

# Public Meeting Summary

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Public Meeting, Alternatives Development and Screening
Date and Time	November 3, 2022 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location	The Vergennes Opera House 120 Main Street Vergennes, VT  Also held via Zoom webinar
Presenters and facilitators	Katharine Otto, VTrans Stephanie Camay, WSP Stephen Chiaramonte, WSP Annabelle Dally, WSP
Team Attendees	Mike Winslow, ACRPC Adam Lougee, ACRPC Amy Bell, VTrans Jacquie DeMent, VTrans Ken Robie, DuBois & King Rich Tetrault, DuBois & King (Remote) Laura Toole, WSP (Remote) Delia Makhetha, WSP (Remote)
Number of attendees: approximately 34 in person and 25 online	

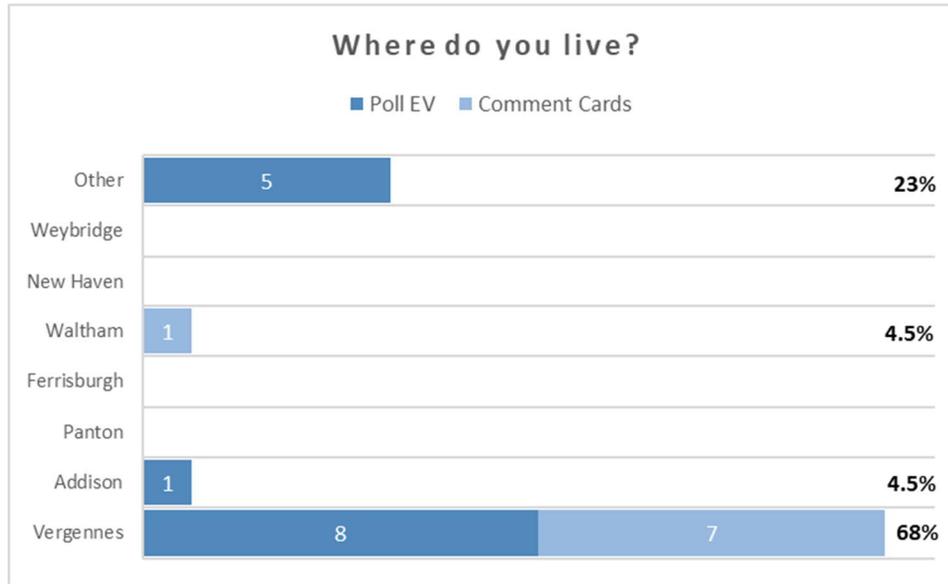
## MEETING SUMMARY

### Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping and Meeting Goals

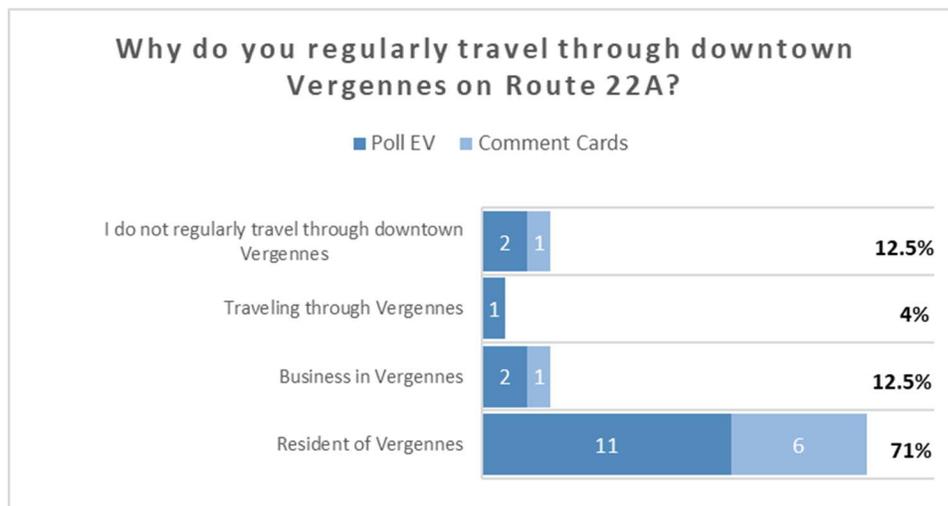
Katharine Otto, Planning Coordinator with the Policy, Planning and Research Section of the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and Project Manager for the Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages Study (Vergennes PEL Study) welcomed attendees, stated the purpose of that evening’s meeting, and introduced the members of the Study Team in attendance that evening. She also informed the public that Joe Segale, the previous Project Manager with VTrans, had retired and she would be fulfilling this role moving forward. The purpose of the meeting was for the public to hear about the concepts that were being

considered, learn about the screening criteria used to evaluate the concepts, and discuss the concepts being dismissed or advanced for further study.

