M E M O R A N D U M

TO: File

FROM: Christopher R. Bean, P.E.

DATE: May 21, 2001

RE: VTrans
Pittsford and Brandon
US Route 7 Bypass Scoping Studies
CLD Reference Nos. 00-0215 and 00-0216

SUBJECT: Public Informational Meeting

LOCATION: Otter Valley Union High School, Brandon, VT

ATTENDEES: 48 people signed in to the meeting (approx. 75 - 80 attended). A number of the Town, Regional and State officials/representatives that were in attendance are listed below:

Lynn Saunders	Brandon Selectboard	USC; BBSC; PBSC
Peg Flory	Pittsford Selectboard	USC; BBSC; PBSC
Richard Baker	Brandon Selectboard	USC; BBSC
Michael Balch	Brandon Town Manager	USC; BBSC
James O'Gorman	Pittsford Town Manager	USC; PBSC
C. Baird Morgan	Pittsford	PBSC
Dolores Furnari	Brandon	BBSC
Hank Pelkey	Brandon Selectboard	USC, BBSC
Mark Blucher	Rutland Reg. Plan. Comm.(RRPC)	
Paul Conner	RRPC	
Dan Peterson	VTrans	USC
Scott Newman	VTrans	
Greg Riley	VTrans	
John Narowski	VTrans	
Steve Sease	VTANR	
Rob Sikora	FHWA	
Chris Bean	CLD	USC; BBSC; PBSC
Jason Stone	CLD	
Wayne Husband	CLD	
Ed Barna	*Rutland Herald Reporter*	
Roy Newton	*Brandon-Pittsford Reporter*	
Peg Armitage	*Brandon Business Journal Reporte*r	

USC **Member, Rt. 7 Upgrade Steering Committee**
BBSC **Member, Brandon Bypass Steering Committee**
PBSC **Member, Pittsford Bypass Steering Committee**

1. **Introductions**

Chris Bean, CLD Project Manager, began the discussion and made general introductions to those present. Chris mentioned that the information presented at this meeting would also be available on CLD's website found at www.cldengineers.com.

2. **Highlight Purpose of Meeting**

Chris explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update the public on the status of the US Route 7 Upgrade Projects and Pittsford and Brandon Bypass Scoping Studies, and to obtain public input on whether the Bypass Scoping Studies should be advanced into the formal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

Chris explained that CLD has coordinated with Bypass Steering Committees from both communities, as well as the public and the regulatory and permitting agencies, in the development of conceptual bypass corridors around both of the Villages. CLD has also tabulated the associated impacts to various natural and social resources in an impact matrix. Chris explained that while the conceptual corridors are not alignments proposed for construction, they do provide a reasonable estimation of the environmental impacts of constructing bypasses around the Villages within the project area. This "order of magnitude" assessment of impacts, as well as input from the public and the regulatory and permitting agencies, will be the basis for VTrans's and FHWA's decision of whether to proceed with an EIS.

3. **Steve Sease, Director of Planning - VT Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)**

Mr. Sease explained that ANR is a multi-faceted State agency, comprised of Fish and Wildlife, Forests and Parks, and Environmental Conservation Departments. He noted that ANR has jurisdiction over state listed threatened and endangered species, and issues permits for impacts to surface waters and wetlands. He then briefly explained his Agency's role in the project development process, and indicated that ANR is willing to assist the communities in identifying natural and social resource impacts and concerns, and developing strategies to minimize and mitigate impacts. Mr. Sease stated that his Agency would generally favor shorter bypass alignments over longer ones, as shorter alternatives would logically incur lesser environmental impacts. Mr. Sease closed by stating that ANR and VTrans are partners that work together to develop projects that serve the public's transportation needs while preserving the natural environment.

4. **Update of US Route 7 Upgrade Projects**

Chris explained that the overall US Route 7 Upgrade project has been segmented into six individual contracts and gave a general description of the proposed improvements.

Conceptual Plans for the 6 contracts will soon be submitted to VTrans for review. Once comments are received and incorporated, the environmental and permitting documents will be developed. A formal Section 502 Public Hearing is targeted for Fall, 2001. Next steps will

involve Preliminary Plans, followed by Utility Relocation Plans and Property Owner Meetings. This step will signify the beginning of the Right-of-Way Process.

5. **Bypass Scoping Study Schedule**

Chris stated that the Draft Bypass Scoping Study Report will be prepared and the findings presented to the public at another Public Informational Meeting, currently targeted for September, 2001. After a public comment/input period, the report would then be finalized and submitted to VTrans and FHWA. These agencies will then decide whether to proceed with an EIS.

