



Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages Study: Land Use Visioning

Waltham Planning Commission Meeting
September 18, 2023



Today's Goals

- Better understand Waltham's character and vision for the future
- Link Waltham's planning work to the PEL Study's road concepts
- Discuss upcoming Land Use Workshops

Today's Agenda

- Study overview
- Screening of concepts
- Concepts as they stand now
- Review of zoning regulations
- Roadway examples
- Land use visioning workshops



Study Overview



What is a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) study?

- PEL is a collaborative approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals
- The goal of PEL is collaboration with stakeholders to better inform and accelerate a project moving forward and being built



Why are we doing a PEL study in and around Vergennes?

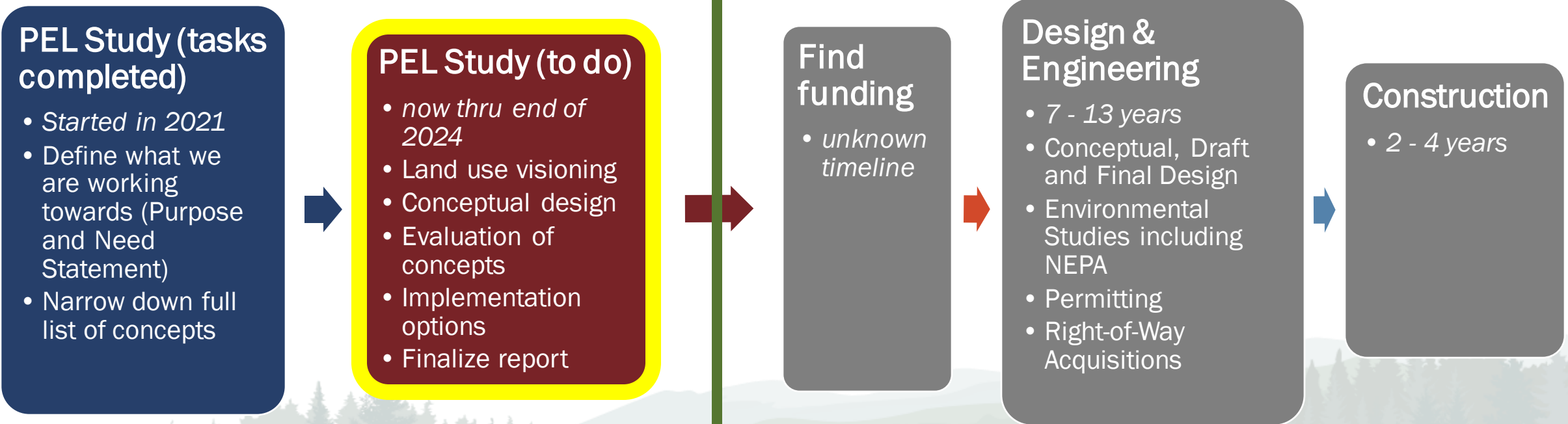
- Previous studies indicated regional agreement that truck volume in downtown Vergennes should be addressed.
- PEL study allow us to go:
 - Wider in our outreach and engagement
 - Deeper into details, including conceptual design and land use

Goal is for region to come to *consensus* on path forward

- VTrans and ACRPC role in PEL study is to facilitate regional process, NOT to decide path forward
- In absence of consensus from the region, change is unlikely



Where are we?

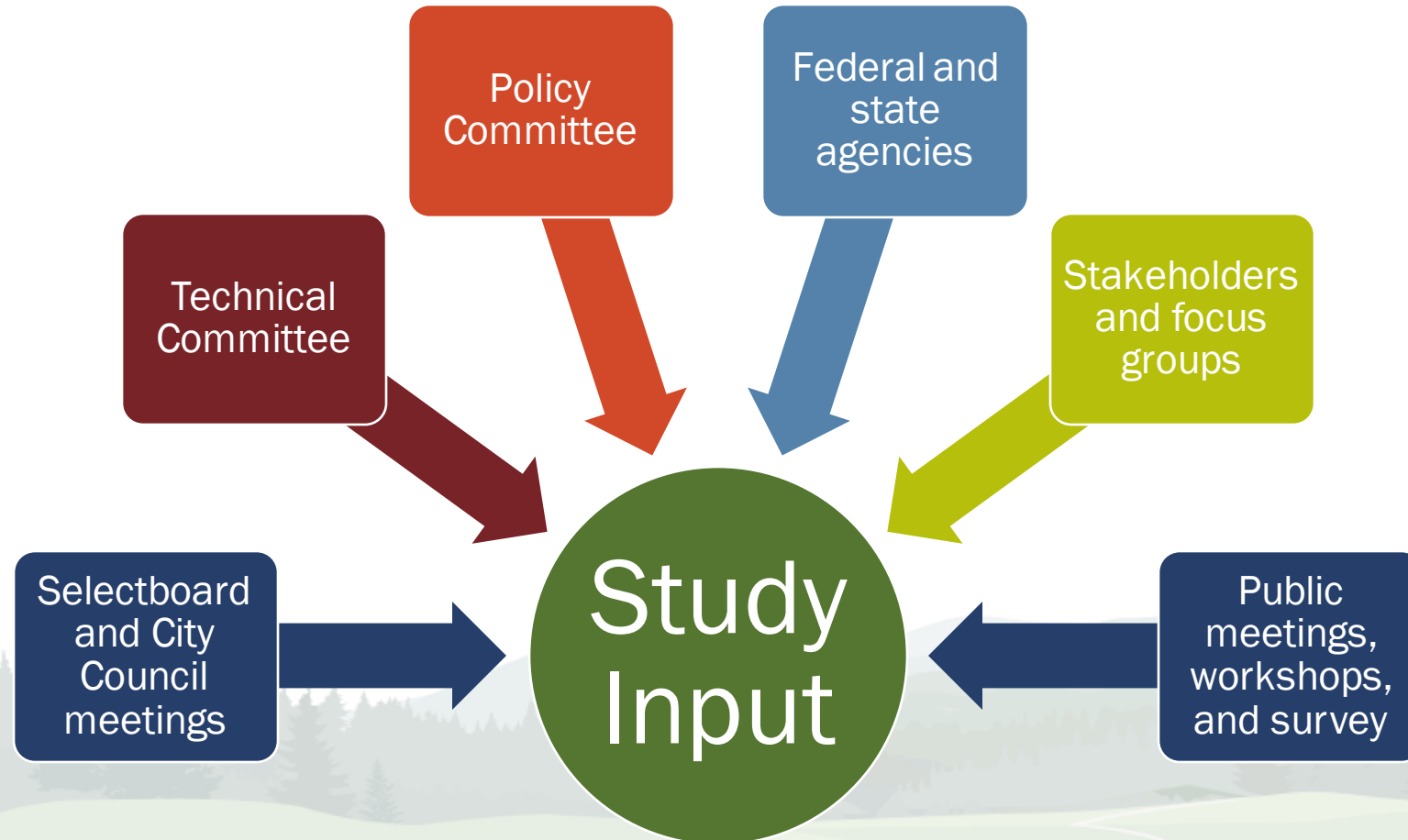


What we are doing as part of this study

If the study concludes construction is needed, these are the steps which would occur next.

The study may conclude that construction is not needed.

Collaborative Approach





**Screening
Fall 2022 – Spring 2023**



Purpose and Need Statement

The **purpose** is to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. Transportation solutions that reduce truck related quality of life impacts should also meet the mobility, safety, and economic vitality needs of Vergennes and the neighboring communities.

A summary of the **needs** identified are detailed below.



Mobility and Access: Maintain opportunities for the movement of freight in the region and minimize and/or mitigate traffic impacts to other transportation corridors



Safety, Circulation and Resilience: Support the continued movement, resilience and safety of travel through downtown Vergennes and in the neighboring communities.



Quality of Life: Improve the quality of life and minimize negative property and environmental resource impacts in downtown Vergennes and neighboring communities.









Land Use: Support local and regional land use plans and policies and state land use goals.



Economic Vitality: Promote economic vitality of downtown Vergennes, goods movement in Vergennes and neighboring communities, and support rural economy.

