

1 **CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
2 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

3 **DRAFT Minutes**

4 **September 24th, 2019**

5 Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Office

6 **Attendees:**

X	Barre City: Scott Bascom		Northfield: Patrick DeMasi
X	Barre Town: Rob White	X	Orange: Lee Cattaneo
X	Berlin: Robert Wernecke, Vice- Chair	X	Plainfield: Bob Atchinson
	Cabot: John Cookson	X	Roxbury: Gerry D'Amico
X	Calais: David Ellenbogen	X	Waitsfield: Don La Haye
X	Duxbury: Alan Quackenbush		Warren: Jim Sanford
X	East Montpelier: Frank Pratt		Washington: Vacant
X	Fayston: Kevin Russell	X	Waterbury: Steve Lotspeich, Chair
X	Marshfield: Robin Schunk	X	Williamstown: Rich Turner
X	Middlesex: Ronald Krauth		Woodbury: Vacant
X	Montpelier: Dona Bate		Worcester: Bill Arrand
X	Moretown: Joyce Manchester	X	Staff: Daniel Currier

Guests: Joe Segale (VTrans), Ashlynn Shanahan (CVRPC), Devon Mason (GMT)

7 Steve Lotspeich called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Quorum was present. Introductions
8 were completed.

9
10 **Adjustments to the Agenda:**

11 Updates from Marshfield on the RAMP project to be discussed before TAC updates.

12
13 **Public Comments:**

14 There were no public comments

15
16 **Presentation from VTrans on the use of Autonomous Vehicles (AV)**

17 Joe Segale VTrans researcher presented on preparing for AV in Vermont.

18 AV testing act - requires AV test permit for level 3-5 automated driving systems.

19 Forecast of AV use on the road - expected to be between 1-2% in 2020s, 40%-60% by 2050.

20 A mix of different levels of AV and conventional vehicles is expected. Cost and convenience will
21 drive adoption rate.

22 Why care about this in transportation world? Over 90% of crashes are due to bad human
23 behavior, AV could remove human error and decrease crash fatalities.

24 Expected impacts depend on ownership model, individual vs shared ownership with mobility as
25 a service. Cars with no passengers will be driving on the road. If AV ownership is primarily
26 individuals, this would mean more vehicle miles travelled, shared ownership means less cars on
27 the road, fewer emissions, fewer crashes, less needs for road capacity, more efficiency.

1 Less time lost, improved mobility for those who can't drive. Half cost of transit agency is labor,
2 transit cost goes down improve access and ridership. This raises concerns on displacing transit
3 employees. Asked to speak to stakeholders, safety is a major concern for transitioning to AV.
4 Not all states are regulating use of AV. If public roads are used to test AV, the public deserves to
5 know and be able to weigh in. Transportation is heading in the direction of av, Vermont needs
6 to be ready. Broadband is an issue that will inhibit AV use.

7 Q- Are most electric? Yes most are, AV goes well with EV.

8 Q- Why will av be important to Vermont's economy? Why any transportation is good for the
9 economy, tourism could be restricted if Vermont cannot accommodate AV.

10 Q- Can AV handle mud seasons? Testing across the country is mainly done in urban areas.
11 Needs to be tested in VT context; gravel roads, snow, ice, low visibility, mud, etc. Hard to know
12 what this will look like in VT depends on what tester is looking for.

13 Federal government responsible for Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.
14 The State's role includes licensing, education and training, registration, insurance liability,
15 enforcing traffic laws, and building infrastructure. The state cannot prohibit AV.

16 AV legislation has spread rapidly among states between 2016 and 2018.
17 Act 60 sections 16-18 will allow and regulate testing of AV in VT.

18 Q-This requires accurate positioning for safety how will it work with GPS, does this depend
19 more on GPS or the road itself? It must respond to its environment not just rely on GPS.

20 Q- How does it navigate, using lanes on road? Artificial intelligence is going to learn to interpret
21 roads, even covered in snow, it will learn through experience. Vehicles share their "knowledge"
22 within manufacturers.

23 Q- Most roadways in Vermont are dirt or gravel, can cars really handle snow covered gravel
24 roads? Won't work in VT unless tech can interpret environment around it.

25 Q- Can level 4 and 5 work in VT? Yes, it is just a matter of when.

26 Traffic committee can approve AV testing on highways and class 1 roads, municipalities must
27 pre approve testing on other classed roads with their own conditions, permit must still be
28 reviewed by traffic committee. Municipalities may withdraw authority to test at any time.
29 Municipalities and state are not responsible to upgrade infrastructure.

30 Q- Are municipalities liable for crashes if they approve AV testing in their town? No, normal
31 duty of care should be taken.

32 Next steps, recruit municipalities willing to preapprove testing on their roads. Would be
33 interested in providing info to any select boards or councils. Complete av guidance and permit
34 application, VTrans may do their own pilot.

35 Q- Most have to adjust to differences of new cars they purchase, if AV varies between
36 companies there will be a lack of predictability, will there be any attempt to regulate behavior
37 of these cars so there is some sort of standardization? Federal government has the power to
38 regulate this aspect, not sure this is possible at the state level. Currently there is a push from
39 industry to not regulate and let them innovate for now.

