

Policy Committee Meeting Summary

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Policy Committee Meeting – Secondary Screening
Date and Time	April 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m. – 12 Noon
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Policy Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Adam Lougee (ACRPC), ACRPC Bill Smith (Vermont Truck and Bus Association), Trucking* Brent Rakowski, (ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee), ACRPC* Clark Hinsdale (Town of Ferrisburgh), Municipal Appointee Diane Lanpher (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature Dickie Austin (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee Jeff Nelson (Town of Addison), Municipal Appointee Jesse Devlin (VTrans), VTrans Katharine Otto (VTrans), VTrans Mary Rudd (Town of Panton), Municipal Appointee Matt Birong (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature* Phil Summers (Addison County Chamber of Commerce), Business* Tim Glassberg (Town of Waltham), Municipal Appointee Brian Shupe (VNRC), Environmental** Jubilee McGill (State Representative from New Haven, Weybridge and Bridport), Legislature** Ian Huizenga (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee** Mike Audy (Town of New Haven), Municipal Appointee** Renny Perry (Vergennes Partnership), Business**</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Chris Jolly (FHWA), FHWA Jacqueline DeMent (FHWA), FHWA Elizabeth Shipley (FHWA), FHWA Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Observer Joel Perrigo, (VTrans), Observer Amy Bell (VTrans), Observer**</p>
Study Team Attendees	<p>Stephanie Camay (WSP) Ken Robie (D&K) Laura Toole (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Annabelle Dally (WSP)**</p>

Members of the Public Attendees	Howard Hall, Town of Panton Tim Cowan, Vergennes Gretchen Bailey, Panton resident
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*Joined after roll call

**Invited, but not present

The official Policy Committee meeting presentation is available on the Vergennes PEL Study website, Committees Section (<https://vergennesspel.com/committees>) under Policy Committee Meeting Materials: [Policy Committee Meeting Presentation - April 3, 2023](#)

Meeting Summary

Adam Lougee, Addison County Regional Planning Commission(ACRPC) and Chair of the Policy Committee (the committee), 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 eighteen voting members (three additional members joined later in the presentation) and four of the six non-voting members were present. Non-voting members included the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) representatives. Five members of the study team from WSP and Dubois & King(D&K) 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 10:10 a.m. on Monday, April 3, 2023.

Stephanie Camay, WSP, presented the Study Overview, slides 6-15 in the presentation.

Following the study overview, Stephanie welcomed members of the public to provide comments. She turned it over to Adam, who moderated the public comment period. Howard Hall, Town of Panton, raised concern about the negative impacts of the potential bypass route, concern over the town boundary between Panton and Vergennes and asked if the committee had received the letter from Panton. Adam thanked Howard and confirmed that they had received the letter and distributed it to the Policy Committee prior to this meeting. Gretchen Bailey, a Panton resident, spoke, stating that she lives on Route 22A(half a mile south of the cemetery) and is impacted by the current traffic; she expressed support for the Route 17 bypass because it would not include the construction of a bridge and would be more economical. No other public comments were stated, and Adam closed the public comment period.

Stephanie presented the Initial Screening, slides 17-20, and the Secondary Screening Methodology, slides 21-23 in the presentation.

Ken Robie, D&K, went back to slide 20 to reiterate that the secondary screening was performed to verify if there were any environmental benefits in the lower-ranking alternatives that may offset the other Alternatives/Concepts. He then presented the Secondary Screening Results and Discussion, slides 24-38 in the presentation.

Stephanie provided clarity on the consensus point and introduced the consensus point questions through slides 39-42 in the presentation. Jeff Nelson, Town of Addison, asked if any concept eliminated for this process will have to be revisited if the project goes through NEPA, or if the goal of PEL is to eliminate eliminated concepts from both this process and NEPA. Stephanie clarified that these concepts would be dismissed and recognized in the NEPA document as concepts that were considered along with the reasoning they were dismissed. Stephanie added that we are still in a planning phase, so that decision is not binding, and another concept could come out prior to a NEPA document.

Adam asked if there were any other questions on the initial screening consensus point. Hearing none, he asked the committee members the consensus point question: **‘Do you agree with the results of the initial screening?’** Delia Makhetha, WSP, polled committee members:

Adam Lougee (ACRPC), ACRPC- yes
Bill Smith (Vermont Truck and Bus Association), Trucking- yes
Brent Rakowski, (ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee), ACRPC- yes
Clark Hinsdale (Town of Ferrisburgh), Municipal Appointee- yes
Diane Lanpher (State Representative from Vergennes), Legislature- yes
Dickie Austin (City of Vergennes), Municipal Appointee- yes
Jeff Nelson (Town of Addison), Municipal Appointee- yes
Jesse Devlin (VTrans), VTrans- yes
Katharine Otto (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
Tim Glassberg (Town of Waltham), Municipal Appointee- yes

This totals 13 “yes”, 0 “no” and so a consensus has been reached.