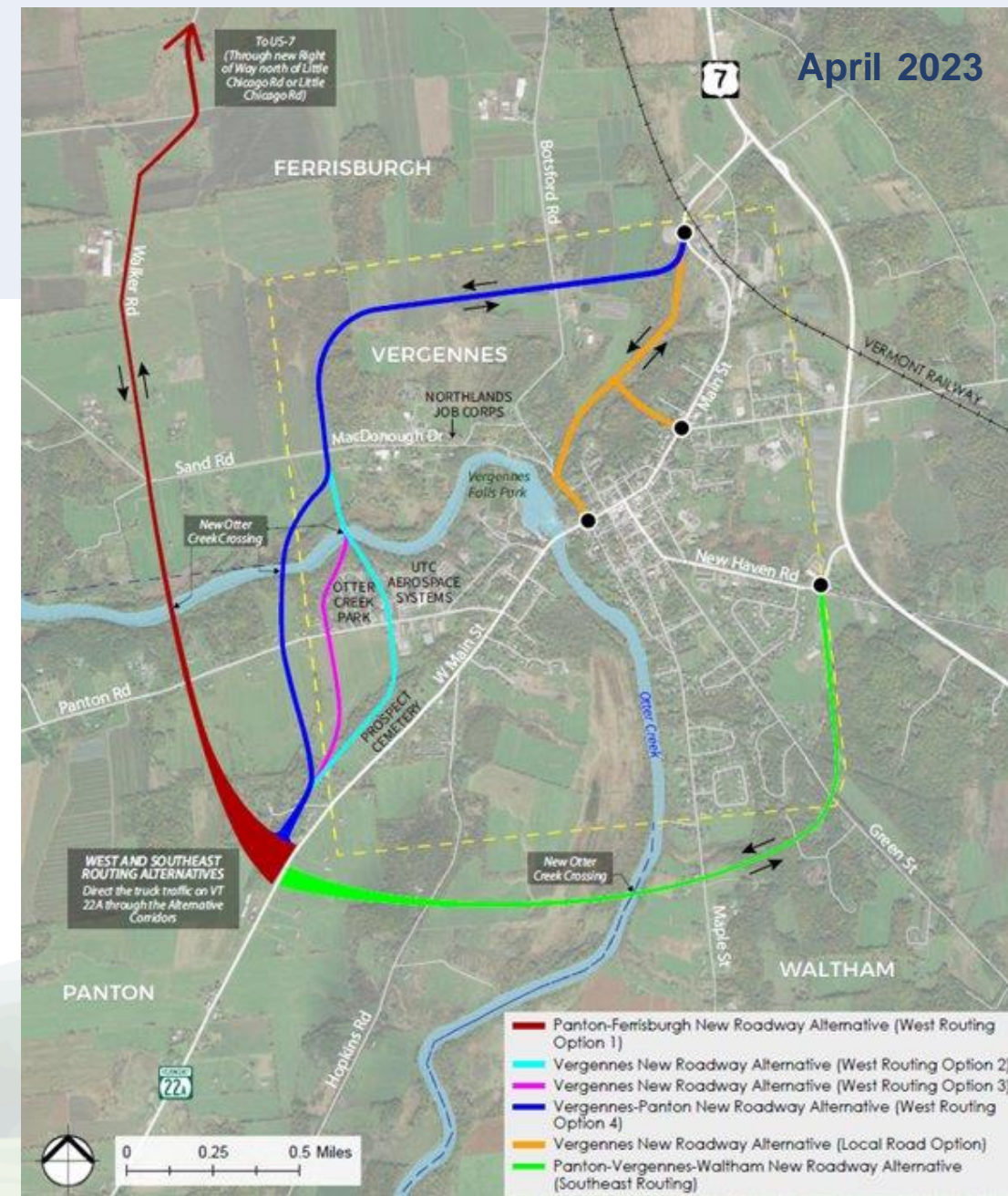
Concepts were evaluated by multiple criteria (Screening Phase)

|  Mobility & Access |  Safety, Circulation & Resilience |  Quality of Life & Environment |  Land Use |  Economic Vitality |  Equity |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Maintain freight mobility throughout the region</p> <p>Improve access to destinations in downtown Vergennes for all modes</p> | <p>Support circulation through and within region for ALL users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized • Active transportation (walkers, bicyclists, and transit riders) • Freight <p>Improve overall safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize conflict point • Improve visibility <p>Improve connectivity of road network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase resilience with alternate routes • Positive impact for emergency response | <p>Reduce truck noise and emissions</p> <p>Support community character</p> <p>Avoid impacts to vulnerable natural resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers and streams • Wetlands • Flood hazard areas • Threatened and endangered species <p>Minimize impacts to protected land & agricultural soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime agricultural soils • Conserved land • State and municipal land | <p>Aligns with existing land uses</p> <p>Aligns with future land uses and goals</p> <p>Aligns with statewide goals</p> <p>Identify proximity to existing development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential properties • Nursing homes • Medical facilities • Educational facilities | <p>Promote economic vitality in downtown Vergennes</p> <p>Promote regional economic vitality</p> | <p>Balance the distribution of transportation resources</p> <p>Avoid impacts to surrounding communities, including disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities</p> |

Full screening process provided in the April 2023 Technical Memo at <https://vergennespel.com/study-documents/>