40 Q- CA has their own standards for pollution and gas mileage, is something similar possible for
41 VT to set their own standards of operations certifications? CA Did this with permission from the
42 federal government.

43 Comment: Government must play a role in ethics, AV must determine difference between
44 crashing into pedestrians and killing occupant in vehicle. Mercedes decided to take out driver.

1 Government must play a role in answering these ethical questions rather than leave them to AI
2 or engineers. Unknown who will make those decisions.

3 Comment: Hope that there will be a failsafe even in completely autonomous vehicles so that a
4 human may take control in an emergency.

5 Q- What about the ethics of pushing technology to be deployed before it's ready?

6 Joe Segale has a draft resolution for communities to allow testing, he leaves his contact info
7 and where to access his presentation.

8

9 **Minutes from July Meeting** – No comments on minutes. Motion to approve minutes, seconded,
10 and approved.

11

12 **Functional Classification change request for Plainfield and Orange** – Reservoir road in Orange
13 connects to route 302, this intersects with Brook road in Plainfield followed by Mill street, Main
14 street, then route 2 in Plainfield.

15 Currently classified as minor collectors, bringing local roads to major collectors. These roads
16 connect to arterial roads, have higher amounts of traffic, and are widely used to get from route
17 302 to route 2. Data is provided on traffic volumes and widths of roads.

18 Q- What is average speed? Speed has no impact on if road is major or minor.

19 Q-Is it benefit to town for a road to be a major collector? Yes, the town will qualify for
20 additional disaster funds.

21 Q-Surprised that major collector is gravel road, if it doesn't need to be paved is it really major?

22 State roads are gravel in VT too. If approved tonight will go to VTrans, then to federal level.

23 Motion to approve by Kevin Russell, seconded by Bob Atchinson, motion passes.

24

25 **Community Rail Grant: Montpelier to Barre Community Connector** – Daniel Currier, CVRPC
26 staff presented on a submitted grant application to convert 8 miles of existing rail to be a
27 commuter rail connecting the cities of Montpelier and Barre. This section of rail is primarily
28 used for freight. Will begin at Montpelier junction in Berlin, through Montpelier, ending at
29 Spaulding High School in Barre. Focused on moving members of communities through 3 towns
30 the rail would operate in.

31 Why do this? Private and public talk about how to use Washington county rail line more
32 effectively. Characterize opportunities and obstacles this project would present.

33 Q- The rail is state owned but managed by VT Railways, will VT Railways manage this? This will
34 be determined through the study.

35 Want to work with communities to provide more reliable faster transportation

36 Consultant draft idea for corridor and adjacent land uses.

37 Q-Was the Montpelier St Albans commuter rail study utilized? Positive train control, ADA
38 compliance add to costs. Cars competition for train usage.

39 Partners for this project - Barre city, Berlin, Montpelier, VTrans, VT Rail systems, VT state
40 senator, VT state representative, Net Zero VT, federal delegation.

41 Project objectives- provide info to state and local policy makers, business leaders, rail
42 operators.

43 Continued Project Objectives: Assess infrastructure needs. Asses value capture opportunities

1 Identify barriers in zoning land use and other regulatory documents. Conduct education
2 outreach public engagement.
3 9 tasks with project total of \$858,000, majority of funding going to infrastructure feasibility
4 studies. Would be 3 year fed grant with no match requirement, grant is focused on
5 implementation, planning is eligible activity.
6 Q-Are there other funding sources this project can use? Yes it's possible to break down whole
7 project into tasks and work on separately with separate funding.
8 Q-Why did TAC not see this before application was sent? CVRPC director approved sending and
9 municipalities have already been involved. Would TAC like to see grant applications like this
10 prior to submitting?
11 How project will be executed if funded- CVRPC will act as project lead, study committee,
12 stakeholder group, consultant to work with CVRPC and study committee, CVRPC would send
13 out an RFP for consultant.
14 Comment: TAC is skeptical about this grant, request that CVRPC discuss TAC role in grant
15 applications related to transportation, TAC has been circumvented. What is the role of TAC?
16 Comment: Missed opportunity for TAC to advise so application can be more robust. Important
17 for TAC to be involved especially when municipalities are being asked to be involved.
18 Idea started with cities of Montpelier and Barre, the cities then invited CVRPC and asked if
19 CVRPC would be applicant for the grant.
20 Representative from Berlin did not know about this project.
21 Q- If any town wants to work with each other and CVRPC why must it go to TAC?
22 Comment: Then what is purpose of TAC? Provide advice on transportation in region. Maintain
23 role within region and being involved helps stay motivated, TAC support strengthens any
24 application.
25 Debates to be had about rail travel, with recent flops in rail investment in other regions. Rail is
26 challenging at the local level.
27 Q- Why would town come to TAC with a project knowing they would not support it?
28 All levels of involvement are skeptical. CVRPC did not intend on circumventing TAC,
29 representative from Berlin feels it was circumvented.
30 Next steps, grant notification in November.
31 If this is approved, one of the main considerations for the study should be to come to TAC
32 meetings several times to solicit input.
33 Comment: In years past a trolley ran between Montpelier and Barre, now cars are so widely
34 used that rail must compete, trying to get people out of their cars.
35 Comment: Smallest commuter rail is in Nashville with a population over 1 million, with a small
36 population and bus cars to compete with is it viable? It will be costly to retrofit stations to be
37 compliant.
38 Q-How many uncontrolled crossings between Montpelier and Barre?
39
40 **Marshfield RAMP updates and request for additional safety measures:**
41 Applied for RAMP grants to VT council of rural development, received grant in December and
42 meetings started in March.
43 Route 2 is being repaved, considering what to ask VTrans for upgrades.

