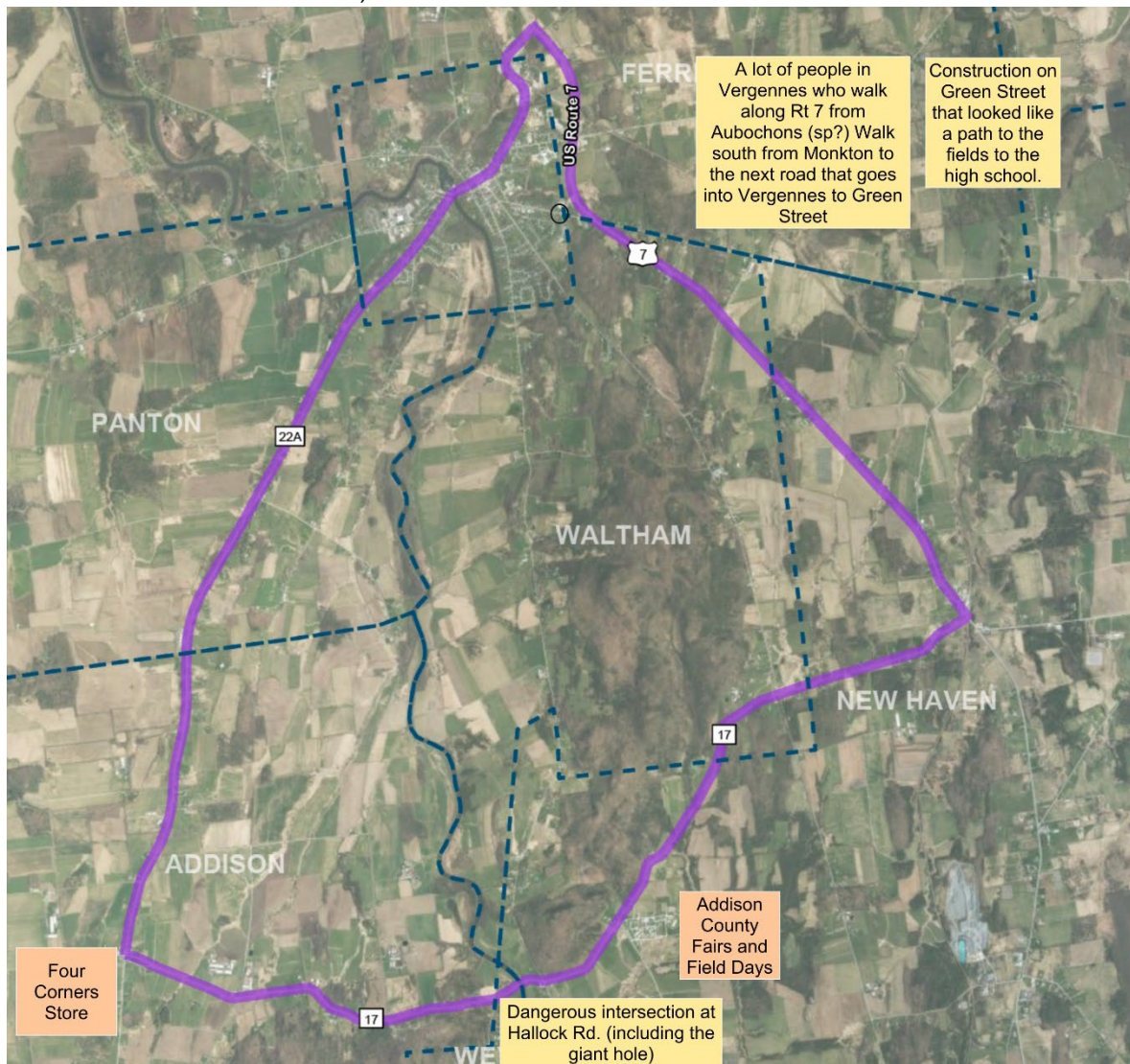


- Install a bike lane on Routes 17 and 22A.
- Light industrial is discouraged.
- Providing non-vehicle access (bike/ped) in this area would be very beneficial.
- There should be sidewalks on the edge of Vergennes City to the town line.
- Will need better lighting if cycling and pedestrian use increases.
- Some of the existing farmland along this area is permanently preserved.
- Open recreation land could be beneficial in the Panton area along this Route.
- Route 7 in VT and Route 302 in NH are good examples of what the group would like to have land uses in this Route reflect. Also, Route 8 through Speculator, NY in the Adirondacks.
- Suggest the addition of pull-offs to allow passing and scenic overlooks.

Purple Route Group 2

Facilitator: Amanda Holland, Vtrans

Note-taker: Elaine Ezerins, WSP



- Other Roads that RT 17 could look like**
- Walking:**
 - These roads aren't considered walkable areas
 - 17 is not very walk friendly
 - Walking on RT 22A is "suicidal"
- Cycling on Route 17 has always been challenging and scary**
- Biking:**
 - With an investment on 17, could this be bikeable?
 - Yes, 17 could be used with improvements. Currently somewhat dangerous.
 - As a cyclist, I wouldn't gravitate to a road that had more truck traffic.
 - Kelly Brush ride happens annually on 17. Kelly is a hand cycling athlete and it is a big event in the adaptive community.
- Bridge across Otter Creek is already very narrow.**
- Interested in what landowners and truckers on 17 think of this**
- Intersection of 22A and 17 is kind of a local hang out (Addison 4 Store). Seems like this could be busy and dangerous. Intersection of 17 and 7 could prove difficult given the topography of the hill.**
- Additional access to Otter Creek on 17 would be great for additional recreational use.**
- Addison Town Hall on 17 and 22A. Stop light to accommodate northbound trucks. Concerns about noise and the existing dangerous intersection.**
- Concerns about the long term volumes of the trucks. Will this change be a wise investment in the long term.**

Highlights:

- Desire to keep Route 17 land uses as they are.
- Route 17 is not currently considered walkable-- not sure it could be made so given the lack of destinations.
- Route 17 could be made bike-able, for recreation purposes, but not on-road if there are hundreds of trucks.

Notes:

- Addison Four Corners may need a full stop light (currently N/S blinking yellow, E/W blinking red), but this could increase noise due to air brakes. This is already a dangerous intersection.
- Walking on Route 22A is "suicidal."
- The bridge over the Otter Creek on Route 17 is narrow – can it accommodate hundreds more trucks per day?
- The intersection of Routes 17 and 7 would need to be reconfigured due to the topography of the hills, the railroad tracks and the wetlands.
- It would be good to build additional access to Otter Creek along Route 17.
- Bicycling along Route 17 is already challenging and "scary."
- Make sure that we talk to current property owners along Route 17.
- Talk to truckers.
- The Kelly Brush annual bicycle ride happens along Route 17. This is an important event for adaptive recreation community.