

MEMORANDUM

TO: File

FROM: Jason A. Stone

DATE: August 6, 2001

RE: VTrans
Pittsford-Brandon, VT - US Route 7 Upgrade Projects
NH 019-3(49)
CLD Reference No. 01-0170

SUBJECT: Conceptual Plans Steering Committee Meeting

LOCATION: Brandon Fire Station

ATTENDEES:

Peg Flory	Pittsford	USC, BBSC, PBSC
Jim O’Gorman	Pittsford Town Manager	USC, PBSC
Hank Pelkey	Pittsford Selectboard	USC, PBSC
Mike Balch	Brandon Town Manager	USC, BBSC
Lynn Saunders	Brandon Selectboard	USC, PBSC, BBSC
Richard Baker	Brandon Resident	USC, BBSC
Dan Peterson	VTrans LTF, Project Manager	USC, PBSC, BBSC
Gary Dubray	VTrans Highway Design	
Mark Germanowski	Rutland Regional Planning Commission	
Chris Bean	CLD Engineers, Project Manager	USC, PBSC, BBSC
David Munro	CLD Engineers, Highway Design	
Jason Stone	CLD Engineers, Environmental Specialist	
Bob Wood	Pittsford-Brandon VT State Representative	
Robert Kilpeck	Brandon Fire Chief	

USC: US Route 7 Upgrade Conceptual Plans Steering Committee Member

PBSC: Pittsford Bypass Steering Committee Member

BBSC: Brandon Bypass Steering Committee Member

MEETING NOTES

1. Jiffy Mart/Proposed McDonald’s Access – Northerly Project Extension

Chris Bean explained that VTrans’s Permits and Utilities Section reviewed and approved the revisions to the access design at the Brandon Auto Sales property. The property owner was forwarded the latest concept plans and had no comment. The revised access design will be incorporated into the plans.

Richard Baker noted the presence of another future access point, just to the north of the Brandon Auto Sales Property, for a Clinic associated with the Rutland Regional Medical Center. He asked whether the project should be extended further to the north, to address the proposed access. Dan Peterson's opinion was that the project should not be extended, and noted that the previous extension to address the Brandon Auto Sales access issue was done to correct an undesirable situation with respect to access control. Since the Clinic access is being constructed, it must already have been reviewed by the VTrans Permits and Utilities Section, and therefore the design should be appropriate.

2. Property at the Corner of Union & Carver Streets – Parking Issue

Two dentists' offices operate out of the property in this location. It was noted that residential apartments are also present in the building. The area in front of the building, between the sidewalk and the roadway, is paved. Currently, the paved area is used for "head-in" parking. Mike Balch noted that it is common to see from two to five vehicles parked in the area (see attached photos).

Mike Balch approached the property owner in the past, with the understanding that the sidewalk in front of the property was on private property, rather than within the roadway right-of-way. Mike's recollection was that a VTrans right-of-way study showed this to be the case. The property owner expressed his desire to retain the parking spaces, and expressed a willingness to donate the property between the roadway and the current sidewalk. However, the sidewalk would have to be moved away from the roadway to allow room for formal diagonal parking spaces.

The current plans for this area show formal diagonal parking spaces. The discussion then centered on the safety of this layout. Concerns were expressed over the potential situation created by vehicles queued at Carver Street. In particular, motorists making the left-turn movement onto Carver Street may not be able to see vehicles backing out of the parking spaces. It was noted that it is somewhat contrary to driver expectations to encounter an access location so close to an intersection.

Several revisions to the layout were discussed. Chris Bean stated that **CLD will investigate options such as implementing parallel parking (perhaps two to three spaces) or moving the parking spaces as far from the intersection as possible, to give motorists more sight distance and recognition time.** Options for a revised parking layout will be presented at the next meeting.

3. Conceptual Plans Comment Review Meeting (July 31, 2001 – Segments 3 and 5)

Chris noted that Mike Balch attended the meeting. Chris stated that the majority of the discussion related to technical design issues that will be addressed when Conceptual Plans are revised. One major topic of discussion that remains to be resolved is the issue of providing fish passage at the "unnumbered" box culvert (Sta. 11+912). VT ANR staff surveyed the area and found fish to be present both upstream and downstream of the culvert, and has internally recommended that fish passage be provided in this location. This recommendation was passed along to CLD for informational purposes, but has not been formally made to VTrans.

