

Technical Committee & Agency Partners Meeting Minutes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Technical Committee & Agency Partners meeting to move conceptual designs into evaluation
Date and Time	December 5, 2023, 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Agency Coordinating Partners	<p>Federal Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Christopher Jolly & Elizabeth Shipley* U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Michael Adams U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Gary Croot* U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Beth Alafat, Tim Timmerman and Nathan Margason U.S.D.A – Natural Resource Conservation Service, Obediah Racicot* Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), David Robbins* & Erik Kuns* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Susi von Oettingen* <p>State Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Billy Coster Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Laura Trieschmann* & Scott Dillon (on Laura’s behalf) Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), Department of Housing and Community Development, Chris Cochran* & Gary Halloway (on Chris’ behalf) Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Ari Rockland-Miller & Ryan Patch* Buildings and General Services (BGS), Vermont Agency of Administration, Eric Pembroke*
Technical Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair – Katharine Otto (VTrans), Planning John Bull (Town of Ferrisburgh), Municipal Public Works Alysha Kane (VTrans), District Maintenance* Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes), Planning Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development), Economic Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes), Municipal Public Works Bruce Martin (VTrans), Roadway Design – Bruce Martin* & Jesse Devlin (on Bruce’s behalf) Joel Perrigo (VTrans), Municipal Assistance

	Katie Raycroft-Meyer (ACRPC), Planning Jeff Ramsey (VTrans), Environmental Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Planning Non-Voting Members: Chris Jolly (FHWA), Planning Jacqueline DeMent (FHWA), Planning* Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), Environmental* James LaCroix (VTrans), Structures Adam Lougee (ACRPC), Planning, Observer Amanda Holland (VTrans), Bicycle and Pedestrian Amy Bell (VTrans), Planning
Study Team Attendees	Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Liviu Sfintescu (WSP) Ken Robie (D&K) Dan Mallach (D&K) Laura Toole (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP) Jim Gish (VHB)
Community Attendees	No community members identified in the meeting

*Invited, but not present

Meeting Minutes

Katharine Otto, Chair of the Technical Committee (the committee), called the committee meeting to order on December 5, 2023, at 12:35 pm. Katharine Otto reviewed the agenda and noted we have enough Technical Committee voting members to take a vote on consensus. The consensus will be voted on later in the meeting and will ask voting members to determine if the conceptual designs, as they are, can move into the evaluation task of the PEL Study. Katharine Otto referred to the technical memo and visualizations that were provided to the Agency Partners and Technical Committee ahead of the meeting.

Delia Makhetha, WSP, conducted roll call. Nine of the ten voting members and five of the seven remaining non-voting members of the committee were present, and ten additional participants representing VTrans, WSP, DuBois & King (D&K) and VHB were in attendance.

Stephanie Camay (WSP), presented on the Vergennes PEL Study background, including a study overview and study timeline. The study is about halfway through the PEL process.

At the last Technical Committee meeting the team reviewed the conceptual design approach and the methodology as well as the initial designs. Comments received from the Technical Committee and Agency Partners were incorporated into the conceptual designs.

This meeting will look at the concepts and the visualizations to help understand and get a sense for how the routes could work in the region and what the team would like to study further in the evaluation phase in Task 6.

Completed tasks include establishing the study's Purpose and Need Statement and narrowing down the long list of concepts. Current and upcoming tasks include land use visioning, conceptual design, concept evaluation implementation, and finalized report.

Stephanie reminded the Technical Committee that their role is to review the methodology, the analysis and recommendation(s) that are brought forward by the study team. The consensus point today will ask the Technical Committee to move the concepts forward for further study and evaluation.

She also reminded the Agency Partners that their role is to provide insight into future coordination activities under NEPA.

The recommendation(s) that come out of the PEL Study by the study team are put forward to the Technical Committee, then presented to the Policy Committee. Ultimately that recommendation will be brought to VTrans leadership. The recommendation(s) that will be brought forth at the end of the PEL Study will only be recommendations and nothing will be binding until the NEPA process.

