

COPY

Memorandum

TO: Patrick C. Scheidel and the Selectboard
FROM: Dennis Lutz, P.E., Public Works Director/Town Engineer
DATE: 23 May 2011
SUBJECT: Circumferential Highway Alternative Projects



ISSUE: The issue is whether or not the communities directly affected by Governor Shumlin's decision on the future of the Circumferential Highway should develop a consolidated approach to funding the transportation needs affected by the decision and should the Essex Selectboard utilize the projects identified in this memorandum as a basis for advocating the needs in Essex?

DISCUSSION:

Consolidated Approach and Loss of Funds:

One immediate ramification of the Governor's decision on the Circumferential Highway concerns the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the years 2011 to 2014. The CCMPO TIP is a component portion of the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) which in turn is used to establish the Legislature's Annual Capital Plan. Currently, the Circumferential Highway is identified in the adopted 2010 TIP on page 11 with construction funding of \$5M in FY13 and \$25M in FY14. The proposed 2012-2015 TIP is scheduled for a public hearing on June 15th 2011. In this draft document, the following funding is provided for the Circumferential Highway:

Project ID	Description	Funding
HC003A	Circ Hwy Prel.Engineering	FY12 funding of \$500,000; FY13 funding of \$1,031,000
HC003	Circ Williston Construction.	FY13 funding of \$1,031,000; FY14 funding of \$15,944,415; FY15 funding of \$16,438,692
HC003E	Circ Williston EIS	Funds obligated of \$6,121,540 -- remaining unspent is unknown

Total (not including HC003E) = \$34,945,107

With the Governor's announcement, it is highly likely that many parties, from the Governor's office to VTRANS to other CCMPO communities to private interest groups may seek to have these funds eliminated from the TIP. The communities most directly impacted by the decision on the Circumferential Highway should, in my opinion, not allow this to happen without a clear definition and costing of

projects now required by those communities to meet the traffic needs created by the loss of the road.

My recommendation to the Selectboard is that these funds remain in the draft TIP and that the TIP be amended during the current year to reflect the projects needed as a direct consequence of the road discontinuance. The alternate projects should be kept in the same funding cycle and could be identified as Circ alternative project #1, Circ alternative project #2, or some similar identification. The intent is threefold:

- 1) Don't move the funds elsewhere in the VTRANS or CCMPO world of projects, when there are identified needs tied directly to the lack of the Circumferential Highway,
- 2) maintain funding at the current level in the TIP until the alternative projects can be fully identified and estimated and
- 3) put the alternative projects on a fast track so they do not have to wait another 10 years in the VTRANS system competing for priority funding or for implementation.

In my opinion, it will take the collective effort of the affected communities, their legislators, the media and residents of the communities to maintain the political pressure to insure that these alternative projects get funded and funded in a timely fashion. It is much too easy a process for VTRANS and the Governor's office to kill the funding for the Circ and direct the funds elsewhere. The impacted communities will lose twice – loss of the Circumferential Highway and long delays in seeing alternative projects move to implementation.

Projects In Essex Needed as a Result of the Loss of the Circumferential Highway

Based upon my knowledge of the transportation needs in Essex, some of which are contained in written studies, some are based on input over time from citizens, past Selectboard members, Town Committees and my observations and some of which are based upon my extended involvement with the development of the Circumferential Highway, I offer the following suggested projects for discussion. I have not attempted to prioritize the list at this time.

- 1) Change the current status of the Essex portion of the Circumferential Highway from an Interstate to a State Highway. It can still be maintained as a limited access State highway but changing the designation provides for other opportunities for use of the corridor.
- 2) With the change under #1, fully fund a designated, 10 foot wide paved bike path both along the Susie Wilson Bypass and from VT2A to VT117 along the entire length of the Circ Highway. This project should be given scoping funds immediately and an assurance of funding for construction in 3 to 5 years. Include in the bike path layout connecting paths to adjacent neighborhoods along the Circ, especially from VT15 to VT117.