Annabelle Dally, Communications and Public Involvement Coordinator with WSP, reviewed general housekeeping items including that the [presentation](#) and [meeting recording](#) would be posted to the [study website](#) and the use of polling throughout the presentation. Polling could be completed through the program Poll Everywhere or through the use of a virtual or printed [comment card](#). She introduced the first two polls to the audience.



A total of 14 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere. Eight additional responses were collected from comment cards. In the virtual Q&A an attendee indicated they were from Salisbury.



A total of 16 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere. Eight additional responses were collected from comment cards.

Katharine reviewed the agenda for the meeting which included an update on the progress of the Study, a brief review of the PEL process, an overview of the results of the screening with opportunities for discussion and feedback, and next steps. She stated the goal of the meeting was to obtain public feedback. She explained that back in the spring, the Study Team held workshops to gather input on the large list of concepts, more specifically if the list was exhaustive or if there were any additional ways to address the issue of truck traffic in Vergennes. Now the Study Team is working to narrow that list of alternatives and looking for feedback from the public on the refined list. She provided an overview of how the meeting fits into the larger Vergennes Study Process and next steps.

### Introduction to the Vergennes PEL

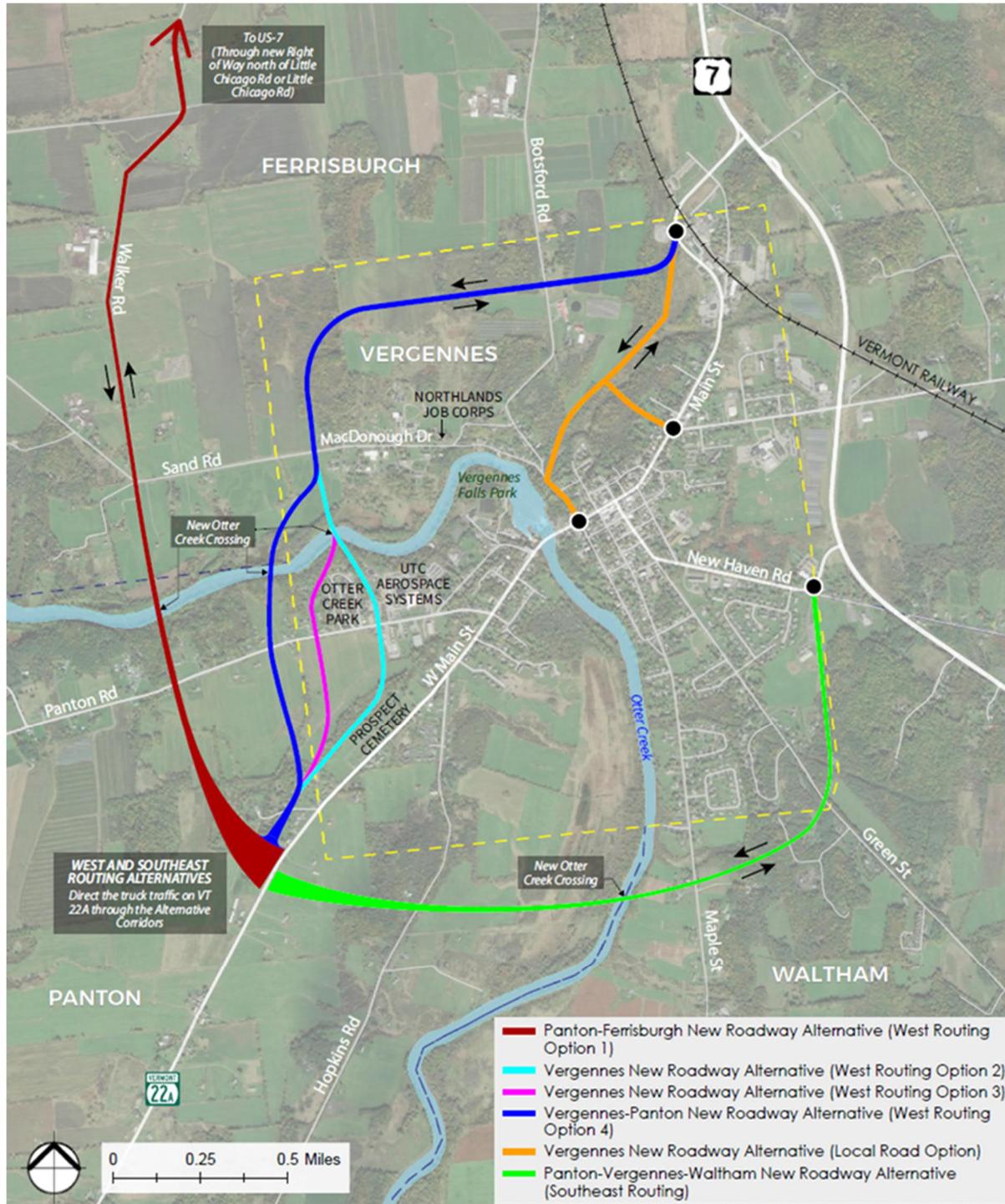
Stephanie Camay, Project Manager from WSP, started by reviewing what a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study is explaining that they are a collaborative transportation decision-making approach that considers the environmental, social, and economic components early in the planning process. Route 22A has been studied for 25 years and the goal of the Vergennes PEL Study is to incorporate those previous studies and link the planning efforts with a future environmental review process and early collaboration. Stephanie stated that early collaboration is critical to the PEL process facilitating better planning decisions to create transportation solutions that better serve the system, environment, and community. She reviewed the purpose and need which were included in the [presentation handout](#). The purpose and need were used to create the long list of alternatives that were presented at the spring workshop and expanded based on public feedback. Screening criteria based on the needs identified by this study were used to evaluate the long list and identify three concepts for further consideration.