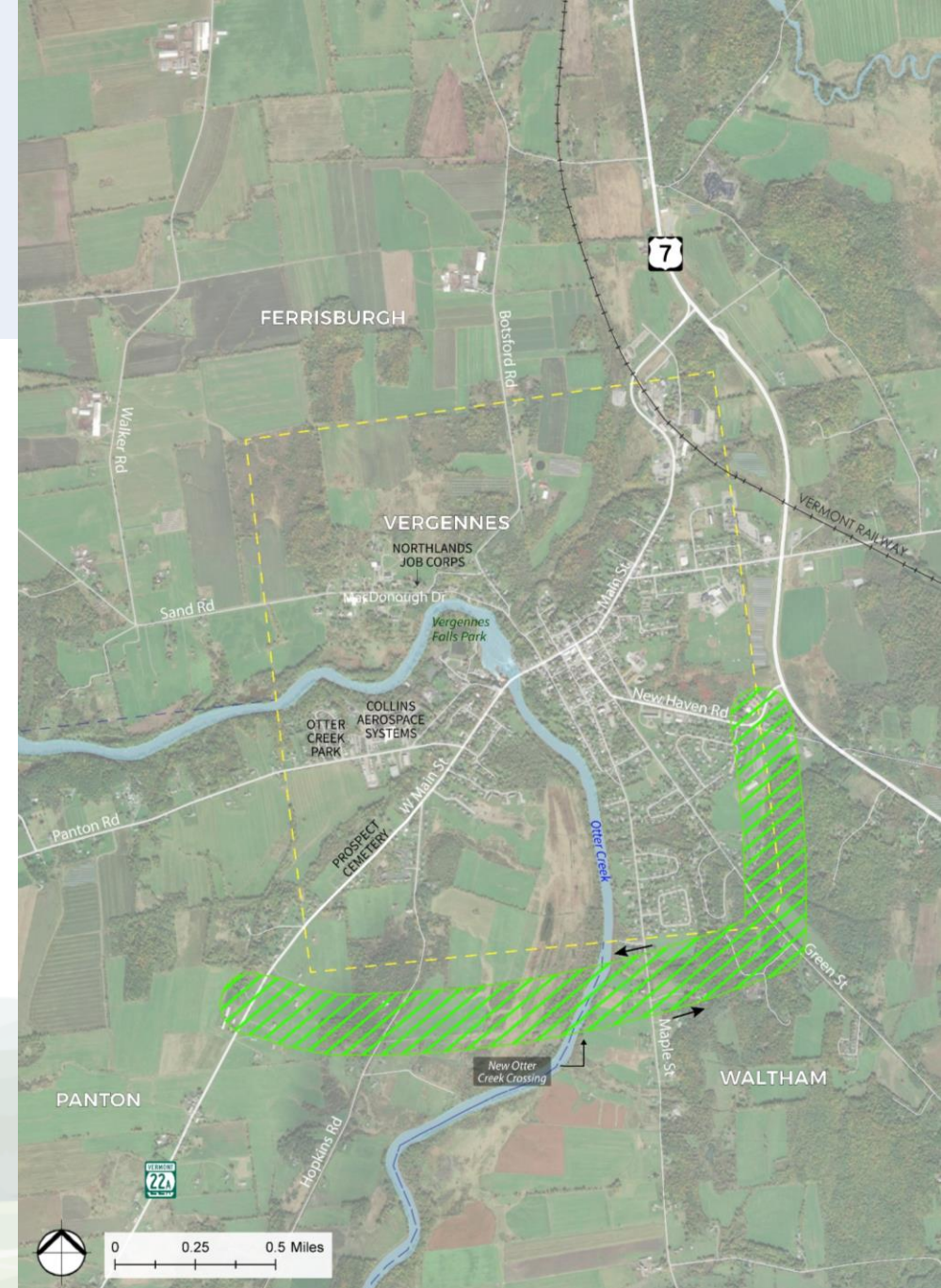
Screening Approach

- 13 concepts were considered, including improvements to existing roadways, new roadways, and other freight modes
 - 7 concepts were dismissed
- Primary screening scored concepts according to a variety of factors based on the Purpose and Need.
 - 1 concept was dismissed (Red)
- 5 concepts recommended for further study as well as the “no build” concept
- Tech memo is available on study website:
<https://vergennespel.com/study-documents/>



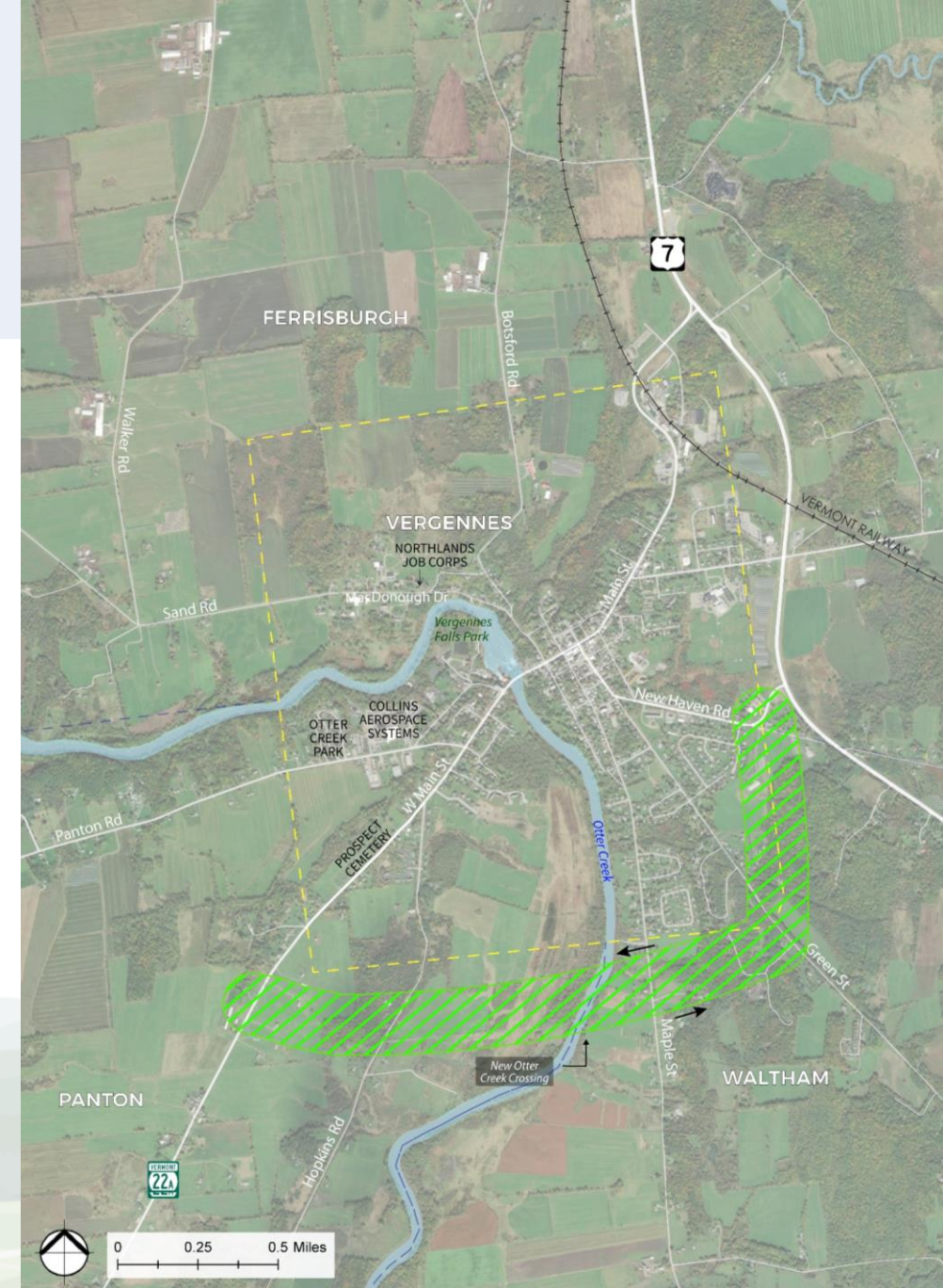
Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) [Green route] Initial Screening – Fall 2022

- Concept proposed for dismissal due to total score
- Issues raised during public and selectboard meetings
 - Wetland and topographic issues
 - Proximity to school and housing
 - New road concept goes into the Towns of Panton and Waltham, which is not compatible with the existing land uses
- Public meeting had some support for further study
 - Provides redundancy with new bridge
 - New bridge would not need to be tall enough to accommodate sail boats
 - Is a better option than the orange route?



Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) [Green route] Secondary Screening

- Meets the Purpose and Need
- Scored lower during the initial screening.
- During the secondary screening, potential impacts, particularly to wetlands, identified
- The new Otter Creek crossing upstream of the Vergennes Falls may be less challenging than the proposed crossings downstream (Blue/Pink Routes)
- The study team recommends that the Green Route move forward for further study.