Stephanie presented the Secondary Screening results, slide 44. Adam Lougee, ACRPC asked if there were any other questions before we vote on the second consensus point question. Hearing none he asked the committee members the consensus point question: **‘Do you agree with the concepts recommended to move forward for further study?’** Delia Makhetha, WSP, polled committee members:

Adam Lougee (ACRPC), ACRPC- yes
Bill Smith (Vermont Truck and Bus Association), Trucking- yes
Brent Rakowski, (ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee), ACRPC- yes
Clark Hinsdale (Town of Ferrisburgh), Municipal Appointee- yes

- He added that he agrees with the town of Panton about the establishment of the town boundary and appreciates Tim Cowan joining the meeting

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

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

Jeff Nelson (Town of Addison), Municipal Appointee- yes

Jesse Devlin (VTrans), VTrans-yes

Katharine Otto (VTrans), VTrans-yes

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

- She added that she agrees with the caveat of the town boundary and notes she cannot agree to the Pink and Blue Routes at this time

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

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

Tim Glassberg (Town of Waltham), Municipal Appointee- yes

- He expressed concern about the Green Route

This totals 13 “yes”, 0 “no” and so a consensus has been reached.

Adam paused to address the caveats and concerns expressed during the poll. He noted that moving forward for further study will provide additional details to address the concerns expressed. Adam reiterated that the study team is trying to satisfy the NEPA requirements, offer viable alternatives, and study them to answer concerns expressed by various towns. He noted that both Panton and New Haven sent letters expressing concern, which were shared with the Policy Committee prior to this meeting.

Tim Glassberg, Town of Waltham, said he appreciates the clarification. He is voting yes for further review of the routes (Purple, Pink, Blue, Green, and Orange) and is expressing that the Green Route will be a route that he will be looking at closely and raising concerns about during the reviewing process.

Mary Rudd, Town of Panton, expressed that her concerns remain. She stated that she has asked what the bridge would look like, noting that a large bridge would impact Panton far more than the other options would affect the other towns. She feels that if she agrees to move forward Panton will be stuck with it and added that they would need a guarantee in writing. She added that she cannot agree to let Panton get stonewalled by the other towns and left with the impacts of the Pink or Blue Routes.

Adam responded that the Policy Committee hears her concerns and that the detailed studies she is looking for will be done in the next phase of the study. By endorsing these concepts for further study, we will be able to address some of the questions that have been raised.

Mary Rudd responded that she knows that the alternative will be in Panton because the Vergennes/Panton boundary will not move west. She expressed the town boundary is a

fundamental problem that should be able to be solved quickly and not hold up this process. She has yet to see interest in trying to sort out that problem.

Adam responded that this study team understands that it is an issue but has not taken a position.

Jeff Nelson, Town of Addison, added that he agreed with Adam on this vote's purpose. He said that numerous committee members have concerns over one alternative or another. The Town of Addison has concerns over the Purple Route, which they see as displacing the issue to other towns. He added that today's purpose is not to agree to build one alternative and thinks the best way to understand better what impacts (aesthetic, environmental, human, etc.) could occur is to endorse further study. He concluded stating that he is confused why anyone would have reservations about continuing the study to answer the questions that have been raised.

Howard Hall responded to Jeff Nelson, "Thank you for insulting us".

Clark Hinsdale, Town of Ferrisburgh, asked Vergennes to continue examining whether the highway will be limited access, supporting the dense commercial development in downtown Vergennes or if Vergennes is still pursuing economic development concept where the new highway frontage is looked at as a development opportunity. He added that limited access versus not limited access is a decision that could change the appropriateness of some routes.

Adam stated that it is one of the questions that will be explored so that we can put forward the best alternatives for as many people as possible.

Adam asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he thanked everyone for their time. Diane Lanpher, State Representative from Vergennes, motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Matt Biron, State Representative from Vergennes, seconded the motion.

Jeff Nelson, Town of Addison, asked before they adjourned when the next time the study team will be meeting with the Policy Committee and what that will involve. Stephanie responded that the next meeting would be to give a study update on the five alternatives and the no-build alternative. In the next phase of the study, the study team will examine the conceptual engineering and begin land use visioning. She added that Policy Committee meetings will be held approximately quarterly.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 11:12 a.m. by Adam Lougee, the Chair of the Policy Committee.