

Technical Committee and Agency Coordination Meeting Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Concepts Development and Screening, Technical Committee and Agency Coordination
Date and Time	June 21, 2023, 1:00 p.m-3:00 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Attendees	<p>Technical Committee</p> <p>Voting Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Municipal Planning Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Land Use Planning Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Regional Planning John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen* Alysha Kane (VTrans), Maintenance* <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Jolly (FHWA), Planning Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), Environmental James (Jim) LaCroix (VTrans), Structures Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Planning, Observer * Elizabeth Shipley, Environmental (FHWA) Jacqueline DeMent (VTrans), Planning, Observer* <p>Agency Partners</p> <p>Federal Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christopher Jolly & Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA) Mike Adams (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) Gary Coot (U.S. Coast Guard) Tim Timmermann & Beth Alafat (U.S. EPA) Christian Paske (FEMA) Obediah Racicot (U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation)* Susi Von Oettingen (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)* <p>State Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scott Dillon (Community Development & Vermont Division for Historic Preservation) Chris Cochran (Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Department of Housing and Community Development) Ari Rockland-Miller (Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets)

	Eric Pembroke (Buildings and General Services, Vermont Agency of Administration) Billy Coster (Agency of Natural Resources) Diane Bothfeld (Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets)*
Study Team Attendees	Katharine Otto (VTrans) Amanda Holland (VTrans) Mike Winslow (ACRPC) Adam Lougee (ACRPC) Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Laura Toole (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Liviu Sfintescu (WSP) Brad Geiger (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP) Ken Robie (DuBois & King) Dan Mallach (DuBois & King) Jim Gish, VHB

*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 1:03 p.m. and then handed the presentation over to Stephanie Camay, WSP.

2. Agenda

Stephanie Camay, WSP reviewed the agenda. The meeting will include a reminder of the goals of the PEL study, a review of the concept screening, presentation of the conceptual design, updates on the land use visioning, and updates on the public outreach. Discussion is encouraged throughout and will end with a technical committee and agency partner discussion.

3. Roll Call

Delia Makhetha, WSP led a brief Zoom orientation and conducted roll call. Nine of the eleven voting members and five of the six non-voting members of the committee were present. Representatives from five federal and four state agencies were present. Fourteen study team members representing VTrans, ACRPC, WSP, and DuBois & King (D&K) were in attendance.

4. PEL Study Background

Stephanie provided an overview of the purpose of PEL studies and this PEL study specifically. She also reviewed the status of this PEL study and next steps. The PEL study has reached the

halfway point and last time this group met they shared the results of the secondary screening and advanced concepts recommended for further analysis. The study team has taken those concepts and refined them further through conceptual engineering which will be shared today. The next steps will be integrating the concepts with land use visioning, then evaluating the concepts, public engagement will be ongoing throughout the study.

Stephanie reviewed how the PEL study fits in with the overall process noting that the study is in the planning stage and there is a long way and many more processes to work through before any future projects are 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. Today, the study team asks the committee and agency partners to; provide input on conceptual design, identify land use visioning coordination touch points, and identify opportunities for more in-depth review and discussion.

5. Concept Screening

Stephanie reviewed the purpose and need statement and the screening criteria used to screen the thirteen concepts originally identified. The purpose is to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. Based on the initial screening seven were dismissed for not meeting the purpose and need. A secondary screening process was conducted using a GIS desktop analysis and the six remaining concepts were reduced to five concepts recommended for further study. The concepts recommended for further study 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), and the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route).

Stephanie shared that since the last time this group has gathered the study team has progressed the concept engineering, have begun the land use visioning, and continued public engagement activities. These tasks will inform the evaluation of the evaluation of the concepts that will begin this year and continue into next year.

6. Concept Design

Steve Chiamonte, WSP introduced the concept design methodology that follows Vermont State Standards, USCG Bridge Clearance guidance, avoids environmental constraints, and aims to keep passenger vehicles in downtown Vergennes. Steve shared a typical roadway section for the initial conceptual design and shared an online map available to the attendees to review the engineering details for each of the concepts.

