

Technical Committee Meeting Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Technical Committee Meeting - Initial Concept Screening Review
Date and Time	October 11, 2022 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Technical Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Land Use Planning Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Regional Planning Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Municipal Planning John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen*</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Planning, Observer Chris Jolly (FHWA), Planning Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), Environmental Jacqueline DeMent (VTrans), Planning, Observer James LaCroix (VTrans), Structures* Jim Cota (VTrans), Maintenance* Jon Kaplan (VTrans), Bicycle and Pedestrian*</p>
Study Team Attendees	<p>Ken Robie (D&K) Rich Tetreault (D&K) Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Laura Toole (WSP) Annabelle Dally (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP)</p>

*Invited, but not present

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

Katharine Otto, Chair of the Technical Committee (the committee), called the committee meeting to order on October 11, 2022, at 11:00 am. General housekeeping note; Joe Segale retired from VTrans in the summer. Katharine Otto replaces Joe Segale as Chair of this Committee and VTrans Project Manager.

2. Roll Call

Annabelle Dally, WSP, conducted roll call. Nine of the ten voting members and four of the eight remaining non-voting members of the committee were present, and eight additional participants representing VTrans, WSP, and DuBois & King (D&K) were in attendance.

3. Study Progress

Katharine Otto reviewed the agenda for the meeting and provided a summary of progress from the last Technical Committee meeting in July to share the draft screening criteria and draft list of concepts. Since the last meeting, the concepts have been scored and the project team has drafted the Alternatives Development and Screening Technical Memorandum (shared with committee the week prior).

Stephanie Camay reviewed the Purpose and Need and reiterated its importance as a foundational element in identifying reasonable alternatives and ultimately streamlining the NEPA process. Stephanie then presented the Draft Screening Criteria that was based on the Purpose and Need and shared with the public. She explained that the draft long list of alternatives is an exhaustive list of all the potential solutions to address the Purpose of the Study. Initially the study team developed twelve concepts and an additional concept was identified as a result of public input. The long list of concepts include Existing Road Concepts, VT 22A Corridor Concepts, New Road Concepts, Other Freight Modes, and the No Build option that will serve as the baseline for this study.

4. Long List of Concepts

Steve Chiamonte presented a detailed view on all the concepts developed within each concept type:

The Existing Roadway Concepts utilize existing roadways and may include roadway improvements, restrict/prohibit trucks on Route 22A, and wayfinding/routing. VT Routes 17, 30 and 125 and US Routes 4, 7 and 9 were considered as viable concepts. Additionally, I-87 and I-89 were considered viable options for longer trips.

The Route 22A Concepts permits trucks on Route 22A and focus on physical changes to Route 22A to accommodate truck traffic as well as balance other modes. The No Build option is included in this concept type.

The New Road Concepts include six new roads that aim to divert trucks away from downtown Vergennes. Steve emphasized that the map shown displays the conceptual ideas not the exact footprint. If any of these concepts move forward the exact locations will have to be determined through a thorough review of land use, right-of-way, environmental impacts, permitting, traffic needs, and design considerations.

** Vergennes New and Existing Roadway was renamed Vergennes Main Street Parallel Route

The other freight mode concepts propose transitioning truck cargo to rail or barge as well as includes concepts that for smart freight, electric vehicles, and connected and autonomous vehicles.

5. Screening

Steve introduced the screening process, which was a largely qualitative review that utilized the study team’s understanding of the concepts, analysis of the regional transportation network, and input from the public and the committees. The study team initially screened the concepts, denoting either neutral or no effect(o), some positive(+) or negative effect(-) or substantial positive(++) or negative effect(--). This was further refined through a formal review which resulted in the ratings and recommendations to further study that will be shared later in the presentation.

Dismissed Concepts

Steve shared the concepts that were proposed to be dismissed at this point in the study and the reasons why they were dismissed.

Concept	Fatal Flaw
Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 2)	Proximity to Otter Creek Mobile Home Park
Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3)	Proximity to Otter Creek Mobile Home Park
Systemwide	Does not adequately balance regional impacts nor maintain freight mobility
VT-22A Corridor Improvements	Does not meet purpose and need
Rail Modes	Does not adequately meet purpose and need
Water Modes	Does not adequately meet purpose and need
Smart Freight Solutions	Does not adequately meet purpose and need

Recommended Concepts

The three concepts that ranked the highest in the initial screening were the Vergennes Panton New Roadway, the Main Street Parallel Route, and the RT-17 Northbound/ 22A Southbound. Steve noted that elements from other concepts that scored less high may be able to be able to supplement the top scoring concepts (e.g., Smart Freight Solutions).

- Chris Jolly (FHWA) asked if the study team had defined what a truck is in the context of this study, whether we’re talking about tractor trailers, two axle with tandem wheels.
- Steve states he will have to confirm with the Purpose and Need, but believes it is FHWA class six and above, three axel and above.