For today's meeting, the Technical Committee and Agency Partners will be asked to provide comment on the technical memo that was provided ahead of the meeting and provide consensus on the concepts after the group reviews the visualizations.

Stephanie reviewed the concept screening. The Purpose and Need Statement was the basis for the screening criteria. This guided the long list of alternatives, now called concepts. From this process, there are four new roadway concepts being studied, one concept to improve the existing Route 17, and a "no build" option along Route 22 which would keep the existing roadway configuration.

Steve Chiamonte (WSP) provided details on each concept and walked through the visualizations. Reviewed the design methodology that guided the conceptual designs. Methodology included the following:

- Follow Vermont State Standards related to lane and shoulder widths, speed, superelevation, vertical clearance over Otter Creek, grade and sight distances
- United States Coast Guard bridge clearance guidance
- Avoid environmental constraints where feasible
- Objective to keep passenger vehicles in downtown Vergennes (Route 22A/Main Street) as much as possible
- Intersection types to be considered

The methodology considered that the conceptual designs provide a footprint to further evaluate the concepts and the concepts associated impacts. The actual design of a roadway will come later in this process.

Today the team is looking for detailed feedback and questions on the following items:

- Design approach and criteria (e.g., speed or geometry)
- Terminus locations
- Visualizations
- Consensus on concept designs for further evaluation and refinement

There are future topics that will be developed as part of the evaluation task of the PEL Study that will not be discussed in detail today, which include:

- Future land use around key roadways
- Operational considerations
- Roadway cross-section dimensions
- Intersection designs (roundabouts, signalized, jug-handle, etc.)
- Bridge design
- Environmental resources
- Property impacts

A consensus will be taken today, but questions and comments can be submitted by Technical Committee and Agency Partners following the meeting. Questions and comments will be accepted until December 18, 2023.

Steve reviewed items that have been updated or added, since the discussions in June 2023 based off comments and feedback the Study team received from the Technical Committee and Agency Partners. These changes include:

- Prepare technical memorandum to describe methodology and conceptual designs
- Prepare visualizations
- Lengthened bridges – blue, pink, and green would be multi-span bridges
- Progressed the conceptual design of the Purple Route to address deficiencies on VT 17
- Adjusted slope of the Orange Route to reduce property impacts
- Reduced the design speed of the Orange Route at the southern end of the route

Before the review of each concept, the team paused for questions and comments.

- Ken Robie (D&K) reiterated that these concepts are base designs that will enter into the evaluation phase. The designs can be adjusted based on the evaluation, since there is information that the team will be unaware of until the evaluation phase. Feedback being accepted through December 18 via email.

Steve reviewed each route and walked through the visualization.

The Blue Route is the western most route and the overall length of this route would be 2.5 miles. The route connects with VT 22A about 1.25 miles south of Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary. Notable intersection for this route includes Panton Road, MacDonough Drive, Comfort Hill and a new crossing over Otter Creek. This route will require cut or fill to maintain appropriate grades with the most substantial earth movement expected at the proposed Otter Creek crossing. The route reconnects with VT 22A north of downtown Vergennes near the

Vergennes Police Department and the Vermont Discount Store. This route would traverse three municipalities including Panton, Ferrisburgh and Vergennes.

Questions and comments on the Blue Route.

