

Technical Committee and Agency Coordination Meeting Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Concepts Development and Screening, Technical Committee and Agency Coordination	
Date and Time	March 1, 2023, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting	
Attendees	<p>Technical Committee</p> <p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning</p> <p>Alysha Kane (VTrans), Maintenance</p> <p>Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Municipal Planning</p> <p>Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic</p> <p>Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen</p> <p>Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway</p> <p>Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance</p> <p>Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Land Use Planning</p> <p>Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental</p> <p>Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Regional Planning</p> <p>John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Chris Jolly (FHWA), Planning</p> <p>Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), Environmental</p> <p>Jacqueline DeMent (VTrans), Planning, Observer</p> <p>James (Jim) LaCroix (VTrans), Structures</p> <p>Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Planning, Observer *</p> <p>Jon Kaplan (VTrans), Bicycle and Pedestrian*</p>	<p>Agency Partners</p> <p>Federal Agencies:</p> <p>Christopher Jolly & Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA)</p> <p>Mike Adams (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)</p> <p>Gary Coot (U.S. Coast Guard)</p> <p>Tim Timmermann, Beth Alafat, & Nathan Margason (U.S. EPA)</p> <p>Christian Paske, Eric Koons, & David Robbins* (FEMA)</p> <p>Obediah Racicot (U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation)*</p> <p>Susi Von Oettingen (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)*</p> <p>State Agencies:</p> <p>Billy Coster (Agency of Natural Resources)</p> <p>Laura Trieschmann & Scott Dillon (Community Development & Vermont Division for Historic Preservation)</p> <p>Air Rockland-Miller & Ryan Patch (Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets)</p> <p>Amy Tomasso* & Chris Cochran* (Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Department of Housing and Community Development)</p> <p>Diane Bothfeld (Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets)*</p> <p>Eric Pembroke (Buildings and General Services, Vermont Agency of Administration)*</p>

Study Team Attendees	Katharine Otto (VTrans) Mike Winslow (ACRPC) Jacqueline DeMent (VTrans) Amy Bell (VTrans) Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Annabelle Dally (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP) Ken Robie (DuBois & King) Adam Lougee (ACRPC)*
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*Invited, but not present

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

Katharine Otto, Chair of the Technical Committee (the committee), called the committee and Agency Partners meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and informed the committee that the meeting would focus on discussing the secondary screening.

2. Agenda

Katharine Otto reviewed the agenda. The meeting would include a reminder of the goals of the PEL study, a review of the initial screening, a presentation of the secondary screening methodology, results, and Study Team recommendations, discussion throughout, an overview of the next steps, and a decision from both the committee and the Agency Partners to confirm which concepts will be recommended for further study.

3. Roll Call

Annabelle Dally, WSP, conducted roll call. Ten of the eleven voting members and four of the six non-voting members of the committee were present. The following federal and state agencies had representatives present: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps), U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Agency of Natural Resources, Community Development and Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, and Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets. Nine study team members representing VTrans, ACRPC, WSP, and DuBois & King (D&K) were in attendance.

For a full list of attendees and invitees, see the beginning of the meeting notes.

4. PEL Study Goals

Stephanie Camay, WSP, provided a recap of the purpose of PEL studies and this PEL study specifically. She also reviewed the status of this PEL study and next steps.

Stephanie explained the goal of a PEL study is early collaboration to develop and improve relationships with agencies and through the implementation of public outreach develop a

transportation solution that best serves the region, the environment, and the communities. Stephanie stated the goal of this PEL study is to link the previous 25 years of studies with current planning efforts to develop concepts for future environmental review.

The previous studies indicated a regional agreement that truck volumes in downtown Vergennes needed to be addressed and consensus on that identified issue was reached by our Technical and Policy committees and Agency Partners. Through this PEL study, a concentrated effort on outreach and engagement with these committees and agencies will continue to be made as these transportation solutions are developed. As part of the PEL study, a deeper dive will be taken into each concept including land-use visioning and conceptual design for those alternatives recommended for further study. The goal of the PEL study is to have a regional consensus on a path forward. The role of VTrans and the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) is to help facilitate the process to accomplish this goal, but not to decide on a path forward as without regional consensus change is unlikely.