Steve Chiamonte, Transportation Planning Lead from WSP, provided an overview of the long list of alternatives and the screening process including identifying the concepts being considered for dismissal and for further study.

Existing Road Concepts – Utilizes existing roadways within the region to redirect truck trips away from Route 22A and downtown Vergennes using signage, enforcement, legislation, and wayfinding.

VT 22A Corridor Concepts – Maintains truck traffic along Route 22A through downtown Vergennes but builds upon right-sizing the corridor for all users such as curb extensions and rectangular rapid flashing beacons. Also includes the “No Build” concept which includes all upgrades to Route 22A planned through 2045.

New Road Concepts – Represent shifting all truck traffic from Route 22A onto a new facility. The illustrated routes are not necessarily reflective of an exact location. Those would be determined in subsequent phases of the Study.



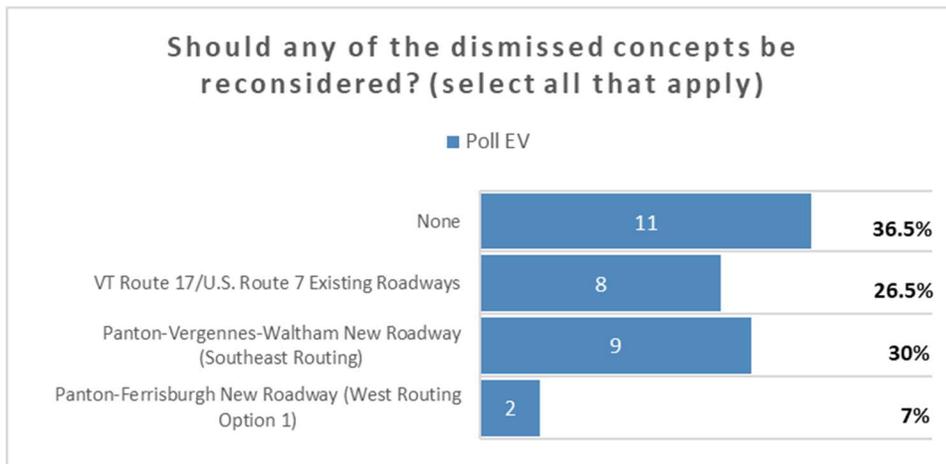
Other Freight Modes – Shifts existing cargo being moved by truck to other freight modes such as rail or water and smart freight.

Steve reviewed how the screening criteria were applied to the concepts and overall ratings were determined. He reviewed the concepts being considered for advancement and dismissal.

### Concepts Proposed for Dismissal

These concepts were considered for dismissal due to a fatal flaw including the Vergennes New Roadways (West Routing Option 2 &3), Systemwide Concept, VT-22A Corridor Improvements, and Rail and Water Modes. These additional concepts were considered for dismissal due to total ranking including Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1), Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing), and VT Route 17/US 7 Existing Roadways.

Steve introduced two polls asking if any of the concepts dismissed due to total rankings should be reconsidered.