- Question from Adam Lougee (ACRPC): How high is the bridge above the water?
 - o Answer from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Currently it is 50 feet
- Question from Chris Jolly (FHWA): Are facilities and structure that are identified on the fly overs, are these all accurate?
 - o Answer from Ken Robie (D&K): Yes, the actual structures are displayed and are graphically enhanced.
- Question from Fred Kenney (Addison County Economic Development): Would it be possible to create a chart that identifies major elements such as length of routes, municipalities crossed, number of intersections, bridge information, etc.
 - o Answer: A chart will be created and shared
- Comment from Billy Coster (ANR): The Blue Route is down stream of Vergennes. This area is of higher natural resources value. The multi-span bridge would be a negative element to the environment and may impact tributaries and wildlife.
 - o Response Stephanie (WSP): These are baseline designs and once we proceed with these into the evaluation phase, there will be a quantitative analysis of natural resources and will be reaching out to agencies for additional input.
- Comment from Tim Timmermann (EPA): The visualization is helpful. Asked the study team to label landmarks (such as Otter Creek housing development) to help people orientate themselves in the visualizations. Also, asked to see the cut/fill balance as the analysis is completed. It will be helpful to see what is cut and what is fill.
- Comment from Ken Robie (D&K): There has been no effort in these visualizations to minimize impacts to allow for a broad footprint and capture the maximum impacts may be. This will be reviewed and analysed during the evaluation phase.

The Pink Route connects with Route 22A about 0.75 of a mile south of the Panton Road and VT 22A intersection. Pink Route is a modified version of the Blue Route that shifts the alignment east between Panton Road and VT 22A. This route does propose a crossing at Otter Creek within the Vergennes limits. This route will require cut or fill to maintain appropriate grades with the most substantial earth movement expected at the proposed Otter Creek crossing. The Pink Route reconnects with VT 22A roughly half a mile west of the Route 22A and Route 7 intersection, north of downtown Vergennes near the Vergennes Police Department and the Vermont Discount Store. The reconnection point is the same as the proposed reconnection point of the Blue Route. The overall length of this route is roughly 2.3 miles. This route would be primarily within Vergennes.

Questions and comments on the Blue Route.

- Comment from Billy Coster (ANR): Concerned that the route ends near a cemetery. Billy will follow up with the team separately with additional comments.
- Question from Jim Larrow (City of Vergennes): How did the team come up with the speed limit on this route? Concerned about speeds through neighborhoods on other routes.
 - o Answer from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Design speed will be governed by how the road is laid out (lane width/should width/curves). What is proposed now in these visualizations uses current design standards based on knowledge of the roadway now. The team acknowledges that this may change during the evaluation phase. At this point, this is only a starting point.
- Comment from Shannon Haggett (City of Vergennes): Reiterated the concern about speeds through city limits. Within the City limits of Vergennes, this will be a critical design issue
 - o Response from Stephanie (WSP): This will be taken into consideration. The team wanted to make sure the design is conservative, knowing that speed limits, operational components and environment will be discussed further in the evaluation phase.

The Orange Route is roughly a one-mile-long route, located entirely in Vergennes and is the only concept that does not include a crossing of Otter Creek. The route connects at the intersection of MacDonough Drive and Main Street. Key intersections would be the realignment at MacDonough Drive between VT 22 A and Comfort Hill and a new intersection of MacDonough Drive and Comfort Hill. This route would require the dead-ending of Battery Hill at MacDonough Drive. Reconnects with VT 22A approximately half a mile west of Route 22A/Route 7 near the Vergennes Police Station and the Vermont Discount Store. For the Orange Route specifically, the design speed is used to determine the geometric features of the roadway. Higher design speed provides a wider footprint for analysis. 45 MPH design grade has a lower grade, a flatter profile. More fill would be required to create a flatter profile.

Questions and comments on the Orange Route:

- Question from Adam Lougee (ACRPC): Can the team estimate the virtual fill on the two images from the Orange Route for the design speed?
 - o Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Engineers can provide that, and the team will look to provide that.
- Question from Michael Adams (USACE): Is the Orange Route speed limit all 35 MPH or 45 MPH? Or does the speed limit switch along the route?
 - o Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Shift in design speed to 35 MPH is for the southern section of the Orange Route.
- Question from Michael Adams (USACE): The visuals are great to show people. Is there a way to enhance or call out the slopes along the proposed roadways? There is a ravine around Otter Creek and there is also a ravine near the Vergennes Police Station, and it would be important to make it easy to see on the visualizations.

- Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): The Study team will check with graphic designers to see if there is a way to amplify the view.
- Response from Ken Robie (D&K): Team also noted the area by the police station is an area that will be looked at specific for natural resources, and likely a habitat corridor that needs to be looked at more closely during the evaluation phase to minimize fill and provide crossing for aquatic and other creatures in the area.
- Question from Fred Kenney (ACEDC): What does cut slope and fill slope refer to? Is a cut slope down and a fill slope up?
 - Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Cut is referring to down slope and fill slope refers to an increase in slope.
- Question from Fred Kenney (ACEDC): When the maps say “extend into” or shows the route extending slight, does that mean there will be a need for roadway improvements in that area?
 - Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): There would most likely be adjustments needed to the Comfort Hill area for the Orange Route and potentially other routes depending on how the route is laid out.
- Comment from Amanda Holland (VTrans): For natural resources, it is important to consider and do a thorough review of slope stability, for resiliency, since ravine slopes can move/shift over time.
- Question from Amanda Holland (VTrans): Where sidewalk and crosswalks are, how close is that to the intersection with MacDonough and 22A and Comfort Hill and 22A. Would that intersection be signalized? Would the crossing be signalized with the traffic light for bicyclists and pedestrians, not just a rapid flashing beacon? Especially coming from the north to the south, would a crosswalk be the first point of contact or reminder to trucks that they are coming into a developed area and need to slow down?
 - Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): Any signalization or intersection treatments will be fleshed out as the concepts move forward into evaluation. The Study team does see the contextual change as vehicles come to the intersection of MacDonough and 22A.

The Green Route is the eastern most route and the overall length of this route would be 2.3 miles. The route connects with VT 22A about one mile south of the Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary. Notable intersection for this route includes Hopkins Road, Maple Street, Green Street, Church Street and a new crossing over Otter Creek. This route will require cut or fill to maintain appropriate grades. The earth movement expected at the proposed Otter Creek crossing is substantially lower than the Pink and Blue Routes. The route reconnects with US Route 7 near the existing intersection of New Haven Road and US Route 7 in Waltham. This route would traverse three municipalities including Panton, Waltham and Vergennes.

Paused for questions and comments on the Green Route:

- Question from Fred Kenney (ACEDC): It looks like in the visualizations that the intersections are two-way stops for streets being crossed. Has that been decided yet?

- Response from Steve Chiaramonte (WSP): That decision has not been made. For all the visualizations, priority was provided to the new roads, but nothing is finalized and will be reviewed during the evaluation phase.
- Response from Ken Robie (D&K): Assumption for all of these routes is that the routes are limited access, so the only connection points are public roadways. This is a big assumption that will be decided after these base concepts are moved into evaluation.

The Purple Route does not have a visualization since it utilizes existing roadways. The purple route does not involve the construction of a new roadway but would widen and improve existing VT 17 and US 7. This would shift northbound truck traffic to VT 17 and US 7 and maintain southbound traffic along VT 22A. Reconstruction of VT 17 would be likely to address deficiencies. Overall length of the Purple Route is 22 miles between VT 17, US 7 and VT 22A and goes through Addison, Panton, Vergennes, Weybridge, Waltham, New Haven, and Ferrisburgh. Key intersections identified include Route 17 and Mountain Road and Middle Road, Route 17 at Quaker Village and Hallock Road, Route 17 at Field Days Road and Route 17 at Green Street.