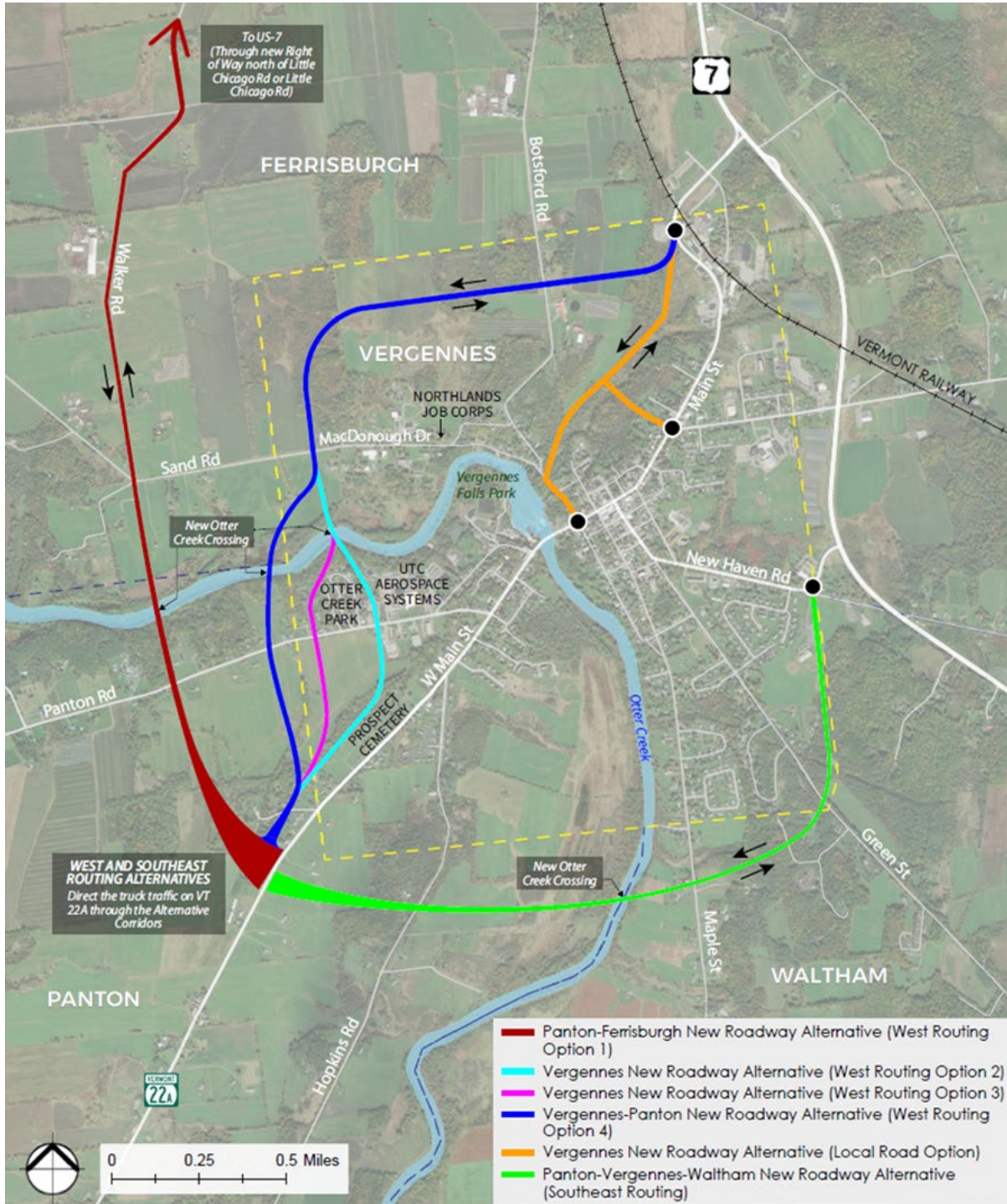
The PEL study has reached the halfway point and an important juncture where the committees and Agency Partners are determining which concepts will move forward into further analysis. The Study Team met with the Policy Committee at the end of December 2022 and will be meeting with them again at working sessions in March 2023 followed by a formal Policy Committee meeting in April 2023. Once the Policy Committee provides its recommendation, the Study Team will ask the cooperating agencies for concurrence. The goal is to have a regional consensus which does not necessarily mean everyone will like the preferred option, but rather that everyone can live with the decision and will help implement the solution through design, environmental review, and construction.