A total of 30 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

#### Comment Themes:

- Reconsider the green route
  - o Less populated than other areas
  - o Provides redundancy with a secondary bridge
  - o Route length is not excessive
  - o Less stop and go along the route
  - o Increased distance for trucks is not a priority of the community

<sup>1</sup> Note: There was some confusion in the audience about which concepts were being dismissed. As such, the poll results may not fully represent the opinions of all in attendance.

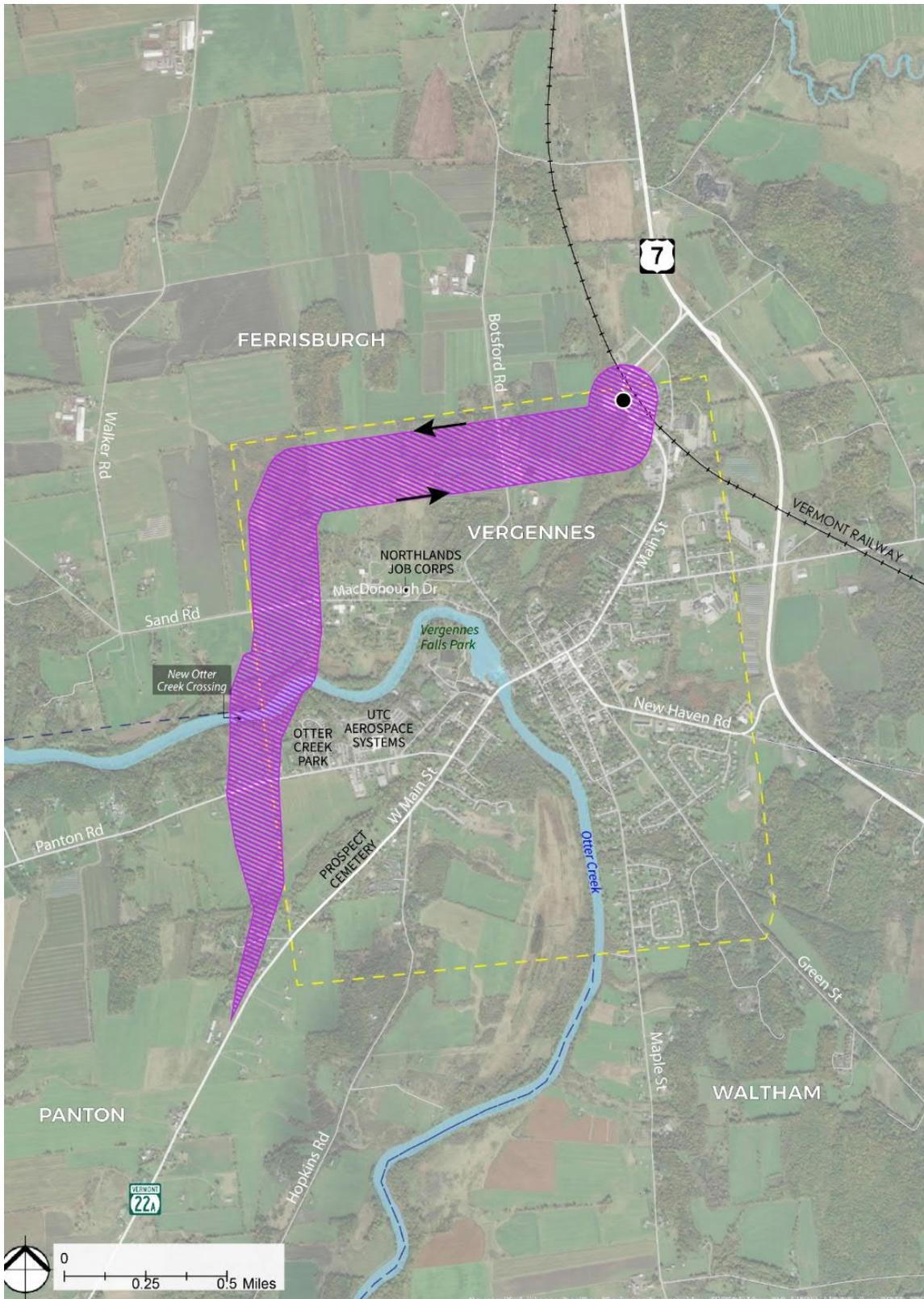
- Dismiss the green route
  - o Topography and wetland issues
  - o More impacts to properties and homes than folks realize
  - o Cost for new bridge
- Route 17 and Route 7 option for both directions
  - o Only viable option with a reasonable turnaround time for construction
- Dismiss the red route due to proximity to the school
- Consider forcing trucks onto Route 4 and 7