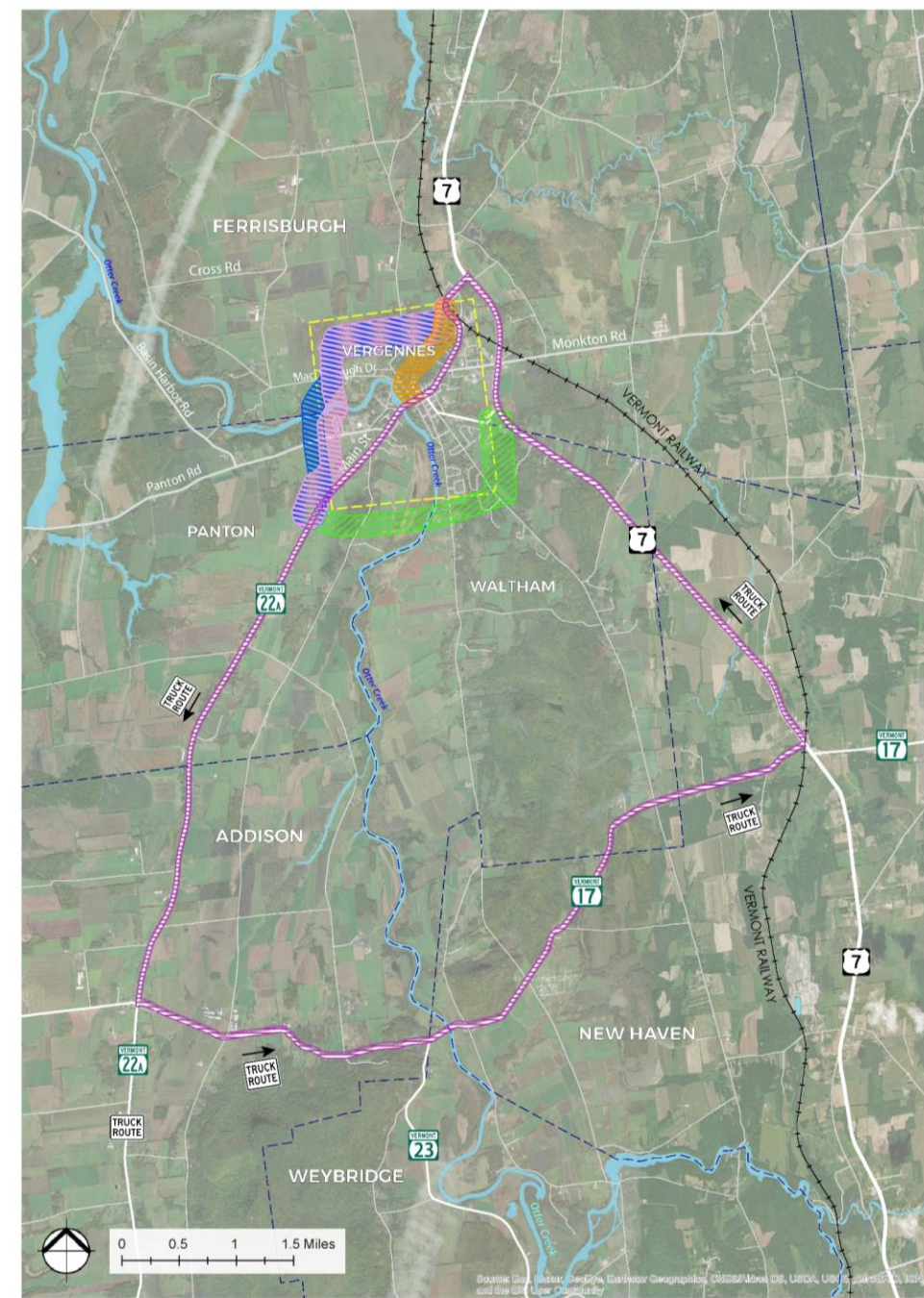
Concepts as they stand now



Route Concepts

- 4 new roadways
- 1 concept that improves existing roadways
- No Build option that would maintain Route 22A in its existing configuration
 - Continual maintenance and repairs would be performed to ensure the safety of the traveling public
 - Safety measures would be implemented to the extent feasible and practical

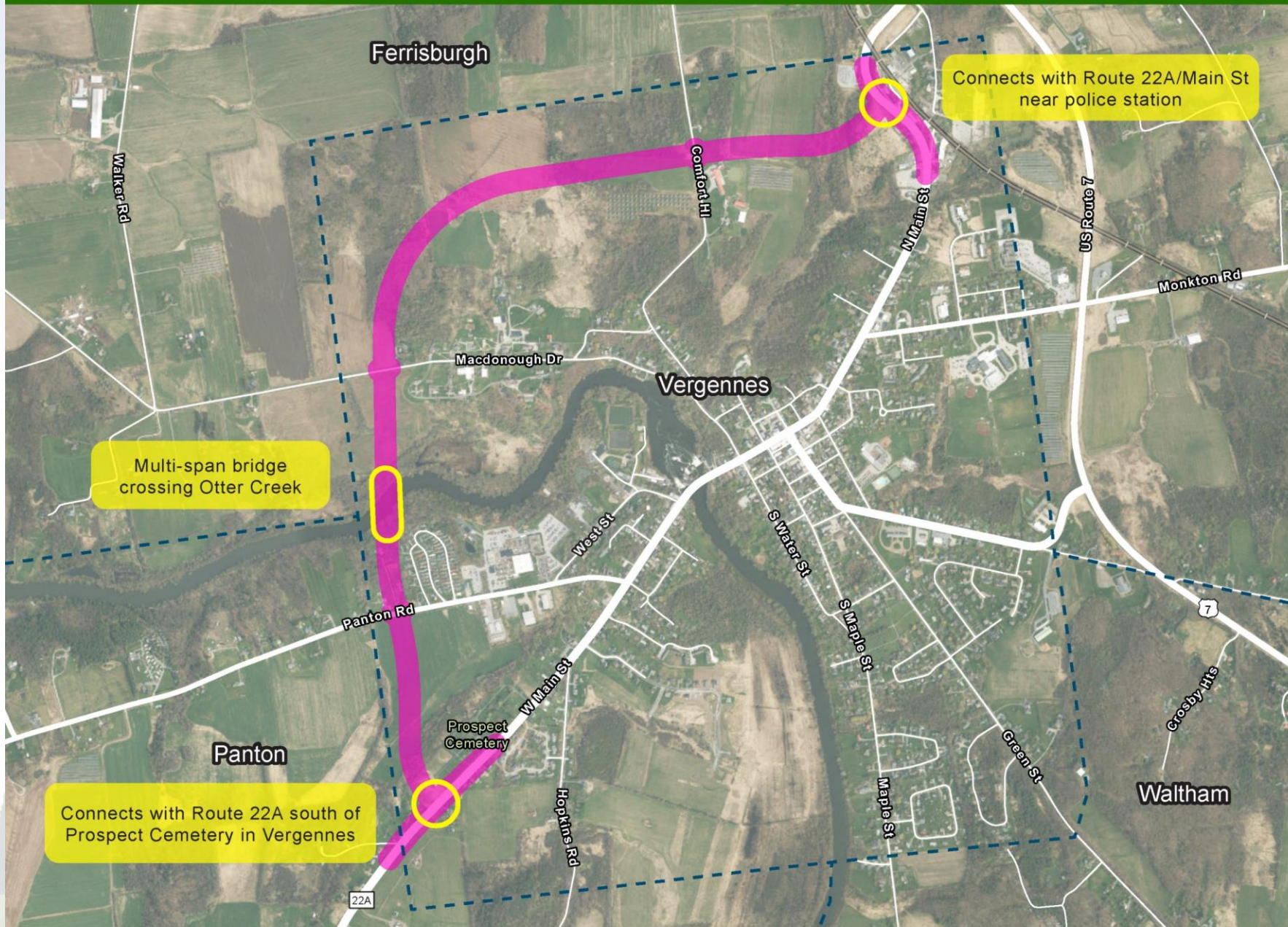
| Route | Strengths | Challenges |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|
| Blue | Single-span bridge | Proximity to mobile home park |
| Pink | Multi-span bridge, shorter than blue | |
| Orange | Entirely within Vergennes | No new bridge |
| Green | Longer bridge span, lower required clearance | Shorter route than blue |
| Purple | Uses existing roadways | Longest route (Northbound) |