Stephanie reviewed how the PEL study fits in with the overall process noting that the project is just in the planning stage and there is a long way and many more processes to work through before the project is designed and constructed. Stephanie reviewed the roles of the committee, to review the methodology, the analysis, and the recommendations, and the Agency Partners, to provide insight into future coordination. It is important to note that this is the planning stage, and these decisions are not binding. The goal is to reduce the number of alternatives and to identify potential impacts that will be reviewed further during NEPA.

5. Initial Screening

Stephanie reviewed the purpose and need statement and the concepts proposed for further study during the initial screening. The purpose is to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. Transportation solutions that reduce truck-related quality-of-life impacts should also meet the mobility, safety, and economic vitality needs of Vergennes and the neighboring communities. There were 13 alternatives originally identified and seven were dismissed as part of the initial screening process for not meeting the purpose and need. A secondary screening process was

conducted on the remaining six concepts which included the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway Concepts (blue and pink routes), the VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (purple route), the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route), the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route), and the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route). Please note the turquoise (light blue) option was eliminated during the initial screening.



6. Secondary Screening Methodology

Stephanie reviewed the methodology used for the secondary screening before Ken Robie, DuBois and King, reviews the results. The secondary screening analyzed the potential impacts on natural and water resources (rivers and streams, Vermont-defined river corridors, Vermont designated class 2 and advisory wetlands, FEMA flood hazard areas), protected land (conserved land, wildlife management areas, state and municipal land) and agricultural resources (local and state prime agricultural soils), and human (residential properties, medical facilities, government and educational facilities, cemeteries, historic buildings/structures, and hazardous sites) using available GIS data. A 500-foot swath of land was used for all new roadway alternatives and a 150-foot swatch was used for any existing roadway to account for potential widening or intersection improvements. The concepts were screened for any fatal flaws with a focus on avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating environmental impacts where possible.

Beth Alafat, EPA, commented that she had read an interesting [study](#) recently and was wondering if it was or would be considered.

Stephanie stated that the Study Team would review the study provided and if it was not considered at this stage of the process, it could be incorporated in a later stage of the progress.

7. Secondary Screening Results and Discussion

Ken reviewed the results of the secondary screening process for each of the six concepts. Ken noted that despite the low scores from the initial screening process the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red) and Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green) options were included in the secondary screening process due to comments from the committees, participating agencies, and the public.

Tim Timmerman, EPA, commented that it is important to note that there is a commitment to constructing these corridor improvements that are included as part of the No-Build concept separate from the outcome of this Study. It is as if all of these concepts are hybrid concepts with those No-Build improvements and that these corridor upgrades, while not a standalone solution, will provide some benefit even if all of these proposed concepts fall away. Tim stressed the importance of incorporating this information somehow, so it is not lost especially to the public.

Ken stated that the No-Build improvements will be taken into consideration as these concepts are developed and refined and the Study Team understands the importance of the public understanding this nuance.

Mike Winslow, ACRPC, mentioned that some of the improvements that are planned for the corridor may exacerbate the issue of truck traffic in downtown Vergennes.

Ken provided context for the secondary screening process before reviewing the results. Ken explained that the four high-scoring concepts were evaluated for feasibility or if there were any significant impacts or fatal flaws and the two low-scoring concepts were evaluated for additional benefits or as a potential impact avoidance concept.

Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development, stated that there were alternatives at the public meeting where the initial screening results were presented that received a level of contention, both alternatives that were recommended for further study and those being dismissed. Fred asked if any of those concepts were dismissed or recommended for further study based on the input from that public meeting.

Ken stated the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route) was brought back for further study based on input from the public who indicated there was benefit from a local perspective and from cooperating agencies who indicated a crossing upstream of the falls might be more feasible.