Questions and comments on the Purple Route:

- Comment from Tim Timmermann (EPA): Recommends creating a visualization for the Purple Route. Also, if some routes have two-direct fly over, it should be done for all routes.
 - Response from Stephanie Camay (WSP): The team will create a visualization for the Purple Route, particularly the areas where significant improvements are proposed. Most likely the visualizations will be from south to north based on size.
- Comment from Chris Jolly (FHWA): It looks like for all the concepts there are no business relocations or property acquisitions required. Is that accurate?
 - Response from Stephanie Camay, WSP: The team anticipates that there would likely be property acquisitions and potential for relocation.
 - Response from Ken Robie (D&K): There would be full takings including structures, specifically thinking about the Orange Route. This is not reflected on the visualizations, as the designs are conceptual. VTrans would try to avoid property impacts, but that is not always possible.
 - Katharine Otto (VTrans): On the Green Route there could be impacts near New Haven Road and on the Blue and Pink Route, the takings could be around Pantan Road where it is closest to buildings. Then also in the MacDonough and Comfort Hill area. The team will look to avoid takings, but it is not always possible.

Stephanie Camay (WSP), noted that the study team will update the technical memo to emphasize the following:

- Design speeds are just a starting point in order to provide a wider swath for evaluation and speed will continue to be looked at during the evaluation process.
- Include a graph/list to show comparison between the routes of length, milage, number of municipalities, bridge and other items.

Stephanie Camay (WSP) noted that the study team will connect with Billy Coster (ANR) for additional comments on the Blue and Pink Routes. The team will also label buildings on the existing visualizations and create a visualization for the Purple Route.

The team paused to allow time for additional questions or comments on the Technical memo or any information the Technical Committee or Agency Partners would like to discussion. There were no questions or comments at this time.

Based on the review done today of the conceptional design technical memo, the meeting will move to a consensus vote from the Technical Committee. The study team is looking for a consensus to move the concepts ahead into the evaluation task of the PEL Study.

The study team is still accepting comments from the Technical Committee and Agency Partners until December 18.

Consensus Point: Based on your review of the Conceptual Design Technical Memorandum and today's discussion, do you recommend moving the conceptual designs into evaluation during the PEL Study?

Katharine Otto (VTrans) conducted a roll call for consensus:

John Bull – In favor

Alysha Kane – Not present

Shannon Haggett – In favor

Fred Kenney – In favor

Jim Larrow – In favor

Bruce Martin (Jeese Devlin on Bruce's behalf) – In favor

Joel Perrigo – In favor

Katie Raycroft-Meyer – In favor

Jeff Ramsey – In favor

Mike Winslow – In favor

Katharine Otto – In favor

The motion reached consensus to move the conceptual designs into evaluation by attending voting members.

This recommendation will be moving forward to the Policy Committee. If there are any major revisions following the presentation to the Policy Committee, the Team will be sure to bring it back to the Technical Committee.

Following consensus, Stephanie Camay (WSP), reviewed the online public survey that was conducted August 17 through September 25. The goal of the survey was to help the study team better understand the issues that are important to the public. The survey received over 900 responses and had representation from all municipalities that may be impacted by the proposed

transportation solutions. Survey outreach included in-person events, email notifications, direct mailers, social media through the VTrans accounts.

Survey included questions related to route preferences, tradeoffs, land use preferences, and demographics.

The route preference screen asked respondents to review each route and rate it on a scale of one to five (one being the lowest, five being the highest). Respondents could provide comments on each route option. Key route preference takeaways:

- Blue route received highest support from survey respondents.
- Orange route received the least support from survey respondents.
- The average ratings for the no build, Green Route and Purple route options were within a 0.10-point range.

The tradeoffs screen asked respondents to review six sets of tradeoffs and make a choice between the pairs. Six of the tradeoffs were about land use and two of the trade-offs were about traffic. Respondents could provide comments on each tradeoff option. Key trade off takeaways

- General support of adding housing the areas surrounding new routes.
- Marginally in support of adding commercial or industrial land use in those areas.

The interactive map screen asked respondents to add markers on a regional map that showed the possible routes under consideration. There were eight marker types available to respondents to place on the map. The marker types related to the purpose and need and included mobility and access, safety and circulation, environment, resilience, quality of life, economic vitality, land use and other. Respondents could provide comments specific to each map marker they placed. Key map high-level marker takeaways:

- Largest proportion of map markers focused on safety and circulation and was primarily focused in downtown Vergennes and along the Blue and Pink Routes.
- The second largest proportion of map markers addressed quality of life concerns and were concentrated in downtown Vergennes, along the Blue and Pink Routes and the southeast corner of the Green Route.
- The third largest proportion of map markers were related to the environment and were concentrated along the Blue, Pink and Green Routes.

