

Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Policy Committee Meeting
Date and Time	July 23, 2024, 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Policy Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Adam Lougee (ACRPC), ACRPC Kati Gallagher, VRNC Diane Lanpher (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature Dickie Austin (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee Ron Redmond (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee Matthew Arancio (VTrans), VTrans Mary Rudd (Town of Panton), Municipal Appointee Matt Birong (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature Phil Summers (Addison County Chamber of Commerce), Business Rhonda Williams (Town of Waltham), Municipal Appointee Brent Rakowski, (ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee), ACRPC** Clark Hinsdale (Town of Ferrisburgh), Municipal Appointee** Jubilee McGill (State Representative from New Haven, Weybridge and Bridport), Legislature** Jeff Nelson (Town of Addison), Municipal Appointee** Jesse Devlin (VTrans), VTrans** Mike Audy (Town of New Haven), Municipal Appointee** Renny Perry (Vergennes Partnership), Business**</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Amy Bell (VTrans), Observer Jacqueline DeMent (FHWA), FHWA Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Observer Patrick Kirby (FHWA), Observer Joel Perrigo, (VTrans), Observer**</p>
Study Team Attendees	<p>Faith Dall (VTrans) Ken Robie (D&K) Aimee Rutledge (D&K) Jim Gish (VHB) Tripp Muldrow (Arnett Muldrow & Associates) Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiamonte (WSP) Laura Toole (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP) Annabelle Dally (WSP)</p>
Public Attendees	<p>Allen Morrey, (Vergennes) Janice Bosworth Linda Harmon (Vergennes resident & business owner)</p>

Liz Markowski (Ferrisburgh)
Mel Holley (Vergennes property owner)
Ted Boelens (Citizen)
Terry Pelletier (Panton resident)
Town Cowan (Vergennes)
Gay Stetzel*
Vicki*
Steve*

*Joined late

**Invited, but not present

The Policy Committee meeting presentation is available on the Vergennes PEL Study website, Committees and Agency Coordination Section (<https://vergennesspel.com/committees-agency-coordination>) under Policy Committee Meeting Materials:
https://www.vergennesspel.com/media/husfcgrq/20240723_policy-committee-meeting.pdf

Meeting Summary

Adam Lougee, Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) and Chair of the Policy Committee (the committee), started the meeting at 1:04 p.m., on Tuesday, July 23, 2024. Adam welcomed everyone to the Policy Committee meeting before turning the meeting over to Delia Makhetha, WSP, for a Zoom Orientation and Roll Call. Ten of the eighteen voting members and four of the five non-voting members were present. Non-voting members included the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC). Eleven members of the study team from WSP, Dubois & King (D&K), Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and the study's community liaison were also in attendance.

A quorum was met, and the meeting was officially called to order by Adam Lougee, the Chair of the Policy Committee, at 1:06 p.m. on Tuesday, July 23, 2024.

No changes were made to the agenda as presented.

Public Comment Period

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, started the meeting by opening the floor to any members from the public who wanted to provide short comments on the Vergennes PEL Study (the Study). Participants were asked to keep comments concise.

Allen Morey, from Vergennes, stated he has reviewed the by-pass options. He asked that prior to any by-pass construction, he suggested that truck traffic be routed on VT 17, north and southbound. He noted many trucks coming from the Rutland area and pass the VT 7 and VT 17 junction going through Vergennes. He recommended a sign be placed at the junction of VT 7 and VT 17 to direct truckers to VT 17 and eliminate truck traffic through Vergennes. Also commented that pink route, blue routes and routes on MacDonough Drive should be eliminated because of traffic flow concerns for truckers on the hill at MacDonough Drive.

PEL Study Background

Stephanie Camay, WSP, provided an overview of the Study, presentation slides 7-11. Stephanie explained that previous studies (over the past 25 years) showed a need to address truck volume in Downtown Vergennes. She shared that the goal of the PEL Study is to link previous studies to future environmental planning efforts. The Study is looking to gather enough details so that the

information developed can be utilized in a future environmental process under the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA). She highlighted that the Study is making a concentrated effort on outreach and engagement, so the community is involved in future transportation solutions.

Stephanie explained that the PEL Study is a three-year process, and the Study is coming to the end of the three-year process. Last time the Study met with the Policy Committee (January 2024) it was to review the conceptual designs. The alternatives progressed through the initial screening will be integrated with the land use visioning and evaluated further.

Stephanie highlighted that PEL is the planning process and within VTrans project lifecycle, it is part of Project Initiation. This PEL Study will conclude in 2025 and then the next step is to authorize funding and then any alternatives coming out of the PEL Study will move into Design and Engineering including the following: conceptual, draft and final design, environmental studies and NEP, permitting, and right-of-way acquisition. Following the Design and Engineering phase the project would then move to construction.