Katharine stated that the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route) was brought back for further study. She explained that this decision was also based on feedback from the Technical Committee. The Study Team felt that based on all the feedback a secondary screening of these two concepts was warranted.

Ken reviewed the secondary screening results for each concept in order of highest to lowest initial screening rank.

Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (blue and pink routes)

The Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (blue and pink routes) is essentially the same concept with a slightly modified route. For the purposes of the secondary screening criteria, these concepts were evaluated as one concept with a large swath where the routes diverge. These concepts have the potential to impact resident properties located along portions of Route 22A, Panton Road and Comfort Hill Street. There is a section of protected private conserved land east of Comfort Hill Street that can be avoided by shifting the route to the south through that area. This concept includes an Otter Creek crossing downstream of the falls which could be challenging.

Mike Adams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corp), clarified for the group that Otter Creek is a navigable waterway from the lake to approximately 67,000 miles upstream to Proctor, Vermont. The section upstream of the Vergennes falls is a Section 10 Waterway and does not

require any permits. The section downstream of the falls is considered a federal navigational channel. Going back to the 1800s, the Corps has a channel from the mouth all the way up to the Vergennes falls that the Corp maintains therefore any concept with a crossing downstream of the falls would require a 408 permit from the Corp.

Ken clarified that the point he was trying to make is these concepts require a crossing downstream of the falls which will require a higher level of scrutiny than a concept with a crossing upstream of the falls.

The Study Team recommends the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (blue and pink routes) move forward for further study as it meets the Purpose and Need, scored high in the initial screening, and no fatal flaws were identified during the secondary screening.

Beth Alafat, EPA, asked if the Study Team had considered future climate change impacts especially as they relate to impacts on floodplains. Beth stated she realizes that would be addressed during the NEPA process but was curious if that was considered here with such a large impact on the floodplain. Beth asked why environmentally this option would be considered the best option.

Ken clarified that the Study Team has not determined that this is the best option environmentally, but rather that based on the secondary screening, no fatal flaw has been identified. The Study Team is recommending that the concept move forward to further study which will include a more in-depth environmental review later in the PEL process and an even more detailed environmental review if the concept moves onto the NEPA process.

Billy Coster, Agency of Natural Resources, stated he is hoping there is an opportunity before the list of concepts gets narrowed further to do a deeper dive into significant natural resources, specifically with the new route, because there are certainly more natural resources beyond what is captured in the GIS data shown here at a granular level and specific to these areas.

Ken clarified that those are the types of things that will be evaluated further throughout the Study for those concepts that have merit and do not appear to have a fatal flaw at this juncture and as we continue moving forward.

VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (purple route)

This concept utilizes existing roadways, however, a 150-foot swath along VT-17 and VT-22A was evaluated to account for any improvements that may be required such as roadway widening or alignment modifications or intersection improvements. There are potential impacts to existing developments and small sections of state wetlands adjacent to both roadways.

The Study Team recommends the VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (purple route) move forward for further study as it meets the Purpose and Need, scored high in the initial screening, and no fatal flaws were identified during the secondary screening.

There were no questions or comments related to this route.

Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route)

As Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development mentioned earlier the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route) was recommended to move forward based on the initial screening but received negative feedback at the public meeting. Despite the negative public feedback, this concept was reevaluated as part of the secondary screening process as it scored in the top tier during the initial screening. Based on public feedback, the Study Team also considered if this concept could feasibly be constructed based on existing topography and space as part of secondary screening. This concept is in close proximity to several single-family residences along Main Street (VT-22A), MacDonough Drive and Comfort Hill Street. The southwest portion of this concept has the potential to impact portions of Otter Creek, FEMA flood hazard areas, and Vermont-designated class 2 wetlands. The northeast portion of this concept has the potential to impact a stream, a smaller swath of the FEMA flood hazard area, and Vermont-designated class 2 wetlands. While further study will be required this concept is constructible through the utilization of the existing roadway and a modified alignment of MacDonough Drive. The route is anticipated to have a grade no steeper than six percent following state and federal design standards.

The Study Team recommends the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route) move forward for further study as it meets the Purpose and Need, scored high in the initial screening, and no fatal flaws were identified during the secondary screening.