Stephanie Camay (WSP) explained the survey team will be sharing the complete survey report with the Technical Committee, Policy Committee, Agency Partners and the public by the end of the year.

There were no questions or comments about the survey.

Stephanie Camay (WSP), proceeded to discuss the Land Use portion of the Vergennes PEL Study. Since last meeting with the Technical Committee and Agency Partners, the study team

has reviewed existing data and have met with all the planning commissions to get a sense zoning regulations and land use regulations within the seven municipalities. Now the study team is holding a series of land use visioning workshop. The workshops are being held in December and a virtual workshop in January. Each workshop focuses on a different route and asks participants to think about if that route is built what is the vision for the surrounding land. The virtual workshop in January will discuss all the routes. These workshops will help to develop an integrated transportation solution that has a strong land use component. The goal will be that the PEL Study will recommend a preferred route as well as recommendations for land use regulations along the recommended corridor. The study team will wrap up land use visioning completed in early 2024. This would then be presented to planning commissions and then land use will be finalized as part of the PEL Study.

Question from Billy Coster (ANR): Are all the routes being proposed as limited access highways? There won't be additional access aside from the entry and exit point, is that correct? Secondary growth impacts would raise significant concerns for ANR. Any additional crossings related to a new route would enable additional residential or commercial development would need to be reviewed by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Response from Stephanie Camay (WSP): This is something that is going to be looked at. If the vision from participants is for more commercial or residential land use and there is a need for additional crossings, that can be incorporated into the design. But the process will also explore if people want the land to stay the same.

Response from Ken Robie (D&K): In the NEPA evaluation, if there is potential for future development, that would need to look at and any secondary impacts would need to take this into account.

Response from Chris Jolly (FHWA): That statement is correct.

Response from Katharine Otto (VTrans): The process will also explore if people want the land to stay the same.

Response from Amanda Holland (VTrans): these workshops are the discussion of communities who are already planning for their future and these workshops help to align with what they want for their future with each proposed concept.

Question from Fred Kenney (ACEDC): Was the public invited to the land use visioning workshops?

Response from Stephanie Camay (WSP): Yes, these are public workshops. We also invite Committee members to attend. Attendance at the first meeting was roughly 50 people at the first land use visioning workshop. Notes will be posted after the workshops. Tentative plan would be to meet again with the Technical Committee and Agency Partners again in late February to discuss results of the land use visioning workshops and present a draft integrated land use vision for each of the conceptual designs.

Stephanie Camay (WSP), presented on next steps in the PEL process. For technical work the team is working on the transportation and land use integration. Now working with the community to develop draft land use visions. Then the team will start to think about the

evaluation of each concept. Now that we have the recommendation from the Technical Committee, our next step is to evaluation the concepts. Next meeting with the Technical and Agency Partners we will share draft screening criteria to evaluate the concepts, looking at a quantitative and qualitative process to evaluate each concept and traffic, environmental resources, and multi-modal considerations. Then the team will move into the implementation plan which will include funding, financing and land use regulations that will help guide the land use visions.

There were not questions or comments.

The study team opened the meeting to Updates/Announcements.

Stephanie Camay (WSP) reminded the Technical Committee and Agency Partners to submit any questions or comments about the visualizations and the technical memo to the study by via email by December 18.

Katharine Otto (VTrans) welcomed Amanda Holland (VTrans) to the Technical Committee as a non-voting member. Amanda has replacing John Kaplan (VTrans) for bicycle and pedestrian related issues.

Katharine Otto thanked the Technical Committee and Agency Partners for their participation, and feedback. The meeting adjourned at 2:17 pm.