Prior to the meeting, VTrans asked CLD to investigate the costs and construction implications of several options that would provide for fish passage, including installation of a fish ladder at the outlet, replacing the culvert with an open-bottomed structure such as an arch, a box culvert that could hold natural substrate material, and a bridge. All options to replace the culvert would require complicated construction and maintenance of traffic because the culvert is in approximately 30 feet of fill. It was estimated that any option to replace the culvert would cost nearly \$500,000. It was decided that VTrans and ANR would hold a meeting to discuss the matter further. **John Narowski of the VTrans Environmental Services Section will coordinate the meeting.** CLD will attend to provide technical assistance.

It was the consensus of the Steering Committee that the cost associated with providing fish passage at this location is excessive, and perhaps not warranted, given the fact that fish are present upstream and downstream of the culvert, and passage in the downstream direction may be possible during periods of higher flows. The Steering Committee asked whether contacting VT ANR directly to express their views would be appropriate. Dan Peterson and Chris Bean reiterated that the recommendation to provide passage has not been formally made to VTrans, and that the issue would be discussed further at the upcoming meeting. Dan suggested that the Steering Committee wait for the outcome of that meeting.

4. **Danville Transportation Enhancement Project – Art in Transportation**

Gary DuBray discussed his recent involvement with a roadway improvement project where art was incorporated as a major factor. The project consists of a one-mile segment of US Route 2, through the Town of Danville, VT. Gary noted the similarities between Danville and Pittsford, and Brandon in particular, citing that both US Route 7 and US Route 2 are on the National Highway System, and each community has cohesive Village Centers with green spaces. Gary explained that Danville is essentially a demonstration project. VTrans recognizes that other communities will want to implement similar projects, and Gary stated that VTrans needs to develop a policy before this will be able to happen. Gary did note that incorporating art into the Danville project has added approximately two years to the project development process due to the additional coordination.

The consensus of the Steering Committee was that the idea of incorporating artwork into the Projects in the Villages is attractive, but should not be pursued at the expense of the project schedules or funding. The Committee was in favor of revisiting the issue later in the process, perhaps as independent Transportation Enhancement efforts. Gary will provide a tape of the Danville Art in Transportation Project, to be viewed at the next Steering Committee meeting. The Danville project website can be viewed at www.aot.state.VT.US/danville/home.html.

5. **Fort Vengeance Monument – Status Update**

Jason Stone gave a brief update on the status of the archeological investigations at the Fort Vengeance Monument Site. VTrans's archeological consultant is conducting further investigations in the area beneath the easterly shoulder of the roadway. This work is necessary to define the site's

easterly boundary. CLD is waiting for the results of this work before investigating design alternatives to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the site.

6. **Mailbox Issue in Pittsford Village**

Peg Flory explained that on-foot mail delivery is being considered. Delivery would be to mailboxes located at the back of the sidewalks, rather than door-to-door, to reduce the amount of time required for delivery. Peg will continue to follow this issue and update the Committee.

7. **VTrans Historic Preservation Coordination**

Peg Flory informed the Committee of a local group interested in historic preservation. Peg indicated that the group might be interested in purchasing the Bloodworth House, to allow the current owners to relocate, as they have expressed an interest in doing. Peg asked if this should be pursued. Dan Peterson and Gary Dubray concurred in the opinion that such an "early acquisition" would not be in the interest of the project. Dan indicated that he recalled seeing a letter from a member of the Pittsford Historical Society, expressing the opinion that the property should not be impacted. Hank Pelkey was surprised at this, noting that his wife is the President of the Historical Society. Hank asked if another letter, expressing the views of the Historical Society as a whole to Scott Newman, would be appropriate. It was agreed that such a letter would do no harm, but would not really affect the treatment or disposition of the property.

VTrans Historic Preservation Coordinator, Scott Newman, has field reviewed the six Project Segments. In the majority of cases, the impacts to Historic Districts and Properties can be addressed through minor design revisions, such as steepened roadway slopes, modified ditches, and/or short retaining walls and back-curb, and also by landscaping treatments. Several trees were identified as being contributing elements to the properties, and CLD will investigate ways to save those trees, if possible, and replace them if they cannot be avoided. Scott requested that a concept-level utilities relocation study be done in the villages, so that impacts to important landscape features could be better defined. Scott added that he would not be able to complete the Section 106 process without that information. Coordination between VTrans and the utility companies is underway.