Stephanie noted that prior to today's meeting the draft Land Use Technical Memorandum was shared with the Policy Committee for review. During today's meeting the PEL Study Team is looking for consensus on the Land Use Technical Memorandum. Stephanie reminded the group that these are only recommendations and nothing in binding until the project enters the NEPA phase.

Stephanie opened the floor to the committee for questions or comments. There were no questions or comments.

Land Use Visioning

The PEL Study is looking at four new roadway alternatives, one route using existing roadways (VT 7/VT 17), and the no build alternatives (per NEPA).

Before this meeting, the draft Land Use Technical Memorandum was shared with the Policy Committee for review. This memorandum was a compilation of work including land use and zoning data review, environmental constraints review, regional and municipal interviews, planning commission meetings, land use visioning workshops, and present the draft land use visions to the planning commissions (seven PEL Study communities). The Land Use Technical Memorandum was shared and reviewed by VTrans, the Policy Committee, the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC), and a subset of the Technical Committee. Last month, The PEL Study Team met with the Technical Committee and the memorandum was approved and recommended to move forward to the Policy Committee.

Stephanie showed one example of the land use visioning scenarios (orange), shown only as an example to show the land use scenarios that would impact alternatives. This has been done for all five alternatives being reviewed.

Stephanie opened the meeting to questions or comments from the Policy Committee. Stephanie noted that Representative Diane Lanpher submitted editorial edits before the meeting, which will be incorporated by the team.

Rhonda Williams, Waltham, stated it was unclear in the Environmental Considerations section of the Land Use Technical Memorandum, if the "potential impacts to community character identified including noise and lighting of a new route" would that only pertain to the orange route (at MacDonough Drive) or is that more general for all routes? She noted that for the Green Route, noise in Waltham would be a concern. If generic, Rhonda requested the sentence be

reworded as a summary statement. Rhonda recommended a summary showing environmental considerations, larger than just noise and light, which will be looked at as part of the NEPA process.

Stephanie, WSP, the comment would pertain to all routes. Potential noise impacts and lighting along any new future alternatives would be considered.

Mike Winslow, ACPRC, shared concerns were uniform across all routes, not specific to one route. Stephanie, WSP, noted this can be cleared up in the document and clear it will be addressed for all routes. WSP will make it clear that a deeper environmental review will be part of a future NEPA process.

Rhonda Williams, Waltham, asked if the no-build alternative is given equal weight to the other alternatives in the Land Use Technical Memorandum and the study?

Stephanie, WSP, explained that there are no land use scenarios for the no build alternative because there is no new roadway. However, when going through the scenarios, the team can add a note in the technical memorandum that explains why there are no scenarios. In terms of the NEPA process, the no build will be considered equal to the other route alternatives proposed.

Mary Rudd, Town of Panton, asked if the technical memorandum should have a statement specific to zoning, not that the technical memorandum does not imply but also doesn't preclude any zoning changes.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, noted that zoning is not determined at this stage, towns and cities will be able to address this at the right time.

Stephanie Camay, WSP, noted that the land use scenarios in technical memorandum will be outlined in the memorandum and the team can add a blanket statement that notes zoning changes may be required for any or all of the alternatives.

Mike Wilson, ACRPC, noted that as part of the land use visioning plan, the team can make recommendations to the municipalities about zoning, and the changes that be necessary for that to occur. However, this would not be imposed on the municipalities.

Allen Morey, from Vergennes, stated that he feels the alternatives that go near UTC and the mobile home park are not the best options for the community.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, noted that Mr. Morey's comments have been noted.

Consensus Point

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, explained the consensus point for the Policy Committee meeting, asks the Policy Committee to weigh in on the following: Based on your review of the Land Use Visioning Technical Memorandum, do you recommend the land use visioning scenarios for approval?

Adam Lougee, ACPRC, noted that the Study team is accepting additional comments until July 31, 2024.

Prior to the vote, Kati Gallagher asked if the Policy Committee is approving the Land Use Technical Memorandum with the recommended changes discussed during today's meeting.

Adam Lougee, ACPRC, confirmed yes, the vote is on the Land Use Technical Memorandum with the changes discussed today.