- 3) Provide integrated traffic signals at the intersections of VT2A and the Circ, using cameras for full control of signal timing. These funds could be provided directly to VTRAN's operations for installation in FY2012.
- 4) Complete a scoping/traffic study for needed improvements at both intersections of the Circ and VT2A. What is needed at the minimum are the following improvements:
 - a) A dedicated right turn lane on the Susie Wilson Bypass for traffic heading north east and turning right onto VT2A.
 - b) Two left turns off the Circ from the Circ highway railroad bridge crossing to VT2A to accommodate the peak AM traffic (only one exists today)
 - c) Two right turn lanes, possibly as signalized slip lanes, on the eastbound VT2A roadway for AM peak hour traffic turning right onto the Susie Wilson Road Bypass.
 - d) Reconstruction of VT2A between the two Circ ramps.
 - e) Future expansion of the Town's park and ride currently ready for construction this summer to include added parking spaces in what was planned to be the extension of the Circ Highway into Colchester.
 - f) A bike path along VT2A between the two Circ ramps to enable the bike path connection between the western Circ ramp and the Susie Wilson Bypass
- 5) Elevate North Williston Road on the Essex side of the bridge so that its travelled surface is above the annual flood stage of the Winooski River. One of the apparently forgotten but important components of the Circumferential Highway was the planned new bridge across the Winooski River. The loss of this proposed bridge will have a significant impact on increasing traffic on VT2A and at the Five Corners. Compounding the problem is that the North Williston Road bridge is closed to traffic periodically during the year due to high water. This past year, with the historic rainfall, has been the worst year for extended and repeated closures. A new bridge is not needed. What is needed is to raise the road and provide a large number of sizeable culverts under the raised road bed to accommodate the high water situations without changing the flow pattern over the floodplain.
- 5) Complete the transitions of the Circumferential Highway at both the VT2A and VT117 ends of the roadway. Utilize permanent signing and a contoured and landscaped transition.
- 6) VTRANS needs to approve the Town approved scoping plan for signalization at the intersection of Sand Hill Road and VT15, move the project quickly into PE and ROW and then into the construction phase. Full television actuated intersection control needs to be installed and the new signals integrated into a complete traffic coordination plan for the length of VT 15 all the way to the traffic signals at the Circ. This control of traffic will help to reduce the peak AM delays along the corridor. It is an important element of moving traffic from northeast of Essex through the community.

7) Implement a scoping study to determine the regional traffic impact on VT15 in Essex Center and study as a component element construction of an alternate route using an extension of the Allen Martin Parkway to a signalized crossing of the Circumferential Highway. Future regional growth to the northeast of Essex will continue to add traffic to an already congested corridor. The recently approved Town Plan and associated zoning retains the design control district in Essex Center. At some future date, there will be a conflict between the Town trying to maintain the current look and feel of the area along VT15 and the transportation demand to increase the width of the roadway to three or more lanes. There may be ways to accommodate this future traffic demand but one alternative associated with the Circumferential Highway was the construction of an alternate route using Allen Martin Drive, a short portion of Sand Hill Road and the extension of Allen Martin Parkway to the Circ, ending in a signalized intersection. Such an alternative would also provide for an at-grade pedestrian crossing linking developments on both sides of the Circ. The issue of current and future congestion along the VT15 corridor in Essex Center needs to be fully investigated and all alternatives identified and studied. With the apparent demise of the Williston segment of the Circ, now is the time to study this issue in detail and set a course of action in place for the future. This is not an argument for or against the construction of the Allen Martin extension; it is argument for an independent scoping by an impartial third party to study the future VT15 traffic problems and recommend potential solutions.

8). With increases in future traffic not originally planned for the Susie Wilson Road corridor (due to the lack of a future Circ. interconnection to Colchester), two problems are likely to need addressing:

a). Studies done both in connection with Lowes and the VT15 Corridor Studies done by the CCMPO within the past two years, indicate the need to consider the evaluation of a roundabout at the intersection of Kellogg Road and Susie Wilson Road. The traffic off the Susie Wilson Road Bypass coupled with increased pressure from development in Colchester will ultimately lead to poor levels of service for left and right turning traffic off Kellogg Road and left turning PM traffic off Susie Wilson Road. This is one of the few locations in Essex where a roundabout might be a potential solution. The future problems at this intersection should be fully modeled and scoped. The preferred alternative from scoping should be fast-tracked through design and construction.

b) In a similar manner, the southbound traffic at Susie Wilson Road and VT15 will require either a variable middle turn lane or the construction of another lane (two southbound left and two southbound right turns) This need will be another direct result of not constructing the Circ in Colchester. The future problems at this intersection should be fully modeled and scoped. The preferred alternative from scoping should be fast tracked through design and construction.

In summary, this is a quick analysis of the transportation needs of the Town as a direct result of the decision on non-construction of the Circumferential Highway. We may identify other needs over the near term that merit evaluation. Other Circumferential Highway communities are likely to have similar needs. The net impact of these needs is likely to approach the funding levels of the original Circumferential Highway, as noted in the draft CCMPO TIP. The designated Circumferential Highway funds should not be lost to other communities not impacted by the loss of the Highway.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Selectboard discuss the consequences of the Governor's decision relative to the Circumferential Highway with the elected officials from the Village of Essex Junction, the Town of Williston and the Town of Colchester. It is also recommended that the Selectboard establish the position that funds identified in the FYE2012–FYE2015 TIP remain committed to the construction of the Circumferential Highway until such time in FYE2012 that the impacted Circumferential Highway Towns can provide meaningful input into the TIP process for project additions/amendments to the 2012TIP required by those communities to meet the traffic needs created by the loss of the road. It is also recommended that the Selectboard provide input to the staff on the projects identified in this memorandum as a basis for discussions with the CCMPO, other communities and VTRANS.