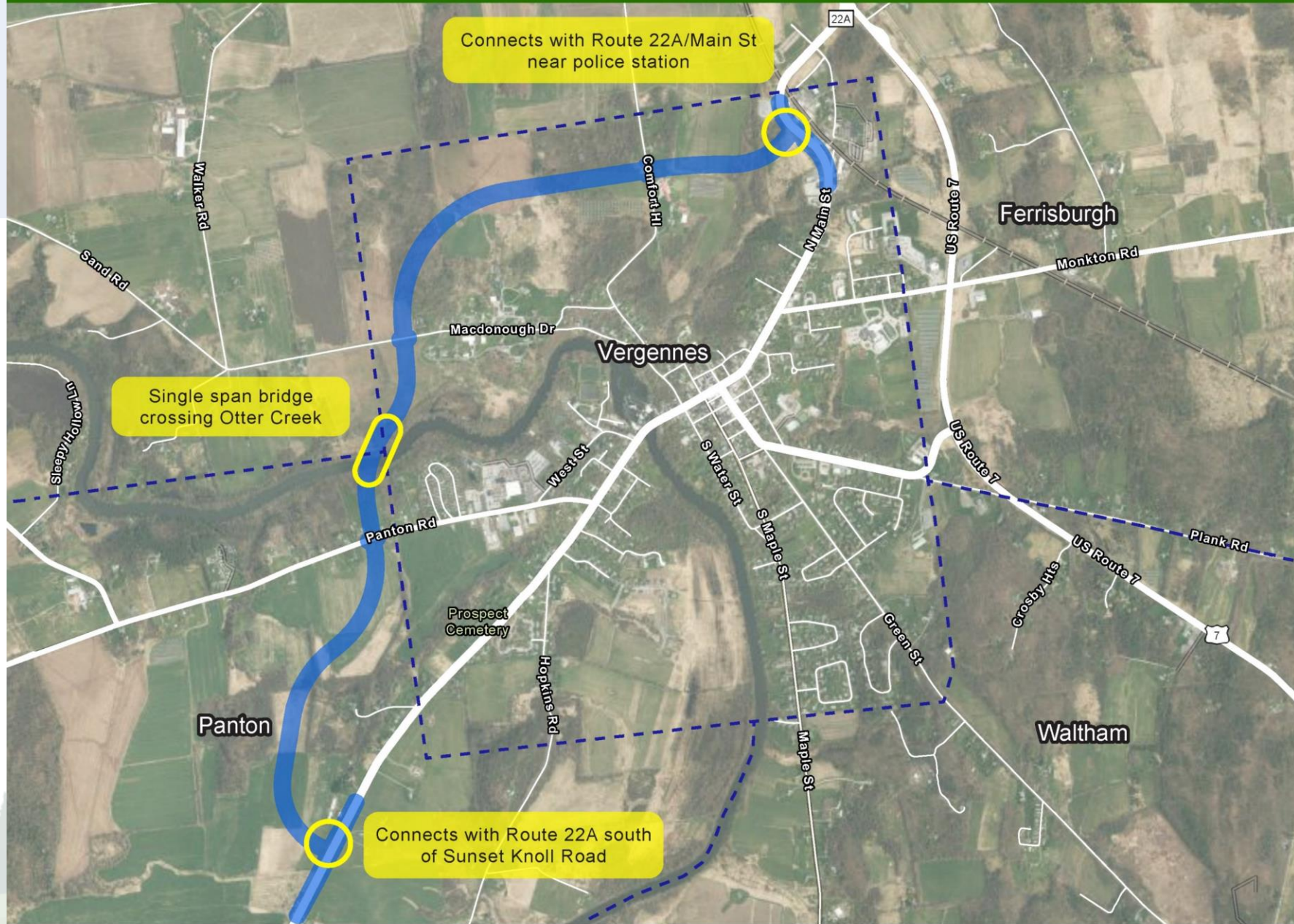
Green Route



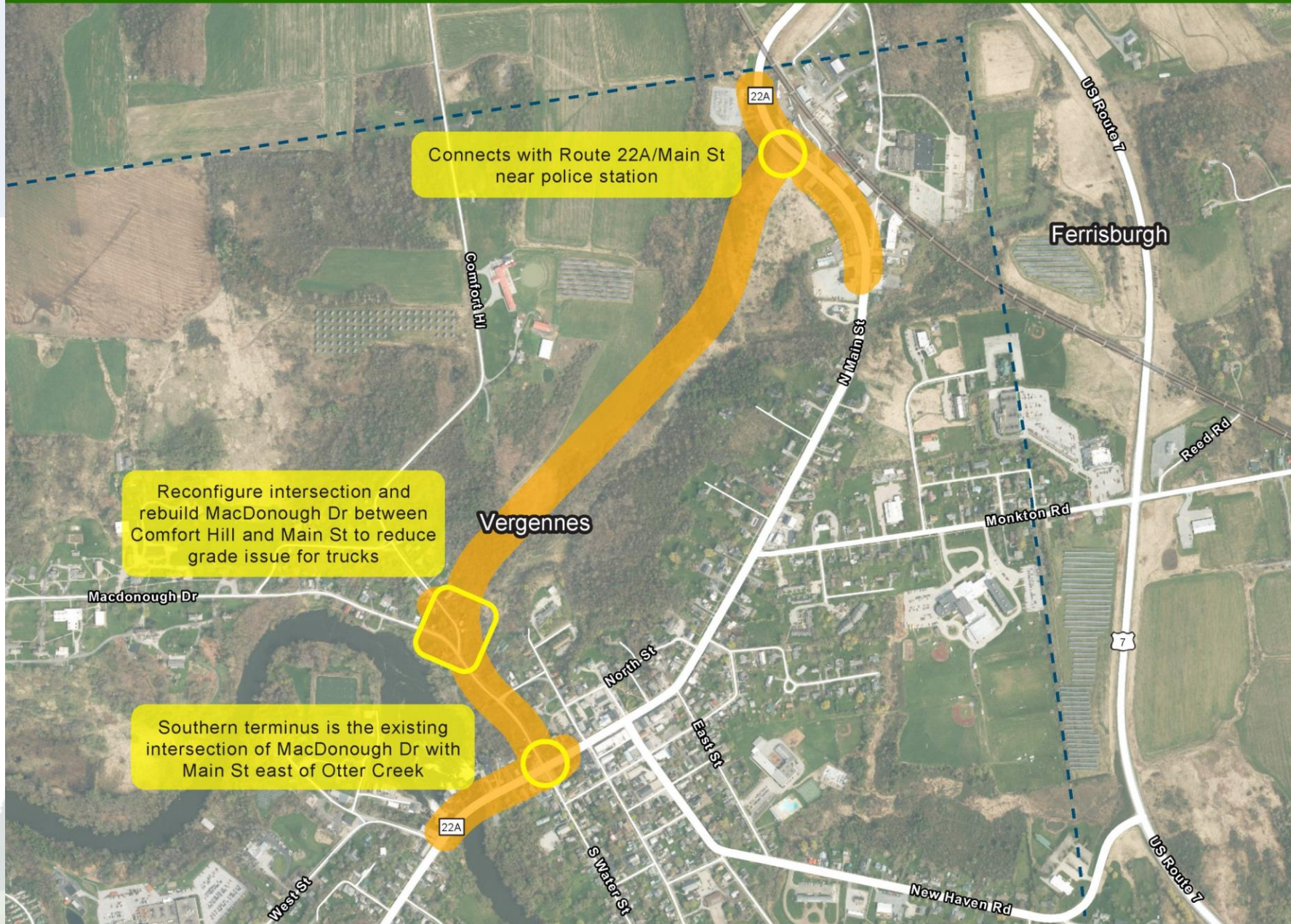
Pink Route



Blue Route



Orange Route

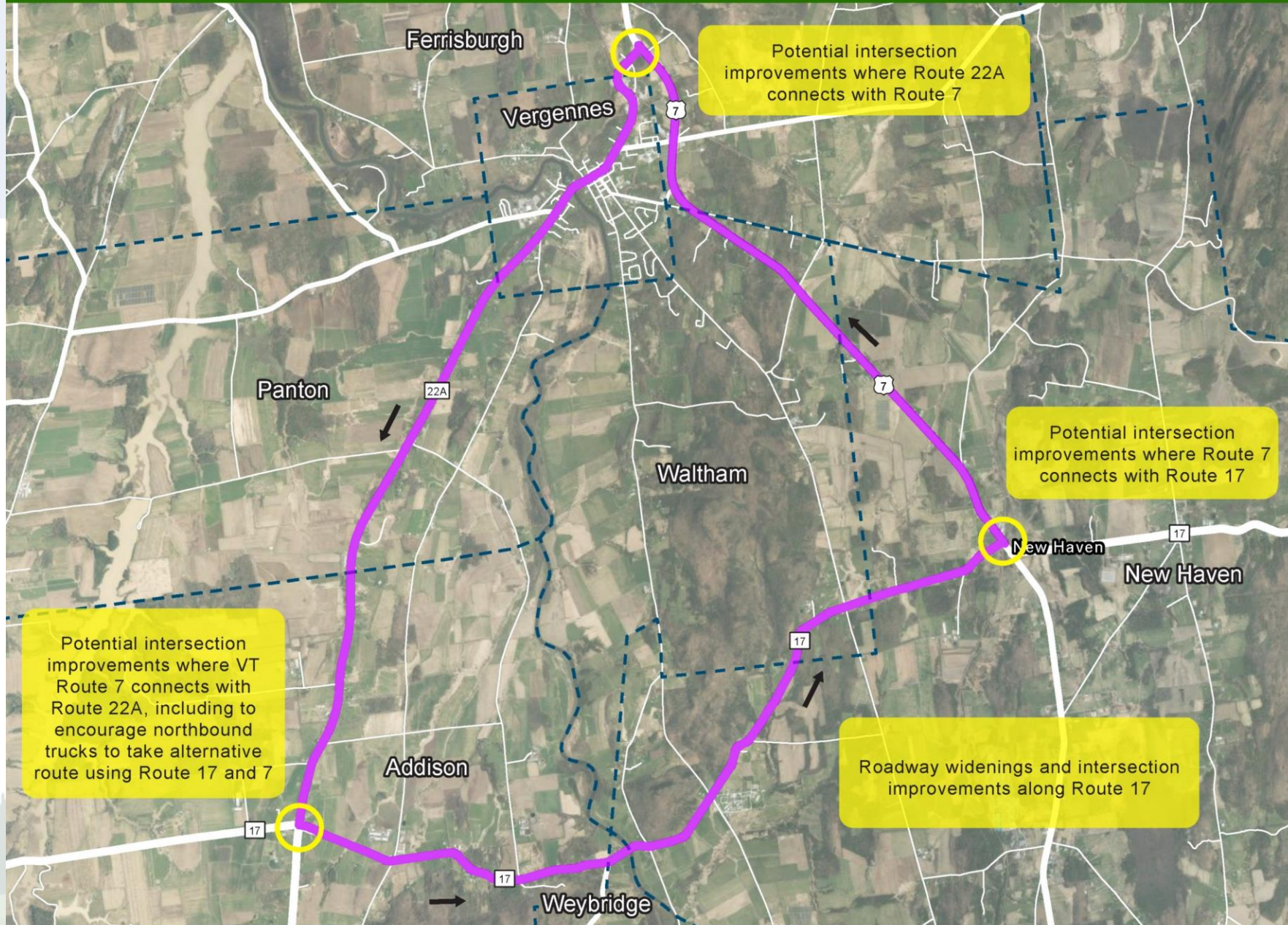


Connects with Route 22A/Main St near police station

Reconfigure intersection and rebuild MacDonough Dr between Comfort Hill and Main St to reduce grade issue for trucks

Southern terminus is the existing intersection of MacDonough Dr with Main St east of Otter Creek

Purple Route





Review of Waltham's Planning



Based on its Town Plan, Waltham Values:

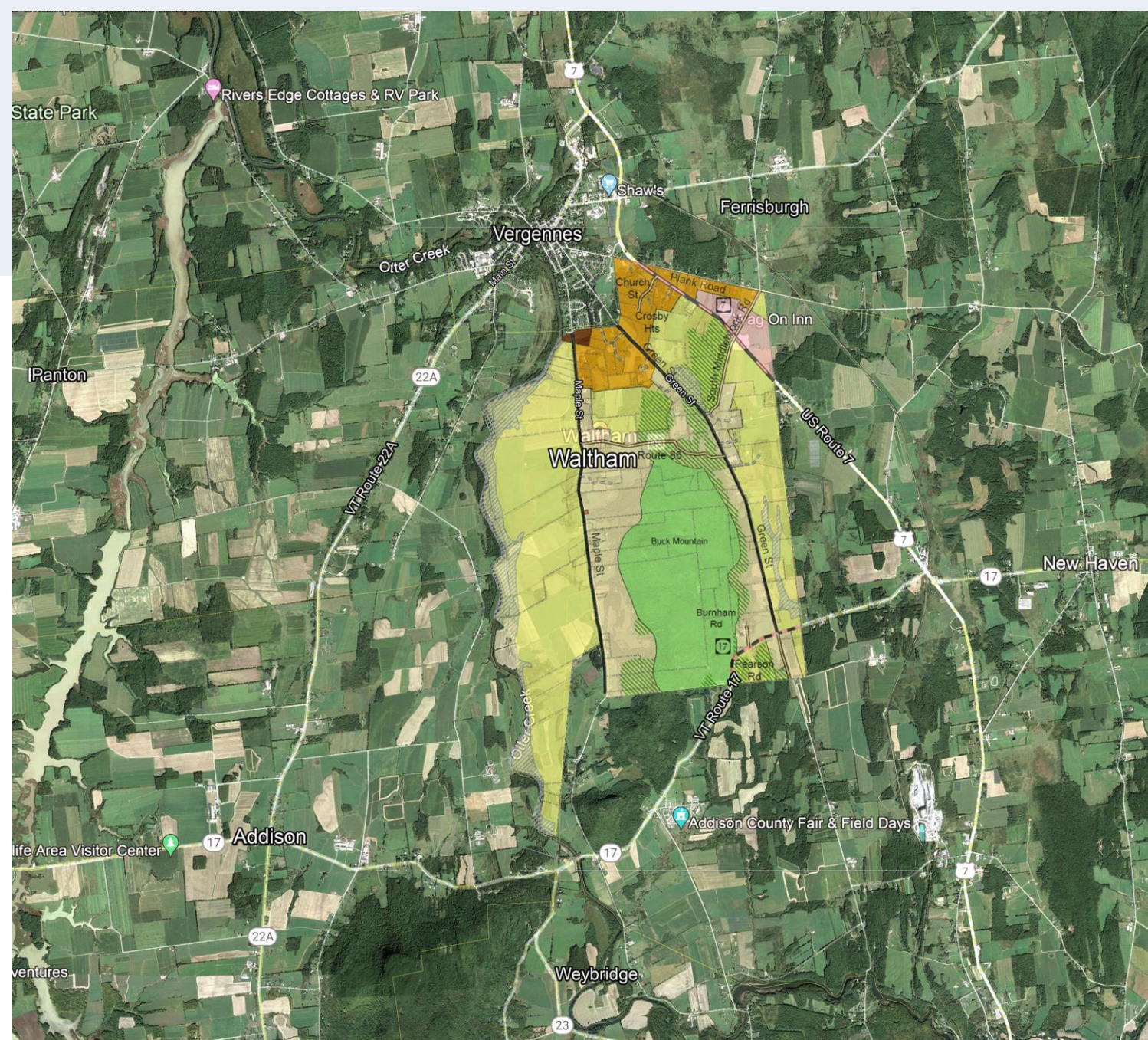
- Planning that is holistic: public facilities, natural features, scenic character, recreation, housing, energy, etc.
- Safe and efficient transportation systems that support desired land use patterns and economic opportunities
- Protection of views as a feature of community character
- Any new development clustered in existing settlement areas, such as in the Northern Residential Section
- Public services and facilities that are available, as needed, and will continue to be available into the future
- **What else does Waltham value?**

The PEL Study should also be guided by input and insights from the Waltham Vision Survey, which will be used to help update the Town Plan.

WALTHAM TOWN PLAN 2016



APPROVED BY WALTHAM SELECTBOARD ON
SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2016