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Stephanie asked the group if there are any surprises with the three concepts that were recommended for further study, hearing none she moved on to review the screening criteria categories:

‘Does the concept meet the Purpose and Need?’ she noted that they scored the 22A Corridor improvements as not meeting the purpose and found several other concepts that did not adequately meet the purpose and need (e.g., rail mode, water mode).

Stephanie presented the quality-of-life criteria and an overview on how the concepts were scored. She asked the group if there are any comments, questions, or surprises - none were raised.

Katharine clarified that at the end of today's meeting, we are intending to have a consensus point. The goal is for all of the voting members who are in attendance to agree with the methodology and what we have discussed so that it can be presented to the other agencies, the public, and then the Policy Committee.

- Chris Jolly raised that the systemwide concept would prohibit trucks from downtown Vergennes and asked why it did not have two positive marks.
- Stephanie stated she believed the reason was because that concept would be challenging to implement.
- Ken stated that Chris has a valid point, that if it has no functional difference from the VT-17 concept (in that it prohibits all trucks from downtown) it should have the same score.
- Chris stated that he doesn't think it will make a difference in the scoring in the long run.
- Steve shared that he was looking at a current draft of the matrix and it showed the systemwide as double plus for this criterion. He agreed with Chris that the adjustment will not change the overall standing of the systemwide concept.
- Fred Kenney asked if any criteria considers the difficulty of enforcement.
- Stephanie responded that the implementation considerations will be described in the technical memo as additional considerations. Fred remarked that he sees what happened in Jeffersonville where they can't even keep trucks out of Smugglers Notch.

Stephanie presented the equity criteria and an overview on how the concepts were scored. She asked the group if there are any questions or surprises.

- Fred Kennedy mentioned any concept that reroutes traffic through other communities should have a negative. For example VT 17 NB and 22A SB, how it that neutral when it is affecting those communities.

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- Stephanie noted that they had a lot of discussion on this category, it was noted as neutral because it would be primarily existing right of way but is open to the committee's thoughts on whether it should be negative instead.
- Bruce echoed Fred's comment noting that the Southern part of 22A is narrow and there is a concern about sending trucks that way. There are some tight spaces and hard maneuvers on Route 17, and he thinks those community would consider it a negative impact.
- Elizabeth Shipley asked if she could describe the methodology/or show how you determined the impacts for each of the concepts.
- Stephanie explained that they started with each concept and developed a rationale on whether the concept satisfies the criteria. The process was qualitative, but they did utilize some information in terms of possible impacts (ex. location of natural resources, environmental justice communities). Then they looked at the overall matrix and made sure that the scores made sense when comparing the concepts. They noted which concepts were on the higher or lower end of a criteria and the rest of the concepts fit in between in that context. The scoring was reviewed by VTrans and ACRPC.
- Mike Winslow noted that he recollects the VT 17 and 22A concepts scoring higher because of the potential benefits of the road improvements.
- Steve added that it was a collaborative approach between VTrans and ACRPC to make sure that the team's understanding of transportation planning was balanced by the local needs and wants represented by VTrans and ACRPC. He also noted that this meeting is part of that collaborative process.

Stephanie presented the mobility and access screening results and gave an overview of the rationale behind the scores. She asked if there are any questions on this grouping of criteria.

- Mike said he we should reconsider the plus for maintains freight mobility throughout the region for the Vergennes New and Existing Roadway noting that he thinks the roadway will add in some turning movements that will make freight movement more difficult.
- Steve asked Mike if he is referring to and from McDonough Drive. Mike responded yes and adding an intersection or traffic moving north from main street to McDonough Drive in an intersection that is already at a level of service D.
- Stephanie asked the committee if they think the rating should be a neutral or negative.
- Shannon Hagget agrees with Mike that it should be negative.
- Katharine believed it should be neutral because of the benefits of having the route so close to the existing route.
- Steve agreed with Katharine to keep the score as neutral noting the need to account for addition travel time or fuel cost.