6. **Conceptual Corridor/Impact Matrix Description**

Chris described the conceptual corridors, stating that they are essentially 150-foot wide bands. They are a reasonable estimation of the impact footprint associated with a two-lane roadway, with truck climbing lanes where warranted. Chris described the 12-foot lane, 8-foot shoulder typical, and indicated that the intersections have only been considered at major intersecting roadways, such as VT Routes 3 and 73, and Kendall Hill Road, a.k.a. the Truck Route. Other local or Town roadways would not be given access to the bypass. Chris noted that limiting access to a bypass would reduce the potential for secondary, or "sprawl" impacts along the local roadways and within the project area.

7. **Public Input/Open Discussion** (Questions are in ***Italicized Bold,*** Responses are in Normal Type)

1. Do structures impacts account for residences or buildings that are not directly impacted - has there been any consideration for proximity impacts?

When estimating the number of impacted structures, impacts were first calculated using the 150-foot corridor band, plus a 50-foot offset on each side (for a total of 250 feet). This was done to take into account "near misses," as the structure location data only provided "point locations" for structures. The structures impacts were artificially inflated by this method, especially where the conceptual corridors match in to existing US Route 7 and cross other roadways. Structures impacts were refined using aerial photographs with the conceptual corridors (150-foot width) superimposed. At this stage, direct impacts to structures were noted, as were other factors such as access and proximity impacts. It is possible that property and structures that are not directly impacted would be acquired due to proximity impacts, and then re-sold after the project was complete.

2. Is there information available that documents the effects of bypasses on similar communities?

Mark Blucher, of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, stated that he did not have that information at the meeting, but would provide it for those interested. He summarized that his understanding, based on the information he has seen, is that communities do very well after bypasses are constructed. Chris Bean noted businesses that rely heavily on through traffic may be negatively affected. Such businesses may change hands to better suit the local needs.

3. ***What criteria were used in the identification of wetlands?***

The wetlands information depicted on the plans was obtained from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, as well as VTANR. In general, three criteria are necessary for determining the presence of a wetland: hydric soils, hydrology, and wetland vegetation. It should be noted that only Class I and Class II wetlands are depicted on the mapping, and this is customary for planning level studies.

4. ***It appears as though Corridor BE would impact Pine Hill Cemetery.***

It should be stressed that the conceptual corridors are not alignments proposed for construction. If, in a future design study, an alignment similar to Corridor BE were proposed, it would likely be designed to avoid the cemetery.

5. ***It appears as though a bypass could be constructed, following the existing Country Club Road - has this been considered?***

As the bypass has been considered as a limited access facility, no driveway connections to the new roadway would be allowed. Therefore, all of the residences along Country Club Road would be impacted. For this reason, such an alternative was not pursued.

6. ***A westerly bypass around Pittsford would seem to benefit the OMYA facility. Has OMYA lobbied for any of the alternatives?***

We are not aware of any preferences expressed by representatives of OMYA.

7. ***It appears as though Corridor PW would impact the landfill.***

See response to number 4, above. If such an alternative were to be designed, efforts to avoid impacts to the landfill would be made. If impacts to the landfill were unavoidable, the facility may be relocated. Appropriate investigations would be undertaken to ensure that the new roadway did not cause the displacement or migration of contamination associated with the landfill.

8. ***It appears as though the deer wintering areas are undermapped.***

The environmental constraints mapping was developed using the most current information available. The constraints maps were reviewed by the Natural Resource Agencies, and some adjustments were made. Actual field verification of all of the information was not possible, nor appropriate for this level of study. It is possible that the mapping of certain resources would be further adjusted based on field surveys. Such surveys would be done during the EIS process, should the study move ahead.

9. ***It has been stated that three lanes will be proposed where truck-climbing lanes are warranted. How many miles of three-lane roadway will be necessary?***

Truck climbing lanes would be constructed where warranted. The length of three-lane roadway to be constructed would be dependent on the actual location of a bypass alignment. Without knowing that location, it is not possible to estimate the length of need for truck climbing lanes.

10. ***Concern was expressed over the noise and visual impacts to the villages associated with a short bypass.***

11. ***If the Upgrades will not be constructed for at least several years, how can we determine the need for bypasses now?***

The Upgrade Projects do not address the need for bypasses. The Upgrades would not address the conflicts between through traffic and local traffic in the Villages.