Jim Larrow, City of Vergennes, comments that this concept allows large trucks to travel halfway through the City of Vergennes before they are rerouted onto the parallel route, and it also requires trucks in both directions to stop on the existing steep graded roadway to turn onto the new roadway. Jim states that he is struggling to see how these are not fatal flaws.

Ken agrees that this concept is challenging from an operational and constructability standpoint, but states that there is no perfect solution, and each concept has positives and negatives. Ken explains that while this concept may not meet the Purpose and Need to the same degree as

some of the others, the concept meets the Purpose and Need enough of a degree to warrant further study. ¹

Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route)

As noted earlier, the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route) was recommended for dismissal after the initial screening due to a low score but was reevaluated in the secondary screening due to public feedback. There is a cluster of residential properties and a school near the intersection of Church Street and Route 7 in Vergennes that may be impacted. There may be a section of protected lane near the school property as part of an Act 250 permit which could be avoided by shifting the route to the east through that area. The western portion of this concept has the potential to impact a concentration of small streets and FEMA flood hazard areas and Vermont-designated wetlands at the Otter Creek crossing location. In addition, there is a habitat for freshwater mussels in this area.

The southwest portion of this concept has the potential to impact portions of Otter Creek, FEMA flood hazard areas, and Vermont-designated class 2 wetlands. The northeast portion of this concept has the potential to impact a stream, a smaller swath of the FEMA flood hazard area, and Vermont-designated class 2 wetlands.

The Study Team recommends the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route) move forward for further study as it meets the Purpose and Need, received positive feedback despite a low initial screening score, has no fatal flaws identified during the secondary screening, and the Otter Creek crossing upstream of the falls may be less challenging.

A participant asked if this concept is more contentious since it falls outside of the confines of Vergennes.

Ken responded that all of the concepts except the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route) are partially or completely outside of the confines of Vergennes.

Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route)

As noted earlier, the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route) was recommended for dismissal after the initial screening due to a low score but was reevaluated in the secondary screening due to public feedback. There are potential impacts to residential properties along Panton Road, Walker, Road and Little Chicago Road and a school along Little Chicago Road.

¹ During the initial screening the concepts were assessed whether they meet the Purpose and Need. The Orange Route meets the purpose of the study to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes.

There are several areas identified as rare, threatened, or endangered species habitats along Walker Road in Ferrisburgh.

Billy Coster, Agency of Natural Resources, stated there are a number of listed grassland breeding birds and a grassland breeding bird habitat that is considered necessary under Act 250. Conducting surveys for the presence of grassland breeding birds, especially those listed, is going to be crucial given the prevalence of hay and pasture in this area.

There is a mix of state prime agricultural soil between VT-22A and the Panton/Ferrisburgh border and a private conserved lane along Walker Road and Little Chicago Road.

The Study Team recommends the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route) be dismissed for further study due to low initial screening score, the presence of federal and state threatened and endangered species, and no additional benefit compared to other nearby concepts.

Beth Alafat, EPA, states that the screenings are preliminary and there is a possibility that once these concepts go through the 404 process some could be eliminated, and others reevaluated. Beth asked if the Study Team was looking for concurrence from the Agency Partners at this juncture as it feels premature.

Ken explains that the Study Team will be looking for concurrence, but that it will not be binding. The intent is to go through the NEPA process with a smaller slate of vetted concepts, but it does not preclude other concepts from being reconsidered in the future should the need arise.

8. Conclusion and Consensus Point

Stephanie summarized the Study Team's recommendation which includes moving forward the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway Concepts (blue and pink routes), the VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (purple route), the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route) and the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route) and dismissing the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route).

Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development, stated that during the public meeting, there was feedback regarding the benefits of having another bridge crossing over Otter Creek south of the falls to add redundancy. Fred asked if that feedback was taken into consideration.

Stephanie stated that a secondary crossing of Otter Creek to add redundancy to the system was considered a benefit.

Fred Kenney explained that he means a secondary crossing of Otter Creek that comes back onto VT-22A south of the existing bridge.

Ken stated that while a secondary crossing of Otter Creek would be considered a benefit, a lack of one would not be considered a fatal flaw.