### Concepts Proposed to be Advanced

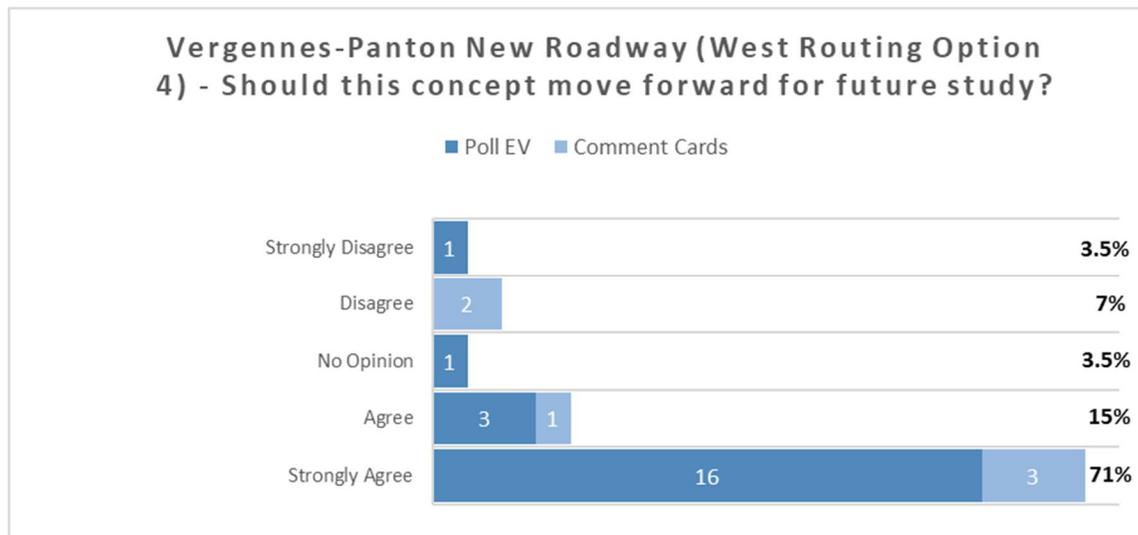
Three concepts were being considered for advancement for further study. In addition, the “No Build” option will be considered in further study as a baseline to compare the benefits and impacts of the concepts.

#### *Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 1)*

This concept (shown in pink) connects Route 22A south of Vergennes and north of Vergennes.



Steve introduced two polls asking for feedback on the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 1) concept.



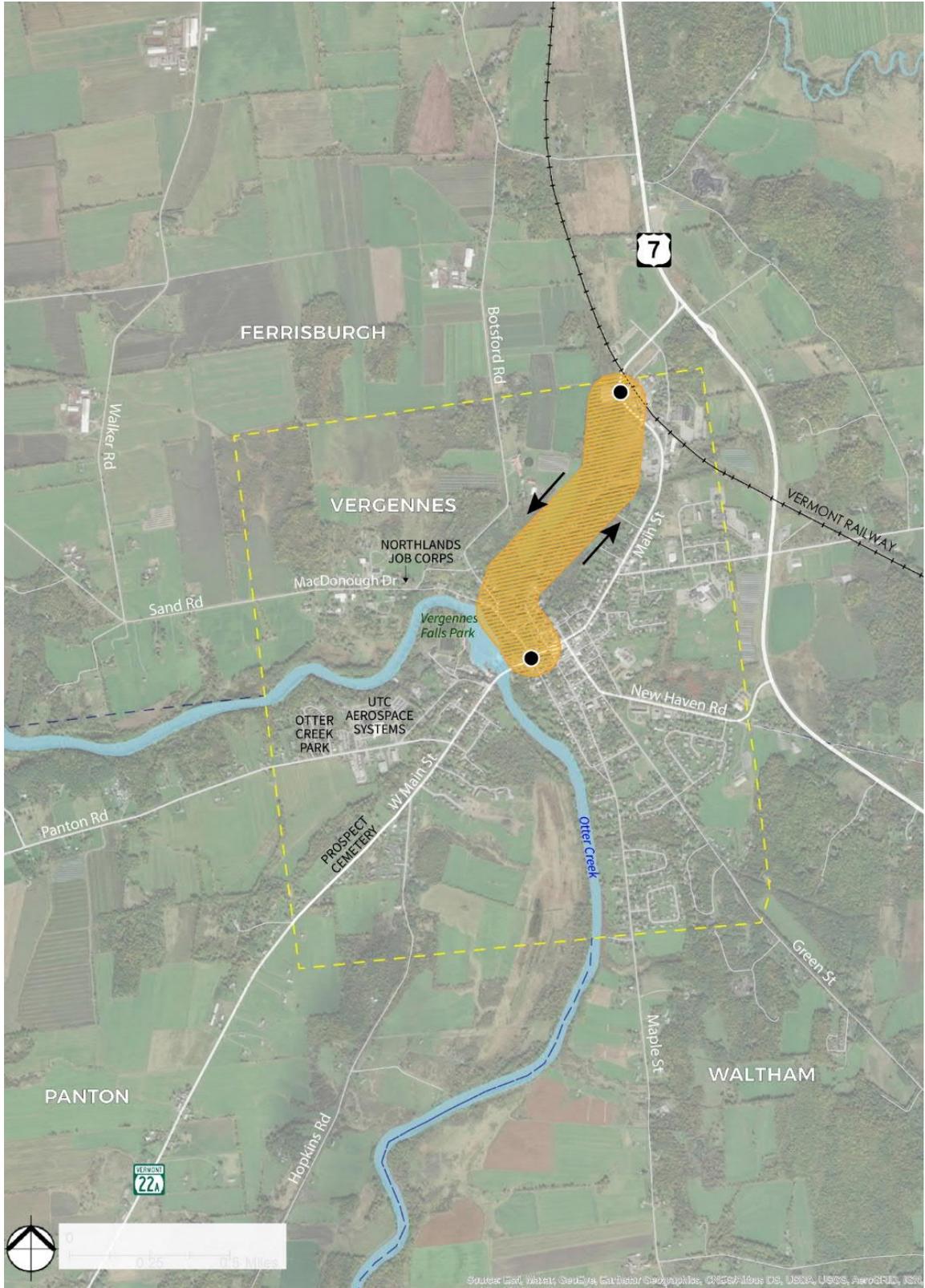
A total of 21 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere. Six additional responses were collected from comment cards.