12. ***Brandon is more affected by OMYA trucks than Pittsford. A bypass is needed in Brandon; the number of trucks will likely increase in the future.***

13. ***Anyone that lives in an older building along US Route 7 in the villages can attest to the damage caused by vibration and dust . Bypasses are needed.***

14. ***With regard to Corridor PE, serious design challenges would be associated with Furnace and Sugar Hollow Brooks and their associated floodplains: grades that would require truck climbing lanes, the need for deep ledge cuts, and the presence of the Proctor Aqueduct.***

15. ***Is there currently consideration for bypasses for other communities to the north and south? Could a more comprehensive plan be considered, rather than a piecemeal approach? Has any consideration been given for linking a long alternative, such as PBW to US Route 4?***

This study has focused on the villages of Pittsford and Brandon. If the study is advanced into the EIS process, Federal regulations will require that a reasonable range of alternatives be considered. Larger-scale projects, as well as rail travel and freight, Traffic System Management, Traffic Demand Management, and improvements to other north-south roadways could be considered at that time.

16. ***Several in attendance expressed the need to expand the study area to include more, if not all, of the communities along US Route 7?***

Lynn Saunders responded that perhaps a new Interstate in the westerly part of the State is what is really needed, but that does not seem likely, given the regulatory and permitting issues. Bypasses around the Villages are the most feasible approach.

17. ***Consideration should be given to constructing a bypass that would follow existing abandoned railroad grades, one of which leads directly to Rutland.***

18. ***A bypass would only take certain people's frontyard problems and put them in other people's backyards.***

19. ***How does this study affect the future salability of property that would be impacted by one of the conceptual corridors?***

A realtor in the audience responded that all realtors are required to disclose all material facts that they are aware of with regard to a property. It should be stressed that this Scoping Study is not intended to set alignments for construction; its only purpose is to

provide the basis for VTrans's and FHWA's determination of whether to proceed with an EIS.

20. The Pittsford Fire Chief commented that most accidents are north and south of the Villages?

Mike Balch responded that Brandon Village has two very High Accident Locations that are monitored by VTrans. He also agreed that many accidents occur north and south of the Villages.

21. What is a realistic timeframe for construction of a bypass, should the EIS process prove successful?

Dan Peterson responded that it may take approximately 20 years to complete the project.

22. When will the public know whether the study will move ahead?

Dan Peterson responded that the decision will be made by the next legislative session, approximately one year from now.

23. What is the status of the Middlebury Bypass Study?

Richard Baker responded that studies to Upgrade of the existing road have not yet been completed. Bypasses will not be considered until the upgrade options have been studied.

24. Chris Bean asked for a show of hands, to indicate whether the study should move ahead, into the EIS process. Of the 33 people from Pittsford in attendance, 9 indicated the study should move ahead, Of the 36 people in attendance from Brandon, 21 indicated the study should move ahead.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

CRB:JAS:cww

Attachments

cc: US Rt. 7 Upgrade Steering Committee
Brandon Bypass Steering Committee
Pittsford Bypass Steering Committee

PROJECT SCHEDULE
Pittsford and Brandon Bypass Scoping Studies

Events/Milestones	Target Date	Actual Date
Phase I		
Project Scoping, Data Collection, Issue Identification		
• Scoping Kickoff Meeting	7/00	11/00
• Develop Draft Purpose and Need	8/00	11/00
• Begin Steering Committee Meetings	8/00	11/00
• Begin Resource Agency (RA) Coordination	9/00	12/00
• Finalize Purpose and Need	10/00	1/01
• Steering Committee Meeting (Constraints Maps)	11/00	1/01
• Public Informational Meeting	N/A	1/01
• RA Meeting (Constraints Maps)	11/00	2/01
Phase II		
Conceptual Corridors	**Target Date**	**Actual Date**
• Steering Committee Meeting(s) (Alternatives)	1/00	3/01
• RA Meeting(s) (Alternatives)	4/01	4/01
• Steering Committee Meeting(s) (Alternatives and Issues)	4/01	4/01
• Public Informational Meeting (Alternatives)	5/01	5/01
• Draft Scoping Report Submitted	8/01	
• Steering Committee Meeting (Scoping Report)	9/01	
• Public Informational Meeting	9/01	
• Scoping Report Published	9/01	
• Public Meeting/Presentation to TAC and/or RRPC	10/10	

PROJECT SCHEDULE
Pittsford-Brandon US Route 7 Upgrades

Approximate Timetable - to be expedited if possible

Events/Milestones	Target Date	Actual Date
Conceptual Plans submitted to VTrans	June, 2001	
Categorical Exclusion Documentation	Fall 2001	
502 Public Hearing	Fall 2001	
Preliminary Plans	Summer 2002	
Property Owner Meetings	Winter 2002	
Semi-Final plans	Spring 2003	
Right-of-Way Process	Spring 2003 - Fall 2004	
Necessity Hearing	Fall 2005	
Compensation Hearing	Spring 2006	
Final Plans	Spring 2006	
Advertise for Construction	Summer 2006	

Revised 05/2001