Steve reiterated that today's discussion should focus on questions and comments on our design approach. Comments will be accepted via email as well, no later than July 10. Additionally, the study team is available for follow-up discussion where there may be additional questions or comments.

Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (blue route)

Steve reviewed the concept engineering design for the **Blue Route** , he asked the group if there were any questions or comments on this route:

Eric Pembroke, Buildings and General Services commented that at the north side of the Otter Creek crossing goes through one of their last developable parcels of owned property. He would like to dig deeper into this concept as well as the Pink Route that also is within that last developable parcel.

Katharine Otto, VTrans clarified that they do not know what the ownership of the roadway would be. It could be built by VTrans and then under the town jurisdiction afterwards. Keep in mind, if you were looking after this road what would you have questions or concerns about.

Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (pink route)

Steve, WSP reviewed the concept engineering design for the Pink Route , he asked the group if there were any questions or comments on this route:

Eric Pembroke, Buildings and General Services expressed the same concern that the Pink Route is within that last developable parcel.

Mike Winslow, ACRPC asked if there is an opportunity to combine the Pink and Blue Route at an earlier point in the southern part of the Otter Creek?

- Steve responded that because these are conceptual there are opportunities to shift the alignment where it may be appropriate.
- Katharine asked Mike if there was any particular reason why he would like the routes to be combined higher up.
- Mike Winslow responded to eliminate takings of property/residences and shift further from the trailer park.

Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (green route)

Steve reviewed the concept engineering design for the **Green Route** , he asked the group if there were any questions or comments on this route:

Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development asked if a skewed intersection means that it is at an angle.

- Steve responded that is correct, and that it means it necessitates an additional review of sight distances and design.

Chris Jolly, FHWA commented that regarding typical sections FHWA would encourage 12 foot lanes and 6 foot shoulders in a typical section. That is the section they would like to pursue from a safety perspective.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC asks how the best location for where the Green Route meets Route 22A determined, she noticed it is between two properties.

- Steve responded that they are working on finding a location that is most feasible given all of the known design and environmental and property constraints. He noted there is flexibility in terms of where these intersections could be and they want those questions and feedback related to intersection locations today.

Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development asked the study team to confirm that Otter Creek is only navigable by very small boats east of the falls. Further he asked if that made a difference in terms of bridge design compared to the Blue and Pink Routes.

- Steve confirmed that because of the presence of larger boats west of the falls it necessitates a substantial clearance for the bridges proposed in the Blue and Pink Routes. Additional discussion with the coast guard is needed to determine the clearance needed. Currently the concept engineering is designing a 50 ft clearance west of the falls and he believe an 8 ft clearance east of the falls.

Vergennes Main Street New Parallel (orange route)

Steve, WSP reviewed the concept engineering design for the **Orange Route** , he asked the group if there were any questions or comments on this route:

No comments or questions were raised for the Orange Route

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

Steve, WSP reviewed the concept engineering design for the **Purple Route** , he asked the group if there were any questions or comments on this route:

Chris Jolly, FHWA asked if the widening would be along the entire length or would only be in certain sections.

- Steve, WSP responded that the widening would likely be in certain sections where necessary based on the existing design of the roadway.

Chris Jolly, FHWA mentioned that he tried to get into the layer of the online map but had trouble. He asked if the areas with horizontal or vertical curves been identified, where widening would also occur.

- Steve responded that the locations where existing vertical or horizontal curves would need improvement have been documented.
- Liviu Sfintescu, WSP states that the locations of the cut and fill locations are not in the GIS file but have them listed in other formats.

Chris Jolly, FHWA asks if the study team has had any discussions with law enforcement in terms of enforcement challenges with the Purple Route(with one way north(VT-17), one way south(VT-22A)

- Steve responded that they have not had specific discussions regarding enforcement. Noting that is one of the elements with design that they are encouraging the right traffic on each route, for example encouraging heavy vehicles on the conceptual routes and passenger vehicle remaining on Main Street/Route 22A traveling through Vergennes.
- Katharine added that VTrans checked with legal section if they were able to divert traffic one direction and then another and they would be allowed to do that from a legal perspective.

Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development asked to confirm that the re-routing would be accomplished through enforcement.

- Steve confirmed it would be accomplished through enforcement and signage.

7. Land Use Visioning

Dan Mallach, D&K introduced the Land Use Visioning task where the study team will seek to understand each community's current approach to planning and help each community strategize should there be impacts and opportunities that arise from the alternative recommendations.

The study team is looking at understanding the types and densities of development that are allowed under current policies. The team will be collecting data including zoning data, policy review, infrastructure and planned projects, demographic data, and environmental constraints.

They will build a baseline/no build or project with no regulatory changes. Those scenarios will be shared with the planning commissions and will offer an opportunity to discuss the values and vision of the community and how they relate to investments, goals, and socioeconomic trends.

The study team will speak with appropriate transportation, land use, and zoning officials as well as selectboards and planning commissions in each community. An open public visioning session will be held in the fall. The meetings will be interactive, tactile, and tailored to each community. The ultimate outcome of this task will reflect what we hear from community stakeholders, local leaders, and community member at the visioning sessions. That insight will be merged with the results of the Land Use Forecasting and Economic Analysis.

Dan Mallach asked if there were any questions or comments, hearing none he added his email address into the chat if attendees would like to reach out to him; dmallach@dubois-king.com.

- Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development added to the chat: Vergennes Day is August 26, 10-3. Good outreach opportunity for Jim [Gish].
- Jim Gish, VHB responded: We'll be there, thanks Fred!

8. Public Outreach

Stephanie emphasized that public engagement and outreach are critical pieces of the PEL Study. She announced that the study has added a Community Liaison role to the team, Jim Gish, VHB. Jim's role will be to be the eyes and ears in the community and to make sure the community voices feel heard throughout the study process. Additionally a [Community Liaison Corner](#) has been added to the Vergennes PEL Study website, Jim will update this page.

A survey will launch this summer and will be shared at the pop-up events this summer as well. The survey will show the general public the concepts that we've looked at today.

Stephanie noted we'll continue to get input for the land use visioning and have coordination meetings. She added that she's discussed and arranged follow-up discussions with several attendees on specific concerns they have expressed and welcomes additional follow-up meetings to discuss the concepts in more detail.

Stephanie shared a graphic showing the schedule for public engagement and coordination touch points over the next several months:



Stephanie opened up the discussion to questions on the schedule.

Jim Larrow asked if there would be a time where we would reevaluate the ones we've chosen so far and eliminate more concepts.

- Stephanie responded yes, that will occur once they've wrapped up the conceptual design, do the land use visioning, do resource identification, then they will evaluate the alternatives. That will likely be in November.

Mike Adams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers states he would add in the schedule some time for resource agencies to go walk and drive the sites before November to avoid pushing back the talk further.

- Stephanie asked Ken if there was a way, they could coordinate with the resource agencies as they do the resource identification.
- Ken responded yes, the intent is to coordinate with the resource agencies in August and September while they're doing the site work so that they can schedule those field visits so that everyone is able to see the sites around the same time.
- Mike Adams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers responded that August and September are filling up so the sooner they can put something on the calendar the better.
- Katharine reminded the resource agencies that we are very much still in the planning end of the process.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer asked when the meetings with the planning commissions are occurring, are they the vision workshop with the planning commission and how do they'd see that structured. She felt that the local planning commission is going to want to know that they've been out and looked at the site.

- Dan Mallach responded that is good to know adding that he is on the team with Amy Rutledge and they will be doing some desktop mapping and then a field evaluation as a check against that work to identify any deltas between the two.

- Katharine added that members of the consulting team have been to the area and have been looking at things, not as specific as a resource perspective so they do have a degree of knowledge of the area.

9. Updates and Announcements

Stephanie wrapped up the meeting asking if the committee members or agency partners had any updates or announcements for the study team. Hearing none she passed the meeting to Katharine who stated that if anyone would like to volunteer for anything, would like more information or get looped into particular processes please let us know.

Katharine closed the meeting at 2:06 p.m.