Fred Kenney clarified that he didn't intend for the lack of a secondary crossing to be considered a fatal flaw more just to be considered a benefit. Fred asked if the only concept that doesn't provide a secondary crossing location is the orange route.

Ken clarifies that the orange route and the purple route, which utilize the existing roadways, are the only concepts that do not provide a secondary Otter Creek crossing. The lack of a secondary crossing location will be evaluated further as part of the operational analysis.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC, stated that she noticed the initial screening scores remained the same after the secondary screening despite the change in recommendation. Katie asked for clarification on why the scores were not updated.

Stephanie explained the initial screening scores were qualitative scores based on a set of screening criteria derived from the Purpose and Need. The secondary screening took that initial screening further to identify any fatal flaws that weren't necessarily captured in the initial screening.

Stephanie explained that the Study Team would be asking the Technical Committee Members for consensus on the recommendations made today, but before that Stephanie asked if there are any other questions or comments.

A participant asked when the Policy Committee would be meeting, if there will be a similar presentation, and if they will be asked for consensus as well.

Stephanie stated that the Policy Committee will be participating in informal working sessions the week of March 20th, 2023 to allow policy committee members to discuss what they have been hearing from their constituents and to provide a forum for them to ask the Study Team questions. A formal Policy Committee meeting will be held at the beginning of April 2023 and the policy committee members will be asked to give concurrence on a recommendation to VTTrans. That recommendation will then go to Federal Agency concurrence.

A participant asked for clarification that the turquoise (light blue) route was eliminated and that the blue and pink routes both reconnect via MacDonough Drive.

Stephanie confirmed the turquoise (light blue) route was eliminated and the blue and pink routes are the same potential alignment from the northern end near Route 7 to MacDonough Drive where the routes diverge, and the blue route goes slightly west toward Panton and the pink route goes slightly east within Vergennes. Stephanie states that a composite map showing

the recommendations made based on the secondary screening will be incorporated into the Alternative Development and Screening Memorandum.

Ken clarified that as we move forward the blue and pink routes will become one concept, but the design team will consider a larger swath along the section south of MacDonough Drive to incorporate both original concepts.

Stephanie noted after the Policy Committee meeting in early April 2023 the identified cooperating agencies (FHWA, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and the U.S. Coast Guard) will be asked for a concurrence letter.

Mike Adams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, commented that the red route was dismissed for several reasons including the presence of federal and state endangered species which is likely true for the entire area. Mike stated that it doesn't seem appropriate to dismiss the red route at this point based on that reason.

Ken clarified that the red route was not recommended for dismissal due to a more significant environmental impact than the other new roadways being proposed, but rather because it scored the lowest on the initial screening and does not appear to have an environmental benefit over the other new roadway concepts that score well.

Mike Adams commented that looking at the concepts again the green route and even the blue and pink routes are much longer sections of new roadway than the red route. It would seem like there is a potential for more significant environmental impacts, especially at the Otter Creek crossing locations. Mike stated that it might make sense to use caution at this point and continue evaluating the red route.

Stephanie asked for others' opinions starting with Chris Jolly and Elizabeth Shipley from FHWA. Stephanie stated it is not necessarily a fatal flaw at this point in the analysis. The red route could be carried forward for further study.

Chris Jolly, FHWA, commented that he did not have an issue with dismissing the red route as the impacts and challenges in the new roadway segment appear similar to the blue and pink routes and he sees no additional benefit. Chris mentioned another potential point of contention to consider is the impact of the red route on Panton. Chris concluded he can understand Mike's point of view that the red route will require a shorter segment of new roadway than some of the others, however, the major reconstruction of the red route north of Sand Road needs to be accounted for.

Elizabeth Shipley, FHWA, commented that she was agreeable to dismissing the red route. Elizabeth explained that the intent of the Study is to end up with a reasonable range of

alternatives for the NEPA process which the Study Team has recommended. Elizabeth stated that not every possible alternative needs to move forward and the purpose of the Study is to dismiss those that may not be technically or economically feasible.

Chris Jolly concludes that it is up to the Technical Committee to decide whether the red route should be recommended for further study.