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- Katie said McDonough Drive has more of a neighborhood character, so she sees the truck route negatively impacting pedestrian and bicycle travel and lowering the score.
- Mike agrees it is a residential area with some undeveloped land as well but noted that criteria are about freight mobility.
- Ken adds that the mobility of other modes will be discussed later.
- Jim Larrow wanted clarification on whether the Vergennes New and Existing Roadway** is the concept routed along McDonough Drive.
- Stephanie and Mike confirmed it is.
- Jim continued to say that he does not understand why it is still being considered because the hill on McDonough Drive is worse than the hill on the current Route 22A. He stated that he has expressed this concern before and asked if this is the time when that option will be deleted.
- Ken Robie responded that at this point in the process we are not looking at the operational viability. If the concept moves forward, it will be further evaluated in a concept level design, and then a second evaluation step ranking it with others and determining if it is viable. Jim responded that he is frustrated with this choice and is still concerned by the steep hill.
- Fred expressed confusion on the naming conventions of the concepts and asked if the Vergennes New and Existing Roadway** is the same as the Vergennes New Main Street New Parallel Route in the matrix.
- Stephanie confirmed that they are the same and the team will reconcile the name in the study materials.
- Fred asked if Stephanie could point out the three that you are proposing to go through. Stephanie noted that the 4th, 7th, and 9th columns on the table show the concepts that are advancing; The VT-17 Northbound/ 22A Southbound, Vergennes-Panton New Roadway Option 4), and the Vergennes New and Existing Roadway**.

Stephanie presented the screening results for economic vitality and an overview on how the concepts were scored. She asked the group if there are any questions, surprises, or scores that should be adjusted in this group.

- Fred asked if it was correct that none of the concepts would limit access for trucks destined to Vergennes. Stephanie confirmed that is correct.

Stephanie noted that the safety, circulation, and resilience categories will look at non-motorized transit. She gave an overview of the criteria and screening results and general rationale for the scores. She asked if there were any thoughts on these or any score that should be adjusted. None were noted.

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Stephanie reviewed the screening results and general rationale for the land use criteria. She asked if there were any comments, criteria, or scores that should be adjusted. None were noted.

6. Next Steps

Stephanie gave a recap of the project schedule and meetings leading up to the agency concurrence by the end of 2022.

- Bruce asked if the Public Meeting would be hybrid, Stephanie confirmed it would be.

Katharine reviewed the concepts proposed for further study reiterating that the concepts shown on the map do not reflect the exact locations.

- Fred Kennedy asked if the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route had an option number associated with it.
- Steve responded that it did not have an option number, the only ones that had an option number noted were the West Routing options to discern the routes from one another because they came from previous studies. He noted that the route Fred is referring to is noted in orange on the map and came out of the public outreach sessions and is the only concepts that has not been previously considered.
- Fred asked where the Vergennes New Roadway concepts is located on a map in the memo.
- Stephanie added that the Vergennes New Roadway concept is in section 3.3.6 and the concept is shown on figure five in the most current version.
- Ken also noted that the concept is named inconsistently in the memo and will be reconciled in study documents. He noted that if there are any disagreements or suggestion about the concepts that were proposed for further study now is the time to voice those thoughts.
- Fred asked if the couple of small changes will alter the scoring or ranking.
- Katharine responded that it would change the scoring but likely not the ranking because there was a clear distinction between the three recommended concepts and the remaining concepts.
- Ken added that because this is a qualitative process where the concepts are compared to each other in going back the study team will have to verify that these changes are independent changes rather than spread across concepts.
- Jim expressed that he does not understand how the Vergennes Local Road concept is part of the recommended concepts as it allows trucks to still come halfway through Vergennes. Another attendee added that Jim's concern also applies to another recommended concept, VT-17 NB/22A SB, which has half the truck volumes still going into Vergennes.
- Stephanie responded that from the previous studies the approach has evolved into removing the truck impacts not necessarily removing all trucks and also balancing the impacts and benefits within Vergennes and the surrounding communities.
- Steve echoed Stephanie's thought and added that the task is to identify which of these concepts best balances all of the competing challenges and needs while addressing the transportation issues. He

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recognized the challenges with McDonough Drive. The goal of the screening is to identify the best potential solutions that can be advanced for further study.

- Rich suggested to go back to the Purpose and Need slide, as it helps to understand that the goal of the study is to remove truck impacts and that has driven the screening results.

7. Consensus Point

Katharine asked the committee if they agree that that methodology and information considered in the scoring matrix is sufficient to be recommended for public review, agency concurrence and policy committee consideration (including the changes agreed upon during the meeting). She then proceeded with a roll call.

Voting Members:

Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning -YAY
 Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway -YAY
 Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic -YAY
 Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental -YAY
 Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Town Road Foremen -YAY
 Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance -YAY
 Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Planning -YAY
 Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Planning -YAY
 Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Planning -YAY
 John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Town Road Foremen - not present
 Jim Cota (VTrans) - not present

Katharine Otto closed the meeting at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Note: During the engagement period for Initial Concept Screening the names of some alternatives/ concepts evolved. By December each route had a color name to help reduce confusion. For ease of reference, a list of what the concepts were called in this meeting, and other names associated within them during the Fall 2022 - Winter 2023 engagement period is provided below.

- VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound – Purple Route
- Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1) – Red Route
- Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 2) – Cyan Route
- Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3) – Pink Route
- Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4) – Blue Route
- Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) – Green Route
- Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route – Orange Route

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