Comment Themes:

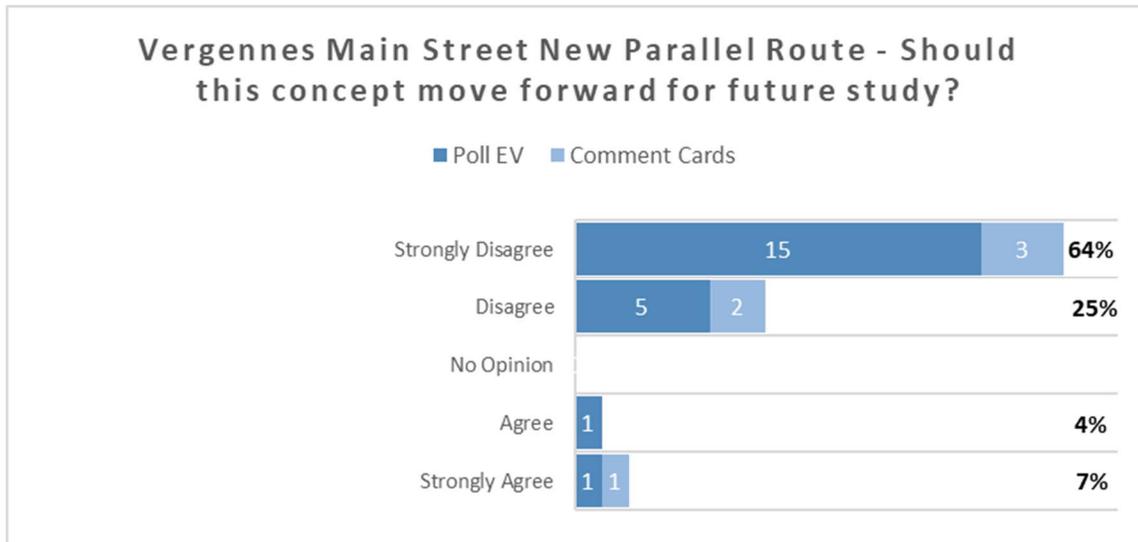
- Add stoplights at intersections to make Route 22A undesirable to truck traffic
- Concern trucks will continue using Route 22A
- Concern about impacts to Panton
- Diverts portion of traffic away from aging existing bridge
- Concerns about the location of the proposed bridge
- Provides redundancy with a secondary bridge
- Connect this route further north to Route 7
- Avoids moving truck traffic into another community
- Impacts of bypass on Central Business District
- Potential impacts to existing properties along the alignment such as Otter Creek Park and the new bridge location
- Adds potential development and housing opportunities
- Only alternative the recognizes that truck traffic is a problem south of Otter Creek Bridge
- Will this solve a systemic transportation problem

*Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route*

This concept (shown in orange) connects Macdonough Drive with Route 22A in northern Vergennes.



