

MEMORANDUM

TO: File

FROM: Christopher R. Bean, P.E.

DATE: February 23, 2001

RE: VTrans
Pittsford-Brandon
US Route 7 Upgrade CLD Ref. No. 00-0219
Pittsford Bypass CLD Ref. No. 00-0215
Brandon Bypass CLD Ref. No. 00-0216

SUBJECT: Meeting with Senate Transportation Committee

LOCATION: Vermont State House

ATTENDEES: Senator Dick Mazza (Chair) Representing Grand Isle
Senator Tom Bahre Representing Addison
Senator John Crowley Representing Rutland
Senator Peter Shumlin Representing Windham
Senator Rob Ibe Representing Caledonia
Senator Cheryl Rivers Representing Windsor
Sherri Burch Senate Transportation Committee
Rep. Peg Flory Pittsford Steering Committee Member
Lynn Saunders Brandon Steering Committee Member
Mike Balch Brandon Town Manager, Steering Committee Member
Dan Peterson VTrans Project Manager
Chris Bean CLD

Purpose of Meeting: To update the Committee on the status of the Pittsford and Brandon US Route 7 projects.

1. **Introductions**

Dan introduced the Town officials and Members of the Steering Committee. Representative Flory, Lynn Saunders, and Mike Balch noted that the Steering Committee process has been very effective on these projects. Its success has resulted in an atmosphere which addresses issues as they develop in a constructive fashion so that resolution can be developed and progress can continue on the projects. They also thanked the Senate Transportation Committee (STC) for their support and pledged to continue working towards the ultimate goal of completing work on the upgrade projects and the bypass studies.

2. **Major Accomplishments in 2000 (Presented by Dan Peterson)**

- A. **Scoping Report:** Since the last meeting with the STC, the Scoping Report detailing the six proposed upgrade projects along the existing 11.5 mile corridor was completed and approved in May 2000. A handout depicting the individual project segments was distributed (copy attached).
- B. **Conceptual Plans:** CLD began development of Conceptual Plans in August 2000. Conceptual Plans for Project Segments 4 and 6 have been submitted and are currently under review. Conceptual Plans for the remaining segments will be submitted within a couple months.
- C. **Archeological Issues:** In the summer of 2000, an extensive archeological investigation was completed along the entire corridor. The field work involved 1,155 shovel tests, 35 excavations 1 m x 1 m in size, and 11 hand-dug trenches 2-3' wide x 120' long. The conclusions show that there are no issues of concern within the proposed work limits of segments 1, 2, 3, and 6. Within segment 5, there is an area of concern in the vicinity of Jones Mill Pond. Within segment 4, there are concerns mostly in the vicinity of Fort Vengeance. Within this potential historic area, remains of the fort have not been found; however, remains have been found of the Hendee Tavern, which was associated with the fort. Investigation in this area will be continuing and alternative alignments are currently being studied to avoid and/or minimize impacts. Should impacts be unavoidable, an expected data recovery operation will most likely be required. Louis Berger and Associates are completing the archeological investigation. Their fee for this work is approximately \$340,000, of which \$210,000 has been spent to date.
- D. **Historical Assessment:** CLD has been working with Scott Newman, VTrans Historic Preservation Coordinator. Scott has been coordinating with the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation in connection with several anticipated impacts within either historic districts or potentially historic properties along the various project segments. One particular location is the Bloodworth House located on the west side of US 7 about ¼ mile south of the intersection with VT 3. An early acquisition of this potentially historic structure is being considered. In addition, the design of improvements within Pittsford Village in the area of the sharp curve at the northerly intersection with Arch Street has been coordinated with the library such that library officials are satisfied with the concept. Within Brandon, the Brandon green is proposed to be reconfigured to address a high accident location at the "sharp curve." This work will necessitate reconfiguration of the Town green and impact along the frontages of some properties in this area. The proposed configuration will result in a safer roadway, as well as an enhanced Brandon green, in that it will be larger and contiguous with the existing monument at the intersection with VT 73, just south of the green.

3. **Budget**

Initial Project Scoping (Rist-Frost-Shumway)	\$ 225,000	(villages only, initial phase only)
CLD Scoping	530,000	(villages and corridor section)
CLD Conceptual Design	630,000	(11.5 miles)
CLD Permitting	220,000	(11.5 miles)
Louis Berger Associates (LBA) Archeology	336,500	(11.5 miles)
VTrans	<u>100,000</u>	
Total	<u>\$2,041,500</u>	
Spent to Date	\$1,300,000	
Balance	\$ 700,000	
Budgeted for FY 2002	\$ 450,000	

The question was then asked whether lack of funding is holding up progress on the project. Dan indicated no, it is not holding it up at this time.