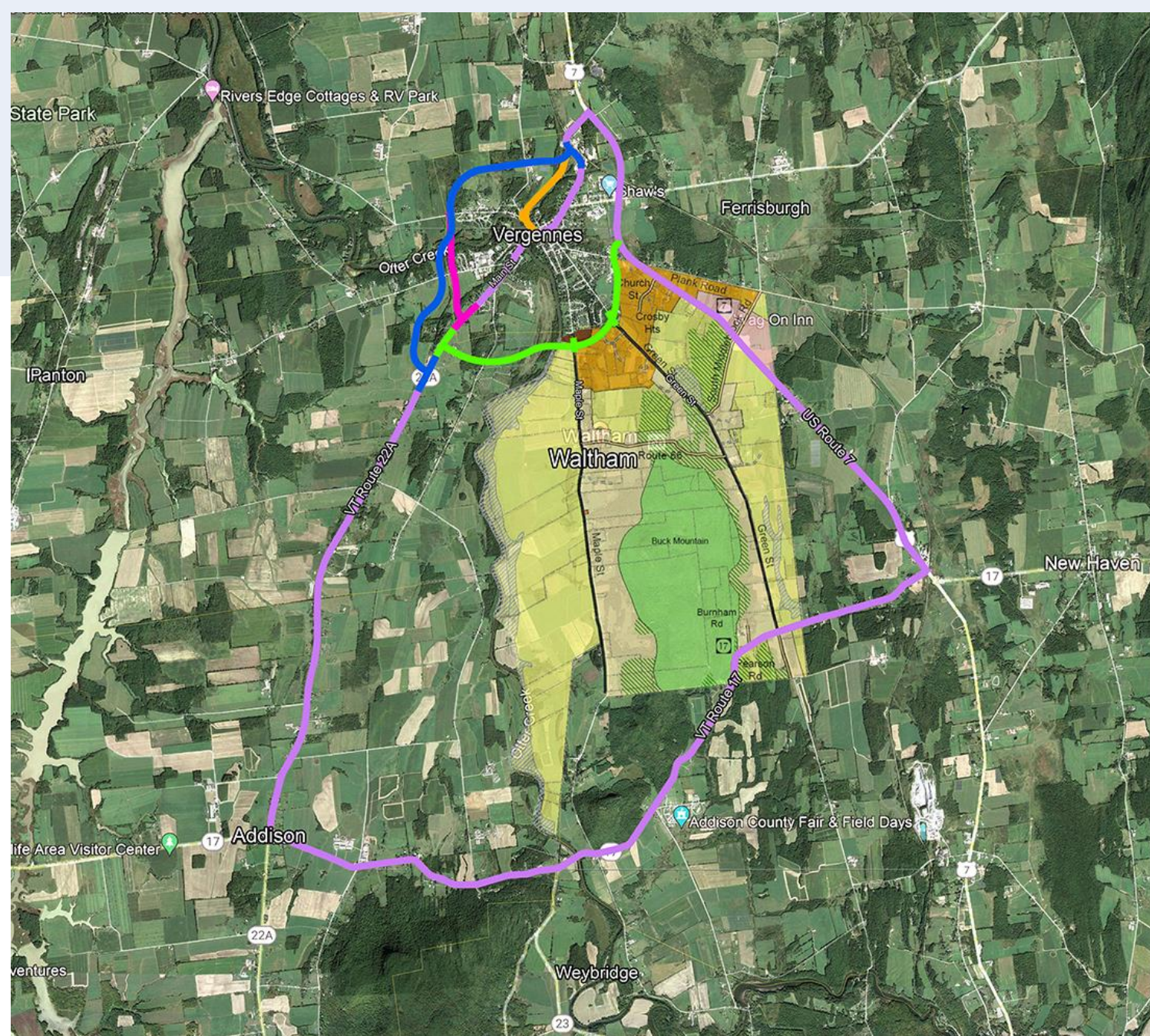


Waltham Zoning Districts

Zoning Districts (draft 2019)

- Municipal District
- Highway Commercial District
- High Density Residential District (draft)
- Medium Density Residential District
- Low Density Residential District
- Agricultural District
- Forest District
- Flood Hazard Area Overlay District
- Habitat Connectivity Overlay District (draft)





Waltham Zoning Districts & Route Concepts

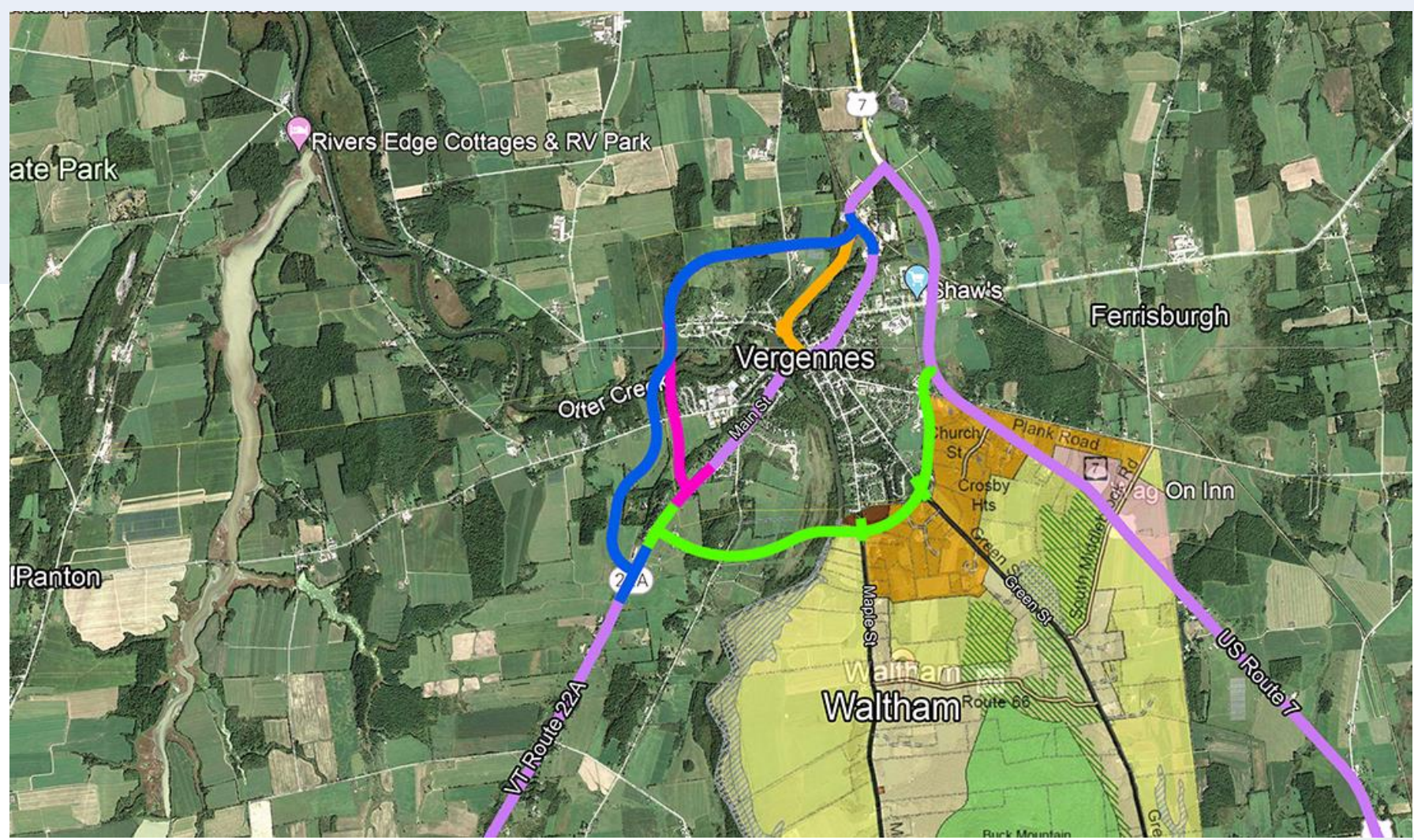
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Waltham Zoning Districts & Route Concepts (Excerpt)



Zoning Districts (draft 2019)

- Municipal District
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What it Means