Steve introduced two polls asking for feedback on the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route concept.



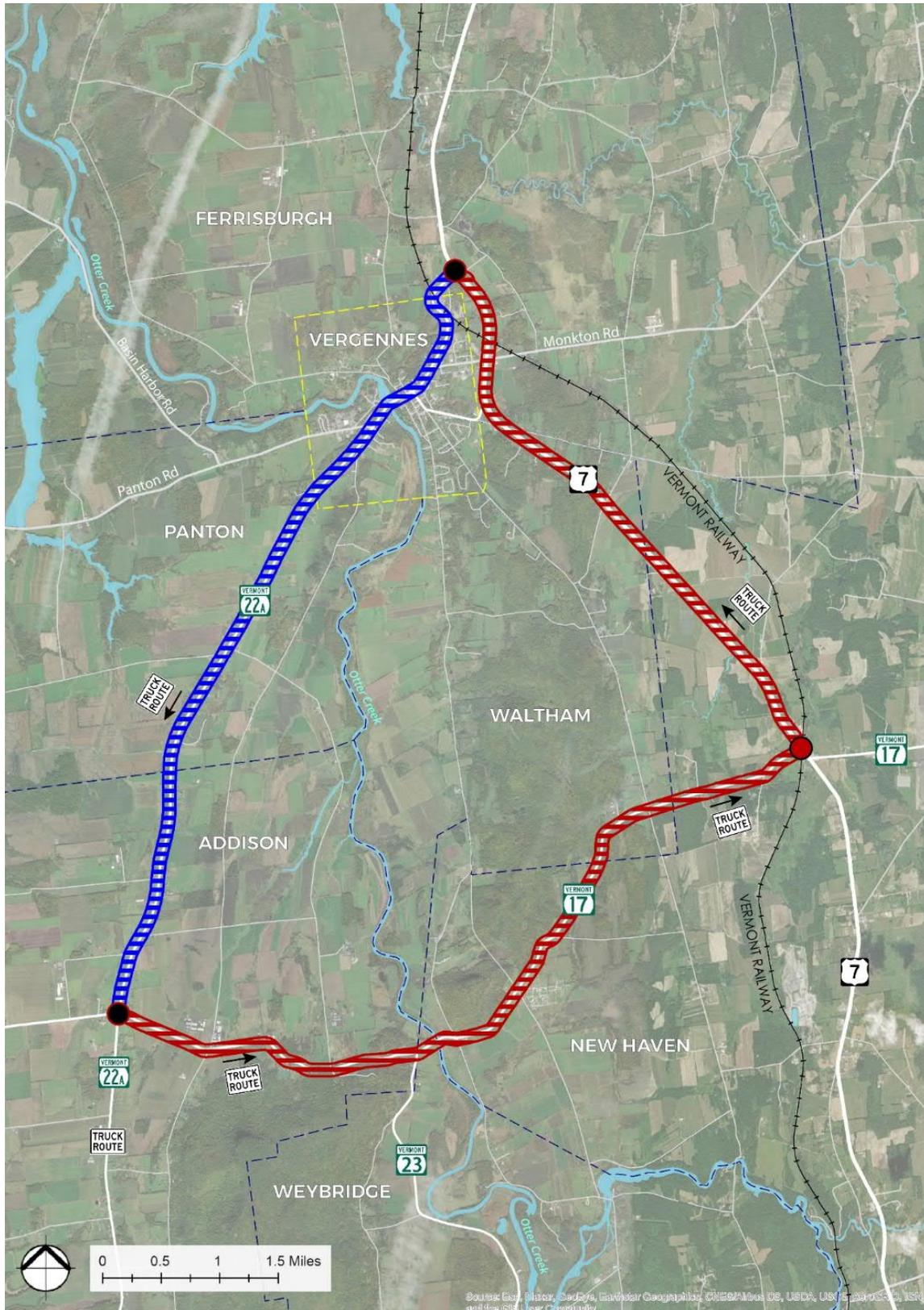
A total of 22 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere. Six additional responses were collected from comment cards.

