

1 CHITTENDEN COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
2 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MINUTES
3

4 DATE: Wednesday, March 4, 2009
5 TIME: 9:00 a.m.
6 PLACE: CCMPO Offices, 30 Kimball Avenue, Suite 206, South Burlington, VT

7 Present:
8 George Gerecke, TAC Chair, Williston
9 Sonny Audette, South Burlington
10 Gary Estus, Westford
11 Jeanne K. Wilson, Hinesburg
12 Ed Wildman, Huntington
13 Amy Bell, VTrans
14 Bernie Gagnon, Shelburne
15 Dennis Lutz, Essex
16 Dan Bradley, Burlington
17 Seth Jensen, Jericho
18 Robin Pierce, Essex Junction
19 Chris Jolly, FHWA
20 Meredith Birkett, CCTA
21 Paul Craven, Railroad Industry
22 Mike Coates, Business Representative
23 Matthew Langham, VTrans
24 Meredith Schuft, Institutions Representative
25 MPO Staff: Jason Charest, Transportation Engineer
26 Dave Roberts, Senior Planner
27 Christine Forde, Senior Planner
28 Bryan Davis, Transportation Planner
29 Peter Keating, Senior Planner
30 Eleni Churchill, Senior Planner
31 Janet Botula, Admin./Communications Assistant
32 Others: Jim Cota, VTrans Operations & Maintenance, District 5
33 Bruce Hoar, South Burlington
34

35 Chair George Gerecke called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

36 Seth Jensen requested that a TIP amendment item be added to the agenda. It was determined that it would
37 be discussed as Item 3a.
38

39 **1. Consent Agenda**

40 A MOTION TO ADOPT THE CONSENT AGENDA (several FY09 TIP amendments) WAS MADE BY
41 DAN BRADLEY AND SECONDED BY AMY BELL. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
42

43 **2. Approval of Minutes**

44 A MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3 BY JEANNE WILSON
45 AND SECONDED BY ED WILDMAN. Amy Bell noted a correction to lines 34 and 35 on page 3. The
46 text should state: "*Amy noted that the Class 2 Town Highway Paving program uses state funds only, so*
47 *there is no requirement to follow the federal requirements. However, there's a sizeable bonding*
48 *proposal pending before the legislature and these monies will be treated as state dollars so there could be*
49 *more money for Class 2 paving and other programs that use only state funds.*" With this clarification, the
50 MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
51

52 **3. Public Comments**

53 No members of the public were present
54

3.a FY2009 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment

Christine Forde stated that Jericho had requested an amendment to the TIP to repair a footbridge that was no longer functional. The reconstruction would be funded with Stimulus monies. This would require an amendment to the FY09 year of the FY08-11 TIP and the FY09 year of the FY09-12 TIP in order to add the reconstruction of a previously existing pedestrian bridge adjacent to the VT15 roadway bridge over Browns River. This amendment would add \$525,000 in Federal funds in FY09. Seth Jensen stated that he felt the project was “shovel ready,” thus meeting federal stimulus funding requirements. Dennis Lutz asked about amending the TIP on an individual/piecemeal project basis versus doing a group of projects in a single amendment package. Christine indicated that they plan to do it as a package but if money is not available the projects won’t necessarily be funded by another source. Chris Jolly asked if the projects are being added to the TIP now so that they will be in place just in case stimulus money is available or through the normal process where it’s on the TIP so that the project will really be funded. Christine said it was up to the TAC. The Jericho project is on the State’s candidate list. It hasn’t advanced on the list and it is currently not in the TIP. Matt Langham just heard of this proposal on Monday that VTrans does not believe the project to be “shovel ready.” Dennis Lutz suggested the MPO get back to communities with feedback on whether and when to submit stimulus projects for TIP amendment and to give them a due date. He would rather act on a package and make the changes with one TIP amendment. Christine stated that the Jericho project was on the MPO list that included projects that would take longer than 120 days, but that it was not on the State’s 120 day list. Sonny Audette stated that the House Transportation Committee is trying hard to get a list from VTrans that includes exactly how much will be spent. They want a definite list of projects and when they will be ready to go.

A MOTION WAS TO TABLE THE JERICHO TIP AMENDMENT BUT TO INCLUDE IT WITH THE BROADER TIP AMENDMENT REQUEST PACKAGE BY THE NEXT TAC MEETING. THE MOTION WAS MADE BY DAN BRADLEY AND SECONDED BY DENNIS LUTZ.

A lengthy discussion ensued that included questions on the status of other local projects in the stimulus bill, at what point the 120 day clock began ticking (March 2nd), what local projects might be listed for funding in stimulus phase 2, the process of making TIP amendments to accommodate these projects, and the need for the CCMPO to obtain additional information regarding project readiness. Following this discussion, THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Hinesburg Request to add Pond Road to Federal Aid System

Peter Keating began with an explanation of the road classification system that included Interstate highways, arterials, collectors and local streets. The Town of Hinesburg had identified a local road segment that requires reclassification on the Federal Aid System Map due to an increase in traffic volume and its function connecting two other major collectors. The town sent a letter to the MPO requesting that Town Highway 6 (Pond Road) be reclassified from a Rural Minor Collector to a Rural Major Collector. Staff recommended that the TAC approve the reclassification and forward the recommendation to the Board. The MPO has done this previously with roads in Colchester, South Burlington and Winooski and the TAC’s action would start the process. Amy Bell noted that part of this road passed through St. George and asked if they had made any comments on this proposal. It was learned that Michele Boomhower had contacted them but no response had been received.