Billy Coster, Agency of Natural Resources, stated that from the State's perspective and based on the GIS data shown, the red route appears to be more permissible than the green route. Billy explains that the green route, which crosses surface waters, floodplains, wetlands, and Otter Creek, appears to have a more significant environmental impact.

Fred Kenney asked if the new road that is required for the red route is just from Sand Road to VT-22A.

Ken confirmed that is the required section of new roadway, however, the existing roadway north of Sand Road will require a full reconstruction to upgrade it from the existing rural town road to a state highway level roadway.

Fred Kenney asked to clarify that there is no existing road between Sand Road and VT-22A.

Ken confirmed.

Fred Kenney asked if the orange route is intended to include two connections one at MacDonough Drive and another north of there as shown on the map.

Ken confirmed the concept includes both potential connection points at MacDonough Drive and near Monkton Road. Stephen Chiaramonte, WSP, confirmed that the connection near Monkton Road would require a new road.

Fred Kenney stated his concern for recommending the orange concept for further study as it does not solve the problem of truck traffic along all or most of VT-22A in Vergennes. Fred stated that based on earlier discussions he would prefer to retain the red route and dismiss the orange route.

Katharine stated the red route can be recommended for further study based on the feedback from the Technical Committee and Agency Partners. Katharine reminded everyone to consider the methodology as these decisions are being made as concepts should only be dismissed based on the methodology and cautioned everyone against eliminating a concept based on opinion.

Ken reiterates Katharine's point that following the methodology is how these recommendations were derived. The scoring was very clear on which alternatives should move forward, but to

Mike and Billy's point, it did not evaluate the feasibility closely enough. The intent of the secondary screening was to take a closer look at these concepts for feasibility and ultimately to find those with the least impact. Ken reiterated that the green route has environmental concerns and is being recommended for further study to provide an alternate Otter Creek crossing location downstream of the falls. Ken explains the red route is being recommended for dismissal because it scored low in the screening criteria and doesn't appear to offer any benefit other than the blue/pink routes.

Mike Winslow, ACRPC, reiterated that the green route appears to be less permissible than the red route and asked if Billy Coster could clarify if he finds the blue route to be equally concerning from a permitting standpoint as the red route.

Billy Coster clarified that the blue route appears to have a similar environmental impact to that of the red route, if not, a lesser impact. Billy explained that the intent of his comment was more in support of what Mike Adams had mentioned that the red route does not warrant dismissal based on environmental impacts alone.

Stephanie asked if the red route appears to have a lesser environmental impact due to the fact only a segment of the route is a new roadway.

Billy Coster clarified that is part of the reason, but also the Otter Creek crossing associated with the red option appears less complex. Billy reiterated that while the available GIS data is showing these occurrences of rare and endangered species, in reality, these are likely found throughout the entire area including along other routes.

Ken clarified a key point because the green and red scored poorly on the initial screening either option would only be considered for further study as an avoidance alternative to the high-scoring blue route. In this case, the green option could potentially provide that benefit, but the red option does not, hence the recommendation for dismissal.

Jim LaCroix, VTrans, asked for clarification on the role of the Technical Committee here. Jim explained that he is concerned that it is debatable if the orange option meets the Purpose and Need. Jim is concerned that by agreeing to move that option forward, the Technical Committee is essentially agreeing that it does meet the Purpose and Need. Jim stated that this option likely has the least impact, and he is concerned the Study might be steered into selecting that option. Jim asked if that decision can be reviewed later in the process.

Stephanie clarified that there will be opportunities throughout the remainder of the PEL process for the Technical Committee to review that decision. In addition, there are opportunities for the Policy Committee, Agency Partners, and the public to weigh in as part of the PEL process. There will also be opportunities for those involved to weigh in during the later stages of the

project, including the NEPA process and the preliminary and conceptual design stages. The Study Team considers the orange route as meeting the Purpose and Need, potentially, to a lesser degree than some of the other concepts.²

Jim LaCroix stated that it is concerning for a concept that doesn't fully meet the Purpose and Need to be evaluated on a level playing field against concepts that do. Jim stated that it is worth further discussion of whether or not the orange route fully meets the Purpose and Need, and if it doesn't, then it should be eliminated.