Comment Themes:

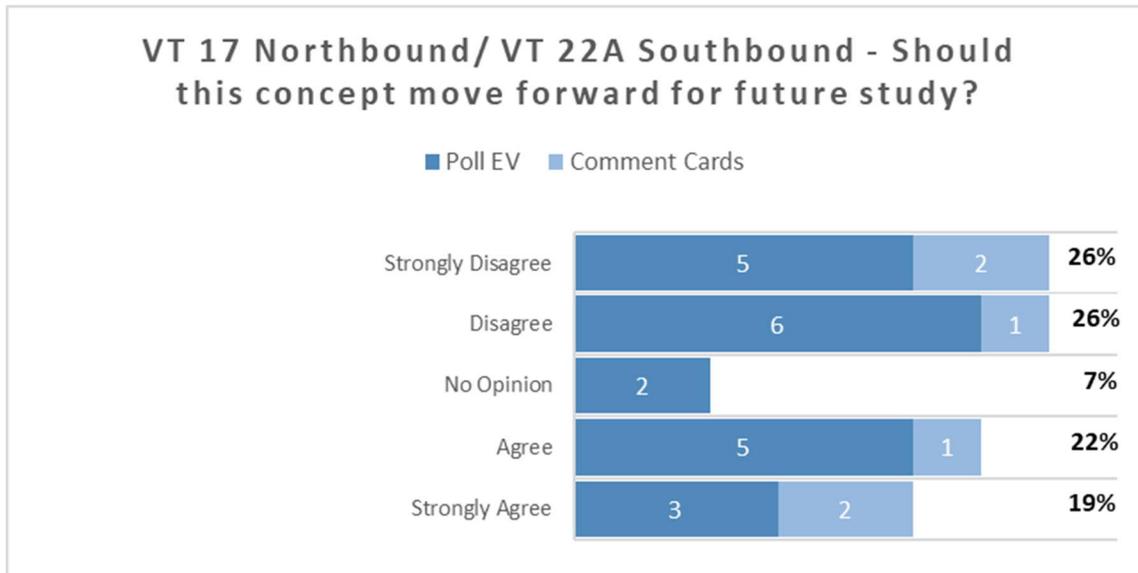
- Excessive grades and difficult turning movements
- Poor topography
- Constructability – could this bypass meet safety standards due to existing constraints and limitations
- Doesn't reduce truck traffic in Vergennes just shifts it
- Doesn't reduce truck noise or pollution
- No bridge redundancy
- Concern for existing bridge condition, stability, longevity, and lifespan
- Doesn't reduce truck traffic in south Vergennes

*VT-17 Northbound/VT 22A Southbound*

This concept (shown in blue and red) would divert northbound truck traffic away from Route 22A onto Route 17 and Route 7 while still maintaining southbound truck traffic on Route 22A.



Steve introduced two polls asking for feedback on the VT-17 Northbound/VT 22A Southbound concept.



A total of 21 responses were collected using Poll Everywhere. Six additional responses were collected from comment cards.

Comment Themes:

- Support as interim solution
  - o Must be enforced
  - o Solves half the problem
- Splits the problem between two communities
- Just shifts the burden to other communities
- Doesn't require new infrastructure
- No bridge redundancy
- Concern for existing bridge condition, stability, longevity, and lifespan
- Route 17 is not suitable for trucks
  - o Steep grades and sharp curves
  - o Narrow roadway with narrow shoulders
  - o Low speed
  - o Poor sightlines

Other Comments and Discussion

Additionally the public raised questions and comments that were not related to a particular concept, these included the following:

- Requests for more information on truck origin and destination patterns

- Impact the creation of a bypass have on an existing Central business district
- Concerns about the safety and lifespan of the Otter Creek Bridge and any impacts that might have on the PEL Study
- Suggestion that project team quantify potential property acquisitions
- Clarity on how close a route would have to Otter Creek Park to be considered a fatal flaw

### More Information and Next Steps

Additional information on the concepts and the screening process can be found in a supplemental recording on the study website.

Stephanie reviewed the next steps. The deadline for public comments was November 10 (later extended to November 23). The Study Team will be meeting with the Technical Committee and Federal and State Agency Partners to review the public input in November. In December, the Study Team will meet with the Policy Committee to review and vote on the concepts recommended for further study. Once the recommended concepts have been accepted, conceptual engineering of those concepts will begin looking at existing ROW and land use, environmental resources, locations of adjacent roadways, municipal boundaries, and other design constraints. Public workshops will be held in Spring 2023 to review the conceptual engineering. After conceptual engineering, the Study Team will begin working on transportation and land use integration including local land use controls/zoning, economic conditions and growth trends, and environmental constraints. Public workshops will be held in the Summer of 2023 to discuss land use visioning. The Study Team will then evaluate the concepts based on traffic impacts, multi-modal considerations, and environmental impacts on wetlands, floodplains, habitats, and noise followed by an additional public workshop in the Summer of 2023.

Katharine closed out the meeting at approximately 7:40pm by thanking all the participants and providing additional ways to provide comments and ask questions over the next several weeks.

Other questions and comments were submitted online and on paper, and a summary of these will be provided at a later date.