4. **Upgrade Project Schedule**

At this time, the schedule for each of the projects is being estimated along the following time line:

?? Complete Conceptual Plan	Spring 2001
?? Complete Environmental Documentation (Categorical Exclusion)	Summer 2001
?? 502 Public Hearing	Summer 2001
?? Preliminary Plans	Winter 2001/2002
?? Property Owner Meetings	Summer 2002
?? Semi-Final Plans	Fall 2002
?? Right-of-Way Process	Fall 2002-Spring 2003
?? Final Plans	Spring 2005
?? Advertise for Construction	Spring-Summer 2005

It was noted that both the Brandon and Pittsford Village projects may be processed as municipally managed projects. This may allow for a more expedited project schedule. (Also see #5.)

5. **Right-of-Way**

Dan explained that although the Agency believes there is a historic 5-rod (82.5-foot) wide right-of-way throughout most of the project, due to lack of historical evidence, the decision has been made to claim the statutory 3-rod (49-foot) right-of-way. The exception will be within the Town of Brandon where a wider right-of-way will be claimed due to the existence of historical evidence supporting same. This may allow the project within Brandon, which is expected to be municipally managed, to proceed on a faster completion schedule than the other projects since less taking of right-of-way will be required. All right-of-way takes for this project are proposed to be in fee as opposed to easements. Land required to be taken beyond the existing right-of-way limits will be taken at current market value.

6. **Pittsford and Brandon Bypass Scoping Studies**

- A. **Purpose of Bypass Scoping Studies:** Chris explained that the purpose of the scoping studies is to determine whether there is a justification to begin a costly environmental impact statement process. The scoping studies will identify sensitive natural resource constraints and determine the potential social and economic impacts of a few proposed bypass corridors. The studies will then include a summary of impacts associated with the alternatives and a final determination and recommendation will then be given as to the whether completion of a thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prudent. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is especially interested in the study outcome, since the FHWA would provide the majority of funds to pay for a potential EIS.
- B. **Purpose and Need:** Chris stated that the major purpose is to separate the current traffic usage of US 7 within the villages, which includes a significant number of through vehicles consistent with the designation of this highway as a National Highway System route, from local traffic and local traffic needs, including parking, driveways to residences and businesses, and numerous intersections with town roads. The need for a bypass has been the subject of several public meetings in the communities where residents have expressed concerns about the inability to gain access to the highway due to heavy volumes of both passenger cars and trucks, noise, vibration, dust, and pedestrian safety.
- C. **Environmental Constraints Mapping:** Chris reviewed a graphic which showed significant historical, water resources, and endangered species in the study area. He further explained that additional constraints such as farmland, deer and bear habitat, conserved lands, and locations of endangered species have been mapped.
- D. **Bypass Traffic Considerations:** Chris presented a graphic showing the anticipated traffic volumes with and without a bypass in both Pittsford and Brandon for the years 2000 and 2025. The graphic was generated based on information obtained from an October 2000 Origin-Destination Study. The graphic showed that a bypass in each community would reduce the projected future average daily traffic from 14,100 to 3,700 in Pittsford and from 17,000 to 6,600 in Brandon.
- E. **Bypass Scoping Project Schedule:** The Bypass Scoping Report is scheduled to be completed in summer 2001.

F. **Budgeted Funds**

Pittsford:

CLD	\$160,000	
LBA	\$ 10,000	
VTrans	<u>\$ 30,000</u>	
Total	\$200,000	(programmed October 2000)

<u>Brandon:</u>	
CLD	\$160,000
LBA	\$ 10,000
VTrans	<u>\$ 40,000</u>
Total	\$200,000 (programmed October 2000)

Dan indicated that the work completed under the development and evaluation budget for scoping in FY 2001 is \$2.7 million. The STC requested and Dan agreed to get back to them with the amount of FY 2001 funds proposed for the Pittsford and Brandon Bypass Scoping Projects. Dan further indicated that there is no money in the State FY 2002 budget for Pittsford and Brandon Bypass projects.

7. **Senate Transportation Committee Input**

Throughout the presentation, Committee members asked general questions about the projects. Responses were given to each question. The STC endorsed the project and requested that they continue to be kept informed of the project status, especially if any barriers are encountered in the design process.

CRB:cww

Attachments

cc: Sherri Burch

Lynn Saunders	Dan Peterson	Mark Blucher	Roy Newton
Michael Balch	Greg Riley	Mark Germanowski	Frank Farnsworth
Richard Baker	Dennis Benjamin	Susie Leonard	Virginia Russell
Dolores Furnari	Duncan Wilkie	Judith Kmileck	Sen. Gerry Gossens
Peg Flory	John Narowski	Chris Borstel	Harry McKinlay
James O’Gorman	Scott Newman	Gary Klinefelter	
Hank Pelkey	Alan Neveau	Kathleen Ryan	
C. Baird Morgan	Paul Tober	Ed Barna	