Scott did express several areas of particular concern:

a. **National Register-Listed Property, south of US Route 7/VT Route 3 Intersection**

The current plan would remove large maple and ash trees in front of this property. Scott indicated that such impacts could not be supported unless avoidance options, including a shift in the US Route 7 alignment, were considered. Since the property lies on the outside of a horizontal curve, it may be possible to avoid the trees by shifting the alignment to the west. Doing so would flatten the curve, but will also require additional earthwork. Based on the field review, it did not seem overly problematic to shift the alignment. **CLD will investigate this further, and give an update at the next meeting.**

b. **Sidewalks Along US Route 7, Separation From Travelway**

Scott suggested that where there is separation between the sidewalk and the roadway, consideration should be given for maintaining the separation. Though not discussed at this meeting, one location that Scott discussed in the field review was opposite St. Alphonsus Church in Pittsford. To accommodate the proposed widening, and to limit impacts to trees on the adjacent historic property, a small retaining wall or back-curb may be necessary in this location. **CLD will look into this matter further, on a project-wide basis, and provide an update at the next meeting.**

c. **US Route 7/High Street Intersection**

Scott expressed concern over the impacted trees and lawn area on the property in the northeasterly quadrant of the intersection. Scott explained that this property defines the gateway to the Brandon Village Historic District, and impacts in this location should be avoided if possible. It was explained that the intersection was reconfigured to provide better turning radii for school buses and delivery vehicles. Subsequent to the field visit, Scott initiated a traffic count at this location to determine what kinds of large vehicles use the intersection. It was found that the larger vehicles consist primarily of delivery-type vehicles. **Mike Balch will check to see how or if the intersection is used by school buses. CLD will investigate ways to reduce impacts to adjacent historic properties.** An update will be given at the next meeting.

The Brandon Fire Chief strongly expressed his opinion that improvements need to be made at the intersection, stating that it is currently difficult to maneuver the fire trucks onto High Street without encroaching into opposing lanes and stopping traffic in all directions. This is due to the skew of the intersection and the inadequate width. The group took a short break to view the intersection, located a short distance from the Fire Station, and concluded that the proposed improvements would correct the problems and that reducing pavement width on the inside of the intersection for historic preservation, should not restrict fire trucks from using the intersection.

d. **US Route 7/VT Route 73 (West) Intersection**

Scott expressed concern over the impacts to the green space that contains the Stephen Douglas Monument, located in front of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) property. Intersection improvements and impacts to the green are necessary to accommodate the right-turn movement for large southbound trucks onto VT Route 73. It was explained that the improvements are necessary to provide the appropriate turning radii. After the meeting, Scott requested traffic information for the intersection, and asked that consideration be given to “scaling down” the design, given the presumed low frequency of trucks making the maneuver.

It was the consensus of the Committee that the proposed turning lane is a necessary improvement. The Committee noted that a good portion of the trucks that make this maneuver are related to seasonal businesses and could have been missed by the counts that generated the information given to Scott. Mark Germanowski made reference to a recently completed VTrans Freight Study, and noted that it may contain information about trucks using the intersection.

The Committee also noted that the Monument is in a very poor (and unsafe) location to be seen by the public, and that it would benefit from relocation, and also cited the damage caused by road

salt. **It was suggested that the DAR and the Brandon Historical Society could be contacted to see if they would provide a letter supporting the relocation of the Monument. CLD will look into the Freight Study, to see if it contains useful information about this intersection.**

8. Project Schedules

Chris Bean explained that CLD has looked into ways of expediting the project schedules. Chris explained that many of the revisions require that VTrans adopt procedures that are not currently part of their normal process.

With regard to Project Segment 6 (Brandon Village), Chris explained that it might be possible to advance that project to construction in the Summer of 2004. Chris suggested that Project Segment 1 (south of Pittsford Village) could be advanced to construction by Summer 2005. The other project segments could then be prioritized as they move ahead or lag in the project development and right-of-way processes.

The Steering Committee looked favorably on the expedited schedules. The Committee was cautioned, however, that it is not possible to predict exactly how the projects will proceed. The schedules are really just a best guess, based on what is known at this time and the assumption that VTrans will choose to adopt the revised procedures. Dan indicated that VTrans will review the suggested revisions to their processes. Dan will report back to the Committee

9. Next Meeting

The next Upgrade Steering Committee Meeting was set for Monday, October 22, at the Brandon Fire Station, from 4:00 to 7:00 PM.

JAS:cww

Attachments

cc: 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	Paul Conner	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	Chris Slesar	Ed Barna	