



Vermont Route 15 Corridor Study
*Colchester, Essex, Essex Junction, Winooski
Champlain Valley Exposition, Fanny Allen, St. Michaels College,
University of Vermont, Vermont National Guard,
Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization*

Route 15 Corridor Study
Community Meeting: Essex/Essex Junction Planning Commission
September 28, 2006 - 6:30 PM

Participants

Essex Planning Commission: David Rogerson, Michael Plageman, Mark Marsh, Peter Lyon, Jim Rose, Dustin Brusco, David Raphael. **Town Staff:** Dana Farley, Dennis Lutz

Essex Junction Planning Commission: Mark Thibeault, Liza Kilcoyne, Dana Kerin, Elaine Sopchak, Mike Boyer. **Village Staff:** Jeff Arango

Public: Dana Baron (Essex Trail Committee), Moshe Braner (Essex Trails Committee), Jim Brophy (GMBC/BBC), Roy Collette, Elizabeth Curtis, Paula Duke, James Howley (Llewellyn-Howley Inc.), Cilla Kimberly Chris and Thomas Lyon (Lyon Family Association), Nick Meyer, Patricia and Armand Pelleran, Jeff Reise, Courtney Stockwart, Michael Trusousau, Ed Ziemer (Essex Trails Committee)

CCMPO Board: Dale Arango. **CCMPO/Consultants:** Susan Smichenko, Georges Jacquemart, Mark Smith, Diane Meyerhoff, Stephen Falbel

Susan explained the background of the Route 15 Corridor Study. We'll be looking at studies that have been done, getting feedback, and recommending both long and short term improvements. We have met with the Institutions in the corridor and we've come tonight to hear your thoughts and concerns.

George explained the study's goals: 1) Plan for eventual completion of entire Circ. Highway and address issues related to segmented completion; 2) Optimize traffic flow throughout the Route 15 Corridor including feeder routes that impact Route 15; 3) Improve corridor aesthetics; 4) Improve corridor safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic; 5) Improve and increase public transit services; 6) Improve pedestrian/bicycle connections along and to the corridor; and 7) Improve infrastructure and physical conditions to allow for future rail or other similar transit services.

Georges gave a short overview of the project, the study area, and intersections identified for further analysis. He is currently looking at the existing conditions including land use. Later steps include analysis of future conditions, public workshops, an implementation plan, financing options, and a final plan. The project will wrap up in October 2007.

Peter Lyon: This study assumes the Circ is completed? **Susan:** The study goal includes the Circ (89 to 89) to be completed, but we will look at the corridor both with and without the Circ.

Mark Thibeault: I have a few concerns: 1) The impact of future development along Susie Wilson Road; 2) Entrance to the Exposition - it needs a signal and to allow left turns when exiting onto Route 15; and 3) We're looking at zoning changes from West Street to the Expo to slow traffic down.

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Liza Kilcoyne: We would like to see Pearl Street more walkable/bikeable/transit oriented. There are a lot of neighborhoods off of Pearl Street and we'd like to create a village atmosphere. There is a delicate balance with business needs.

Dan Kerin: I've been a state trooper for 20 years. I'm concerned about the increase in crashes along Route 15, especially near Exit 15 where the traffic is backing up on the ramps. It would be great if we had alternate routes to alleviate congestion. Widening does seem necessary and perhaps signal optimization. **Susan:** VTrans is aware of Exit 15.

David Rogerson: The problem that I see is that alternate routes travel through neighborhoods who don't want the traffic. Traffic is from Jericho/Underhill, etc. Susie Wilson has many accidents. We've been relying on the Circ to solve these problems, but we need to look at other options. What can we do without widening? **Georges:** The function of the roadway is important. It's a state route that is meant to carry regional traffic. There may be access management solutions to help reduce the number of conflicts. It is the municipality's obligation to develop a more comprehensive street network rather than all residential streets feeding into the state highway. That hasn't historically happened so we struggle with it now.

Dan Kerin: The number of side streets and curb cuts for residential and commercial development impedes the flow of traffic. Will you look at improvements like those on Dorset Street and Route 7? **Georges:** Yes, we'll look at those solutions.

David Rogerson: Dorset Street is terrific. We've talked about a similar solution for Susie Wilson. We are concerned about bike paths on the shoulder of the road - they are scary and dangerous. The Susie Wilson path isn't divided - we need a distinct separation.

Dustin Brusso: Don't ignore the corridor out to the Jericho line. If we can decrease vehicle traffic, we can make things move more smoothly. The TOD concept concentrates all services in one place. I don't like that, I think services should be universally available and alternative transportation should be offered.

Liza Kilcoyne: I'd like to see commuter lots further out of town to capture cars earlier.

Dennis Lutz: The reason for this study is that each community needs to work together to insure that we don't unintentionally adversely impact one another. We want wise investments.

Dana Farley: I'd suggest you review the 1991 Essex Master Plan for the Town Center. It discusses the vision of a boulevard concept for Route 15.

Moshe Braner: I ride on Susie Wilson Road and there are too many curb cuts. I don't ride on Route 15 because it's dangerous - but there is an alternative. The bus service is very slow - we need an express bus from Burlington to Essex.

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Dana Baron: I'm on the Town's Trails Committee. Look at the new bike trail from Sunderland Brook to Route 15. The new path on 128 doesn't work - this is a missed opportunity. We need to figure out how to turn "pretty" pictures into something people can really use.

Dan Kerin: Improving the path network is great, but it doesn't work when you have to drop kids off and carry equipment for work.

Dana Farley: Often solutions are in conflict. We need to find a balance.

Jim Brofey: I'm a member of GMC and the Burlington Bike Council. I commute from the Village to Burlington by bike. The traffic on the feeder streets, like West Street, is very fast, especially since it's a straight street. I'd love to see more bus service. I'm wary of bike paths that are along sidewalks - they are very dangerous and are not recommended by the League of American Bicyclists because motorists aren't expecting to see bikes on sidewalks. It essentially creates an intersection at every side street.

Paula Duke: I don't want to see rotaries. Is this an anti-Circ effort? **Georges:** The study that we are undertaking is clearly in support of the Circ. If we are looking at roundabouts in the corridor that has nothing to do with the Circ. It is my professional obligation to look at safety and roundabouts are the safest intersections that we have. A roundabout is smaller than a rotary and is based on two principles: 1) cars have to slow down upon entering the roundabout; and 2) vehicles in the roundabout have the right-of way. A rotary is an outdated facility that allows for weaving movements, big circles, and high speeds. The possibility of recommending roundabouts is not about the Circ.

Dan Kerin: Is there room for roundabouts in the corridor? **Georges:** In some places, yes.

Nick Myer: Does your zoning mitigate curb cuts from Essex Junction to Jericho? **David:** There haven't been zoning changes there. The issue of curb cuts always comes up with new development, and fairness is an issue.

Michael Plageman: We don't always make the decision on curb cuts, sometimes VTrans makes the call. David Lutz, our Engineer, guides us also.

Moshe Braner: We can learn from the mistakes of the Winooski roundabout. **Georges:** It's not really a roundabout, although it has some elements of one. The traffic problems of the Circulator are more related to downstream intersections in Burlington.