Adam Lougee asked Delia Makhetha, WSP, to poll the Policy Committee members for their vote:

Kati Gallagher, VRNC - Yes

Diane Lanpher (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature - Yes

Dickie Austin (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee - Yes

Ron Redmond (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee - Yes

Matthew Arancio (VTrans), VTrans - Yes

Mary Rudd (Town of Panton), Municipal Appointee - Yes

Matt Birong (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature - Yes

Phil Summers (Addison County Chamber of Commerce), Business - Yes

Rhonda Williams (Town of Waltham), Municipal Appointee - Yes

Adam Lougee, Chair (Addison County Regional Planning Commission) - Yes

Of the seventeen voting Policy Committee members, ten were present to vote. Ten responded “yes,” zero responded “no.” A consensus was reached. The Policy Committee recommends that the Land Use Visioning Technical Memorandum and land use visioning scenarios move forward. The motion passed at 1:41 p.m.

Community Engagement

Jim Gish, the study’s community liaison with VHB, provided an overview of public engagement efforts in 2024, presentation slides 18-21. Jim Gish noted that there have been 37 stakeholder meetings, 36 PEL Study Team planning meetings, seven planning commission meetings, 15 meetings with individual Policy Committee members.

Jim Gish, VHB, highlighted his key objectives to build awareness of the PEL process, document concerns and recommendations, encourage conversations and collaboration and creating a point of connection.

Jim Gish, VHB, asked the Policy Committee to share anyone they feel he should connect with as part of the PEL Study process. He asked the Policy Committee to reach out if they have recommendations for stakeholder outreach.

Jim Gish, VHB, highlighted his community liaison outlook for Fall 2024. He noted bolster project transparency, serving as the eyes and ears of the PEL Study team, and continuing to meet with stakeholders.

Mel Holley, Vergennes Property Owner, noted that he has not been in touch with Jim Gish, community liaison. He owns 3.5 acres to the west of Otter Creek Park. He is waiting for PEL Study to get to a point to make a recommendation, he is following the route near Otter Creek since if that route moves forward, it will directly impact him.

Adam Lougee, thanks Mel for his comment, and noted that Jim Gish may reach out to set up a conversation with Mel and his wife.

Next Steps

Stephanie Camay, WSP, provided the next steps, presentation slides 23-25. The Study Team is identifying evaluation criteria and metrics used to screen the alternatives. Evaluation criteria tie into the Study’s Purpose and Need. Environmental impacts and potential mitigation for built alternatives will be explored. The evaluation will result in the recommendation of one or more alternatives. The Study Team will also work on developing an implementation plan. This plan will explain how VTrans and the Federal Highway Administration will move alternative(s)

through the NEPA process. All this work will result in one final Planning and Environmental Linkages Document.

Stephanie Camay, WSP, also outlined the plans for additional meetings, including 2-3 Technical Committee meetings, 2-3 Policy Committee meetings and one public information meeting to share the results of the evaluation and recommended alternatives.

Future Policy Committee meetings will include the review and evaluation of criteria, review the results of the alternatives evaluation and outlining next steps. Will be looking for the Policy Committee to provide input on locally preferred alternatives. The Study Team will also be looking for a recommendation and review of the alternative evaluation, implementation plan and then approval of the final PEL Study report.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, reinforced that the Study Team will make recommendations to the Policy Committee and the Policy Committee will hopefully come to a consensus on preferred alternative(s) and make recommendations. He reminded the Policy Committee, that since this will go through the federal NEPA process, the federal government may also demand other alternatives other than the one's recommended by the Policy Committee be included. The Policy Committee has an important role in outlining the locally preferred alternatives through Policy Committee consensus.

Rhonda Williams, Town of Waltham, asked does the safety, circulation and resiliency category include anticipated climate change impacts and how they might influence respective options?

Stephanie Camay, WSP, stated that the Study Team will not get into the details of these items. The Study Team will be looking at air quality as it relates to truck traffic. The Study Team will be looking qualitatively about changes in emissions related to rerouting trucks along a new roadway. As part of the PEL Study, the team can look at these items from a qualitative perspective.

Rhonda Williams, Town of Waltham, noted that as part of the Selectboard they are seeing the impacts on local roads from recent weather events and if there is recent data available on what is occurring in the region and projections on what it may look like in 10 to 20 years from now, it would be good to have that information included, if the Policy Committee agrees.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, noted that the Study Team is working with the Technical Committee to develop the evaluation criteria, and what the Study Team can do is suggest adding that as criteria, and let the Technical Committee decide if it is appropriate to incorporate this into the evaluation criteria.

Rhonda Williams, Town of Waltham, agreed to this proposal.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, opened the floor to the Policy Committee for any additional questions, comments or concerns. None were presented.

Stephanie Camay, WSP, reminded the Policy Committee to provide any additional comments by July 31, 2024.

Adam Lougee, ACRPC, thanked the Policy Committee for their review of the Land Use Vision Technical Memo, and for their time today. Adam adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m.