There was some discussion the types of restrictions town’s could place on roads depending on how they were designated. Amy Bell said that towns request changes to Federal designation in order to make the road eligible for Federal funds. She was not sure why Pond Road had not already been designated a Rural Major Collector and reported that VTrans staff believes it is a good candidate to upgrade.

A MOTION TO SUPPORT THE RECLASSIFICATION OF POND ROAD WAS MADE BY DENNIS LUTZ AND SECONDED BY SONNY AUDETTE. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Project Prioritization

Christine Forde made a PowerPoint presentation which included background and legislative requirements, considerations when priority is directed by the Legislature, VTrans Program categories, and MPO scoring categories. She also discussed the scoring for Construction funds, ROW funds and design funds. She then described the factors used to score for economic vitality, safety and security, accessibility, mobility and connectivity; environment, energy and quality of life; preservation of existing systems and efficient system management. She stated that projects that scored highly included: Projects that access regional activity centers, airport, tourism facilities; projects that improve safety in a location with a documented safety problem; bicycle/pedestrian facilities making intermodal or regional connections; reconstruction projects with critical need and improving corridors with significant congestion. She stated that the TAC was being asked to approve the 2011 project prioritization list and recommend adoption by the MPO Board.

A discussion then ensued about rail issues and why rail was not included in the TIP prioritization process. Paul Craven asked why there was no mention of rail. Christine stated that the MPO does not have authority over Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) funds and that the MPO is just asked to prioritize what's on the list supplied by VTrans. She stated that the MPO doesn't prioritize transit projects either and that we would if they asked us. George Gerecke reiterated that this is our response to a State provided list. Amy Bell stated that page 21 of the legislative report, Project Prioritization and Addition of New Projects for the State Transportation Program, talks about that railroad is addressed from a statewide, not a regional perspective.

Further discussion included:

- The sources of funding for rail.
- The Western Corridor project's rail components
- The Albany/Bennington/Rutland/Burlington (ABRB) project components to be funded – five projects totaling \$30 million
- The VT Rail Council's project priorities
- The lack of Chittenden County rail projects needing prioritization
- Essex Junctions recent request to fund passenger rail between the village and Burlington
- The importance of keeping rail issues on the table and the worry over not seeing rail on the priority list
- The CCMPO's ultimate priority list is the TIP

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DENNIS LUTZ AND SECONDED BY ED WILDMAN TO ENDORSE THE PROJECT PRIORITIZATION OFFEED BY STAFF. Sonny Audette requested that the motion be amended to submit a letter from the CCMPO to VTrans stating the TAC's support for rail. The amendment was accepted and then PASSED WITH VTRANS ABSTAINING.

6. Federal Stimulus Bill

Christine Forde made a PowerPoint presentation about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, describing its purpose and gave a summary of ARRA Provisions for FHWA including funding and eligibility, set asides, distribution, maintenance of effort, reporting and transparency. She stated that the MPO has been working on a 180 day list and beyond. The State is working on projects that will be ready in 120 days. The list in the TAC packet is what the MPO lists as ready in 120 days and what the MPO has submitted. Sonny Audette raised the issue of Transportation Enhancements. This program's funding normally goes to municipal projects but under the stimulus, VTrans doesn't apparently plan on using it for local projects. The House Transportation Committee is not pleased as the money is supposed to go to local communities. Dan Bradley asked about Enhancement eligibility. Christine said that it's a stimulus category but VTrans did not include Enhancement projects in their 120 day obligation list. Chris Jolly stated that Enhancement funding is not subject to 120 days and that this funding source is not mandated to go to local communities. Sonny Audette replied that the State says it –not the Feds. Dennis Lutz wondered that if VTrans is using all the 120 day funds for their projects then the municipalities won't see