Ken clarified that this is step three of a five-step culling process. The concepts are being incrementally whittled down as the Study continues and the Study Team evaluates concepts in more detail. Ken stated that the next phase will include an operational analysis which will determine if the concept provides the level of mitigation desired to make that concept feasible.

Jim LaCroix concluded that under the understanding that the concept was still being evaluated he was agreeable to the concept moving forward for further study.

Jim Larrow, City of Vergennes, asked if the goal of these meetings was to ultimately end up with a certain number of the concepts.

Stephanie clarified that there is no set goal. Through the process, the concepts will continue to be evaluated and culled down. By the end of the process, there could be one or several viable options recommended for future NEPA review.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC, asked for clarification on the scores from the initial screening. Katie explained it is her understanding that the Technical Committee is intended to make decisions on what moves forward for further study based on the methodology or rankings, but if they aren't changing account for these additional findings and evaluations, she is not clear on how to make that decision.

Ken clarified that the initial scoring is for the initial screening and the secondary screening is also part of the initial screening process which is about culling down the list of concepts to those that will be evaluated in more detail. Once the Study moves onto this next step of analysis those scores will no longer have a role in the future process and all the concepts will be evaluated on a level playing field.

² During the initial screening the concepts were assessed whether they meet the Purpose and Need. The Orange Route meets the purpose of the study to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes.

Fred Kenney asked for clarification on a comment made earlier regarding the NEPA requirements to look at all available options. Fred asked if that meant that when this moves into the NEPA process all of the dismissed options will be re-evaluated.

Elizabeth Shipley clarified that she stated the NEPA process does not require every available option to be considered just reasonable options. She explained there is not a set number required for the NEPA process, but at minimum, there needs to be a reasonable option and a no action or no build alternative. She stated that Fred was correct that this process refines the alternatives prior to the NEPA process.

Fred Kenney asked for clarification on the orange route, specifically the connection being proposed north of MacDonough Drive in the middle of downtown. Fred stated that this connection would allow trucks to continue accessing downtown Vergennes via Main Street (VT-22A), which he feels is a fatal flow.

Ken clarified that the intent is for through trucks to use the orange route from Route 7/VT-22A to MacDonough Drive. The other connection north of MacDonough Drive is intended for additional mobility and connectivity, predominantly for other modes of traffic or trucks making deliveries within downtown Vergennes.

Based on the discussion, Katharine Otto polled the Technical Committee and Federal Agencies on the dismissal of the red route. Nine members indicated agreement in the dismissal of the red route. The Federal Agencies were split regarding the red route with the EPA and Army Corp of Engineers interested in further study and the Coast Guard and FEMA indicating agreement in its dismissal. The Study Team and the Army Corp of Engineers and the EPA agreed to recommend the red route for further study with the caveat that the red route could be dismissed prior to the Policy Committee meeting in April 2023 pending the agreement of those agencies based on additional justification provided by the Study Team.

Katharine Otto moves to have the Technical Committee vote on the following recommendation to the Policy Committee Meeting:

- Further study of the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway Concepts (blue and pink routes), the VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (purple route), the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route) and the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route) and the potential for further study of the Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (red route) pending further discussions with the Army Corp of Engineers and the EPA.

Katharine proceeded with a roll call. The following are the results.

Voting Members:

Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning - YAY

Alysha Kane (VTrans), Maintenance - YAY
Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Municipal Planning - YAY
Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic - YAY
Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway - YAY
Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance - YAY
Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Land Use Planning - YAY
Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental - YAY
Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Regional Planning - YAY
Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen – left prior to vote
John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen – not in attendance

With this vote, the motion passes.

9. Next Steps

Stephanie wrapped up the meeting by reviewing next steps, including the upcoming Policy Committee meeting in early April 2023 followed by Federal Agency concurrence on the concepts for further study. Following Federal Agency concurrence, the Study Team will begin concept engineering, followed by transportation and land use integration, and the evaluation of concepts.

Stephanie asked the Technical Committee and Agencies if they prefer to continue meeting jointly, and the majority of attendees indicated they favor joint meetings.

Katharine closed the meeting at 1:00 p.m.