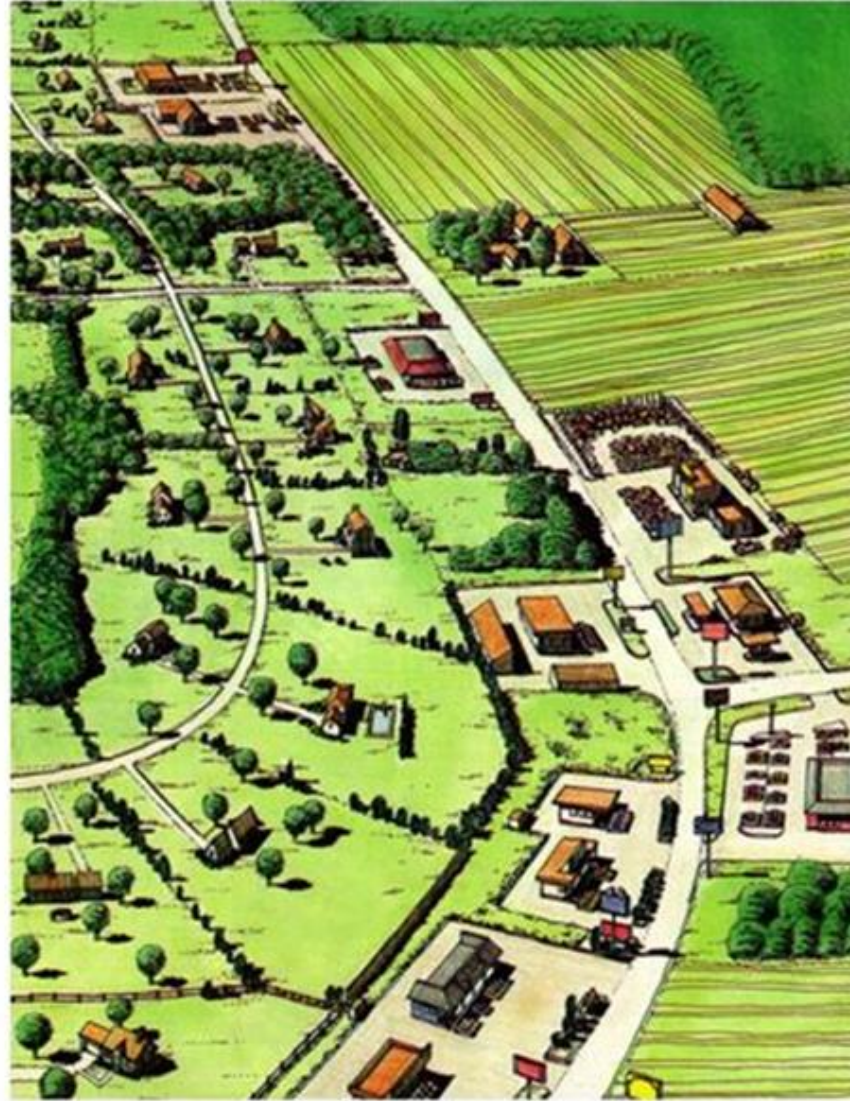
Implications and Options for Waltham

- A new road in Waltham can support a variety of land uses, which has tradeoffs.
- Access to and from a road, by cross streets and driveways, affects land use patterns.
- Consider how any new road can align with the Town's planning around:
 - development growth or restriction
 - natural feature stewardship
 - transportation
 - public services
 - recreation

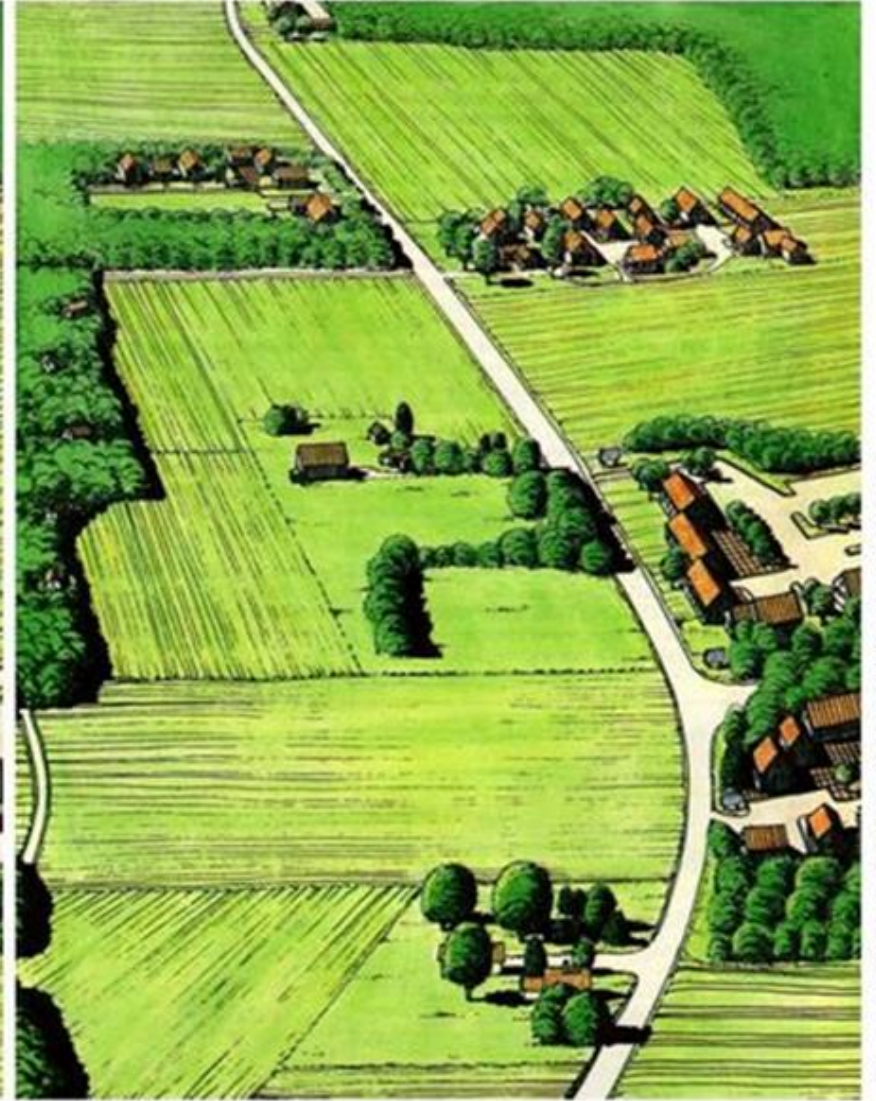
For Consideration

- How can community character – people, land uses, views, traditions – be preserved or enhanced if a new road is built?
- Are there land uses along new road alignments that would be desirable, or uses that should be avoided?
- Should a new road support recreational or active transportation projects?
- How would potential access to and from a road, like cross streets or driveways, work best within different parts of the Study area?

What it Means



Conventional



Design Based



Food for Thought: Roadway Examples



Route 100 through Morrisville

- Limited access road
- Signalized and unsignalized intersections with side roads
- This portion of VT 100 does not intersect with private driveways

Note: The way any new road would intersect with existing roads, such as whether a dedicated turn lane would be necessary, has not been determined.



VT 100 intersection with Stafford Avenue (Google Earth)

VT 15 between St. Michael's College in Colchester and Essex Five Corners



VT 15 multi-use path entering Colchester (Google Earth)

- Multi-use path, separated from the roadway
- Most of VT 15 along this stretch only intersects with side roads

Note: Lane width, number of lanes, and posted speeds have not been determined for this Study's road concepts.

Further Discussion and Next Steps

Previous questions:

- How can community character – people, land uses, views, traditions – be preserved or enhanced if a new road is built?
- Are there land uses along new road alignments that would be desirable, or uses that should be avoided?
- Should a new road to support recreational or active transportation projects?
- How would potential access to and from a road, like cross streets or driveways, work best within different parts of the Study area?

Additional questions:

- What else would you like the Vergennes PEL Study Team to consider?
- What do you consider to be the keys to a successful community-wide event in Waltham?
- Are there any existing local community events we can participate in?

Land Use Visioning Workshop

- Anticipated November-December
 - What's best: evening or weekend afternoon?
- Take a deeper dive into Land + Use, what matters to us, and our vision
- An opportunity to listen to all voices and generate ideas in an open forum
 - Are there people or groups that we want to make sure are “in the room”?
- Primarily in person workshops
 - Potential of a virtual workshop
- What will be the best way to work collaboratively?

What does consensus mean?

Levels of Consensus

1. I like it, am on board and can easily accept this decision.

2. I accept this decision but may have some questions/points to clarify at a later time.

3. I can live with this decision even though it may not be my preferred option.

This is our goal for everyone

4. I don't agree but I will not block this decision.

5. I loathe it and cannot accept this decision.



Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/levels-consensus-group-decision-making-success-leah-mether/>

Thank you!

A Public Survey is now open through September 25th at:
vergennespel.com/survey

We welcome your input and appreciate your feedback.

Please visit vergennespel.com to join the email list for Study updates.

You can email vergennespel@gmail.com for further information, to submit comments, or to contact the Study team.