

**SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Minutes of September 30, 2020**

A virtual meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was held via Zoom at 6pm.

**Attendance**

TAC members present: Wayne Wheelock, Baltimore; Sharon Bixby, Ludlow; Gordy Eastman, Reading; Eric Bye, Springfield; Barbara Bye, Springfield; Tom Kenyon, West Windsor; Arne Jonynas, Chester; John Saydek, Cavendish.

Others present: Jason Rasmussen and Otis Munroe, SWCRPC; Zoe Neaderland and Dave Pelletier, VTrans.

Wayne Wheelock opened the meeting at 6:04 pm.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Wayne Wheelock welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made.

**2. Changes to the Agenda**

None.

**3. Update of Statewide Rail and Freight Plans**

Zoe Neaderland introduced VTrans' ongoing efforts to update the Rail Plan and Freight Plan simultaneously. Dave Pelletier gave a presentation about the projects. The plans open funding opportunities that would otherwise not be available. There will be a statewide town hall meeting to get input on these plans at 4PM on October 6<sup>th</sup>. An online interactive map was created to collect site specific comments for the planning effort. No Amtrak service is currently running during the pandemic, but VTrans is in discussions with Amtrak about restarting passenger rail service. Questions or comments included:

- Omya and Imerys are users of freight rail. Are there other important users in this part of the state?
- Does Amtrak allow for passengers to bring bicycles on the train?
- What remaining constraints are there for double-stack clearance in the state?
- In the past, the timing of fuel oil deliveries was a problem. Is it still? Has it improved with precision scheduled railroading?
- What opportunities are there for future rail sidings in the region?

There was also a question about using bud cars for commuter rail. That is a topic for the Public Transportation Policy Plan, not the Rail Plan.

Dave and Zoe thanked the TAC for their time and consideration. See the agenda packet handouts for more information. Additional comments on the plans are appreciated. Please consider using the online map to submit comments.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

*Sharon Bixby made a motion to approve the June 24, 2020 meeting minutes. Second by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed unanimously.*

**5. Regional Transportation Plan Update**

Otis Munroe indicated that staff has begun updating the Regional Transportation Plan, such as adding newer information, such as flood resilience, and updating the regional transportation needs list. Jason Rasmussen indicated that the Regional Plan is also being updated at the same time. We hope to adopt the Regional Plan and Regional Transportation Plan at the same time. That means striving to develop a final draft by June 2021.

Jason noted that our current plan is largely focused on maintaining the existing infrastructure. He asked if anything has fundamentally changed since then. For example, during the pandemic many more people are telecommuting and as a result have more time for walking and bicycling. Many people from metropolitan areas are buying homes in Vermont. Gordy noted that maintaining the existing system remains a priority. Arne said that a bike and pedestrian focus is also a priority; recreation activity this summer has been significant. Telecommuting and the pandemic appears to have encouraged an influx of new residents or second homeowners. It is too early to know if this will turn into a lasting trend.

#### **6. Updates and Announcements**

- a. Jason noted that the RPC is changing its name to Mount Ascutney Regional Commission as of January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- b. Potential topics for upcoming meetings include a Transportation Resilience Tool review, update on revamping VTrans project selection and prioritization system, and a workshop on updating the Regional Transportation Plan.
- c. Gordy indicated he is willing to give an update on the Middlebury railroad project at a future TAC meeting.

#### **8. Adjourn**

- a. *Gordy Eastman made a motion to adjourn. Second by John Saydek. The motion passed unanimous.*
- b. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.