1 Requests include: traffic calming islands in village similar to Danville, converting the
2 intersections of route 215 and route 2 to be a "T" intersection, speed feedback signs to help
3 slow traffic down, more advanced warning of speed reduction leading into village
4 Q-Is TAC willing to support these changes?
5 Q- Is there interest in changing speed limits through the village? This was discussed, speed
6 limits not being followed on 215. Municipality can't regulate speed on state road or federal
7 highway.
8 Earlier notice of transition is need for reduced speed entering village.
9 Q-What is safety improvement program VTrans has, can it be paired with RAMP? Safety
10 highway corridors not taking new locations not funding new signs trying to get through their
11 own backlog. Safety audit review identified same concerns brought by Marshfield about speed
12 safety, speed change is abrupt on creamery st
13 Q-How many state crosswalks in village? No crosswalks at all, there are only sidewalks
14 Comment: Robust pedestrian infrastructure such as crosswalks can help driver alertness
15 through the village.
16 Comment: Town facilities like town clerk, library, and post office have no nearby crosswalks.
17 VTrans won't take responsibility to update pedestrian infrastructure through this project. Town
18 hopes that VTrans will consider these fixes as they work on route 2, focusing on road, signage,
19 guardrails, not crosswalks. T intersection off route 215 will hopefully be considered.
20 Q-Is there interest in access management in Marshfield, there is no no controlled access by
21 stores? Town has had studies done, barriers to controlled access-one person owns entire block
22 with businesses and the general store has a different owner. Getting them to agree on layout is
23 tricky, but islands could control where vehicles enter and exit. VTrans was supposed to put
24 sidewalk and crosswalk in this area but met with opposition.
25 Alan Quakenbush motions to have letter of support from TAC composed by Dan Currier
26 requesting traffic calming measures, improvement of route 215 and route 2 intersection,
27 pedestrian facilities to be added in conjunction with RAMP project. Motion is seconded by
28 Richard Turner and approved.
29 Q- Did the safety audit look into pedestrian access? Request of audit was to look at speeds on
30 route 2, not pedestrians
31 Q-Why was this not part of a safety audit?
32 Comment: Prudent to add safety audit language to motion, building on safety audit as
33 consultant entity, to be clear with language to VTrans knows what is expected and that towns
34 get what they need.
35 Q-What about complete streets?
36 Dan will incorporate complete streets language and safety audit into letter and share letter for
37 review first.
38 Motion passes as amended.
39
40 **TAC Updates:** flashing lights on construction flagging signs, starting to be used at district level
41 Comment: Hard to find these signs and operators if they are hiding in shade, lights will be
42 helpful.
43
44

1 **TAC Member Concerns**

2 Space to unload along riverbank used to be Plainfield hardware now requires tractor trailer
3 deliveries now green space with 25 degree slope down, don't know how water will flow off
4 intersection. With regards to route 2 closure, got creative in East Montpelier putting in bridge,
5 rip shred and tear of road with massive crew should be done in weekend, keep at least 1 lane
6 open there are few or no alternative routes for heavier duty vehicles. Sewer and water cross
7 the intersection will be exposed, costly to work around closing route 2. Costly to loose
8 commerce. Will have to be dealt with through project design. Needs of local businesses not
9 being considered with intersection planning. Keep TAC informed

10

11 Retaining wall looks like it's about to collapse past 215 east bound heading toward Montpelier,
12 wall poses safety threat.

13 Started repairs on route 2 Plainfield resurfacing, route 12 and 14 are also poor shape. One
14 instance visitors said they probably won't come back because of roads. Roads in region are in
15 worse shape compared to other parts of state and should be addressed.

16 Fayston was sent plans to replace route 17 regional significance, might consider for agenda on
17 future date to get feedback. Plan review will provide feedback and assessment. Community can
18 provide input during this process too. Unknown what the town's opportunity is to provide input
19 no public hearings. To be brought up at Mad River Planning District meeting.

20 **Set Agenda for Future TAC Meeting**

21 Public transit policy plan - coming back to provide update will have 30 minutes

22 VTrans looking for new process to prioritize projects introduce process with presentation, will
23 replace regional process.

24 **Adjourn:**

25 The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.