1 any of the money. Chris Jolly believed that to be correct. Dennis Lutz questioned how communities
2 could plan for the projects on our list even though some are “shovel ready” and others have work to be
3 done. He has to figure out if he has a chance of getting money in September. Christine said that she
4 understands that communities need to know what projects will make the list. Sonny reiterated that the
5 point that the House Transportation Committee wants a factual list the first week the Legislature is back
6 in session. No one knows what’s ready to go—the Committee wants to know as communities need to
7 know. It wants a firm list with dollars and cents as well as timing. Paul Craven thought that when
8 VTrans advances projects they were able to use federal dollars and questioned whether municipalities
9 could use federal dollars to advance their own projects. Is there a way that municipalities can use federal
10 funding as seed money to get their projects ready? Dennis Lutz said that he would be willing to risk
11 \$10,000 in local funds to advance a project but wants to know if it’s worth it –will there be a guarantee
12 that construction money from the stimulus bill will be there? Bruce Hoar said that South Burlington is
13 already starting to develop plans and that they are not at the level that shows ROW – similar to what
14 VTrans did for the VT RT 116 paving project. If he’s to be held to a higher standard he needs to know.
15 Amy Bell commented that Bruce must not have received all of the detailed plans from VTrans—you do
16 need Right of Way (ROW) certification for this type of project. Dennis Lutz asked that if you’ve got
17 paving within the ROW—is there a way to complete the project preparation process without all of the
18 information? He understands that there may be trouble if it’s outside the ROW and would therefore be
19 reluctant to start. Bruce Hoar asked what VTrans’ Local Transportation Facilities (LTF) division will
20 accept in terms of project readiness documents. Amy replied that Sue Scribner said it would be on a case
21 by case basis and that the town should ask their LTF project manager. Bruce Hoar said that he had no
22 LTF manager yet. Chris Jolly commented that VTrans design managers have the ability –and can make
23 certification of ROW. VTrans ROW staff will accept certification from their design managers. LTF
24 project managers have the discretion to make the determination if a project won’t need ROW. He
25 recognized that there were no LTF managers yet. Sonny Audette mentioned that he’d had a discussion
26 with the asphalt producers. They recommend getting bids out early for regular paving projects as the state
27 has many. It will be imperative to get out early if you want your projects to get done this year. There are
28 only three pavers in the state and just a couple of asphalt producers.

29
30 Dan Bradley questioned who will make the decisions so that communities know they can go ahead and
31 spend money up front. He said the Burlington has some earmark money and could do an entire area or
32 just one or two streets with existing. Christine thought that there needed to be some guidelines. Chris
33 Jolly reiterated that 50% must be obligated in 120 days, this means \$44 million in Vermont. He stated that
34 the Richmond Bridge is the only project certified to use Stimulus money at this time and he understands
35 that VTrans won’t be obligating any more stimulus funds until it meets with the Legislature. There is also
36 a requirement that priority be given to projects in economically distressed areas and in Vermont that only
37 includes the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom. Dan Bradley believed that some areas of
38 Burlington might qualify but Chris said no because there’s been a throwback to earlier criteria to identify
39 those areas. Only three counties: Essex, Orleans and Caledonia qualify. Dennis Lutz brought up his
40 concerns about bonding. He stated that some construction companies are having trouble obtaining
41 bonding in this economy and he is concerned that the bonding requirement may impact the towns’ ability
42 to spend the stimulus money in a timely manner. He suggested that it might be wise to look at the criteria
43 for qualifying bidders to see what could be done. Seth Jensen wanted to return to the discussion about
44 ROW issues between towns and their LTF project manager. The process can be a problem depending
45 upon who a town has for a LTF manager if there’s a 90-120 day timeline. He hopes that there are clear
46 determination criteria and not just an LTF manager’s opinion. He also wanted to express his hope that
47 projects don’t get bogged down in the ROW process. Jim Cota of VTrans Operations and Maintenance
48 District 5 said they were trying to meet the deadlines to review projects.

50 **7. FY2010 Unified Planning Work Program**

51 Peter Keating stated that the MPO was working on a list of tasks that will be done with planning funds
52 between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010 as part of the UPWP process which started about a month ago.
53 Project ideas were solicited from the public but no members of the public commented at the last Board

1 meeting. Ideas thus far are mostly from staff and municipalities. There is a committee working on this
2 project and they hope to get back to the TAC in April. He welcomes any ideas from the TAC. Amy Bell
3 mentioned that ideas would be appreciated before April 11, as that is when the committee meets again.
4

5 **8. Status of Projects and Subcommittee Reports**

6 Eleni stated that, in regards to the Western Corridor project, three public workshops were being planned
7 for March to discuss strategies and goals. Two focus groups would be meeting in April to discuss the
8 whole corridor. She hopes to have some material to present to the TAC at its next meeting. Bryan Davis
9 will be announcing the second round of Transportation Action Grants – this time around \$100,000 will be
10 available. Planning is still underway for Way to Go week. Next year, the project will go State-wide but
11 the MPO will be involved regionally. The dates this year are May 4-8. He also reported that the second
12 Road Manager’s meeting will be held on April 14th—more information will be forthcoming. Dave
13 Roberts, speaking for Daryl Benoit, stated that the 2008 Traffic Count data is now available on our
14 website. Peter Keating noted the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update is underway. At a
15 second project advisory committee meeting in early February they went over the workshop results,
16 discussed consolidating scenarios and reviewed the project schedule so that the Plan can be completed by
17 the end of the year.
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19 **11. Chairman’s/Members’ Items:**

20 Chairman Gerecke stated that there was not much to report about the Board meeting as there had not been
21 a quorum. Peter mentioned that there had been a Stimulus Package update and a request for UPWP input
22 from the public but none was received as no members of the public were present. They also heard an
23 update on MTP development.
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25 The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.

26
27 Respectfully submitted,
28 Janet Botula