Communities working together to
meet Chittenden County's transportation needs

CHITTENDEN COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2011-2014

Adopted July 21, 2010

Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization
110 West Canal Street, Suite 202
Winooski, VT 05404
(802) 660-4071 / (802) 660-4079 (fax)
www.ccmppo.org

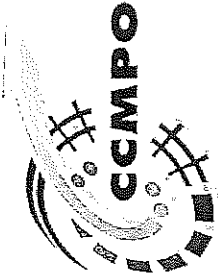
FY11-14 Federal Funds

Other Project Information

CCMPO # Project Location	FY11 Phase	FY12 * Phase	FY13 * Phase	FY14* Phase	Total Cost fed+state+local in 2010 Dollars	Fed. Funds Obligated Thru FY09	FY10 Fed Funds Phase	Project Use Category	Federal Funding Source	Remarks
Interstate/Expressway										
HC003F Circ Colchester - Preliminary Engineering					Total: \$6,000,000 PE: \$6,000,000 ROW: CON:			Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	EIS for Circ Colchester project. Project is included for illustrative purposes pending the availability of federal funds.
VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1(1)								Constraint Status: Constrained		
								VTrans PM: Robie, Ken		
HC003A Circ Highway (VT289) Preliminary Engineering	\$1,500,000 PE/ROW	\$1,000,000 PE/ROW			Total: PE: ROW: CON:		\$1,140,000 PE/ROW	Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	
VTrans Number: NH 033-1(1)								Constraint Status: Constrained		
								VTrans PM: Robie, Ken		
HC003 Circ Williston - Construction			\$5,000,000 CON	\$25,000,000 CON	Total: \$60,000,000 PE: ROW: CON: \$60,000,000			Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	Construction of project recommended by EIS. Includes \$21 M in FY13.
VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1(1)								Constraint Status: Constrained		
								VTrans PM: Robie, Ken		
HC003E Circ Williston - Environmental Impact Statement					Total: \$8,000,000 PE: \$8,000,000 ROW: CON:	\$6,121,540	\$360,000	Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	EIS for Circ Williston project.
VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1(24)								Funds to be obligated in FY10		
								Constraint Status: Constrained		
								VTrans PM: Robie, Ken		

* Future project costs escalated at a rate of 3.1% per year.

Tuesday, August 10, 2010



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meet Chittenden County's transportation needs*

CHITTENDEN COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2012-2015

Public Hearing Draft June 15, 2011

Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization
110 West Canal Street, Suite 202
Winooski, VT 05404
(802) 660-4071 / (802) 660-4079(fax)
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CCMPO # Project Location	FY12-15 Federal Funds			
	FY12 Phase	FY13 * Phase	FY14* Phase	FY15* Phase

Other Project Information				
Total Cost fed+state+local in 2011 Dollars	Fed. Funds Obligated Thru FY10	FY11 Fed Funds Phase	Project Use Category	Federal Funding Source

Remarks

Interstate/Expressway

HC003F Circ Colchester - Preliminary Engineering VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1()					Total: \$6,000,000 PE: \$6,000,000 ROW: CON:			Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	EIS for Circ Colchester project. Project is included for illustrative purposes pending the availability of federal funds.
									<u>Constraint Status:</u> Constrained	<u>VTrans PM:</u> Robie, Ken
HC003A Circ Highway (VT289) Preliminary Engineering VTrans Number: NH 033-1()	\$500,000 PE	\$1,031,000 PE			Total: \$1,500,000 PE: \$1,500,000 ROW: CON:			Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	
									<u>Constraint Status:</u> Constrained	<u>VTrans PM:</u> Robie, Ken
HC003 Circ Williston - Construction VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1()		\$1,031,000 CON	\$15,944,415 CON	\$16,438,692 CON	Total: \$60,000,000 PE: \$60,000,000 ROW: CON: \$60,000,000			Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	Construction of project recommended by EIS. Project includes \$17,000,000 in FY16.
									<u>Constraint Status:</u> Constrained	<u>VTrans PM:</u> Robie, Ken
HC003E Circ Williston - Environmental Impact Statement VTrans Number: AC NH 033-1(24)					Total: \$8,000,000 PE: \$8,000,000 ROW: CON:	\$6,121,540		Capacity Expansion	NHS 80 % Federal 20 % State 0 % Local	EIS for Circ Williston project.
									<u>Constraint Status:</u> Constrained	<u>VTrans PM:</u> Robie, Ken
BR040 I-89 Bridge Maintenance, Richmond Bridge 57 N&S VTrans Number: IM BTNT(7)					Total: \$862,234 PE: \$22,234 ROW: CON: \$840,000	\$756,000 CON		Bridge Preservation	IM 90 % Federal 10 % State 0 % Local	
									<u>Constraint Status:</u> Non-Constrained	<u>VTrans PM:</u>

* Future project costs escalated at a rate of 3.1% per year.

Friday, May 20, 2011