VERGENNES PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES (PEL) STUDY

Final Report

April 2025

VERMONT
AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

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Executive Summary

In Spring 2021, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), in partnership with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), initiated a federal Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study in Addison County. The VT 22A corridor in northern Addison County was identified as a focus for a PEL Study because it serves as a primary truck route transporting goods between New York City and Albany to the south and Chittenden County and the Port of Montreal to the north. An estimated 800 trucks daily pass through downtown Vergennes, triggering sustained concerns about quality-of-life impacts.

Building on three previous transportation studies—conducted in 1995, 2002, and 2019—the Vergennes PEL Study set out to address the impact of large trucks traveling VT 22A on downtown Vergennes and its surrounding communities. This Final Report describes the process and the results of the four-year Vergennes PEL Study.

Notable accomplishments of the Study include:

- The selection of three recommended alternatives based on a quantitative evaluation that derived from 1) the study's Purpose and Need statement, 2) feedback provided through extensive stakeholder input, and 3) an evaluation of potential environmental impacts. Two formal study committees were active participants in the study: a Technical Committee composed of internal AOT and FHWA stakeholders and a Policy Committee composed primarily of municipal and external stakeholders. Two of the recommended alternatives are western routes that demonstrate to stakeholders a willingness to consider investing in a new roadway (and a second bridge over Otter Creek, a key issue for locals) to address concerns. The third alternative—the inclusion of an existing state highway, VT 17—reflects a commonly voiced opinion among stakeholders to "improve what we already have."
- Intensive public outreach and engagement brought many diverse voices to the table from across Addison County. Farmers, homeowners, and local housing advocates joined municipal officials and local business owners in a four-year dialogue that took place in living rooms, restaurants, and town offices in all seven communities participating in the Study: Waltham, New Haven, Addison, Weybridge, Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Vergennes. In addition to conventional public meetings and open houses, the PEL Study team held nearly 100 small group and 1:1 meetings. More than 150 local residents attended a final Open House to discuss the results of the Vergennes PEL Study with the PEL Study team. This final gathering reflected the cooperative spirit and idea-sharing that had come to characterize the Study's public process. Additional engagement successes include:

  - Collaboration among municipal officials in the key communities of Vergennes, Panton, and Ferrisburgh to find common ground across a range of issues, such as housing, sewer infrastructure, and disputed boundary lines, as they worked toward consensus on the solution to the transportation issue.
  - Sustained and personalized public engagement transformed a wariness of the state's intentions and skepticism about its understanding of local concerns to an appreciation of the value of partnering with the state to address a long-standing problem.

- The Study confirmed the desire of many local business owners to improve the shopping and dining experience in downtown Vergennes through the advancement of one of the recommended alternatives, especially if a truck alternative were coupled with a marketing initiative to promote downtown Vergennes to passing motorists.
- The Study consolidated and refined previous investments in transportation studies and set the stage for subsequent steps of NEPA, design, and construction once funding is identified. Stakeholders by and large understand the current demands on transportation funding and are aware that moving forward is a complex and time-consuming process.

1. Introduction

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), in cooperation with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has conducted a Planning and Environment Linkages Study (PEL) for the VT Route 22A corridor in the City of Vergennes. The Vergennes PEL Study (Study) was initiated in 2021, with the intent to evaluate transportation alternatives to reduce the impacts of large trucks on VT Route 22A (Route 22A) in downtown Vergennes while also enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality for residents in the city and surrounding towns. AOT and ACRPC were joined by a consultant team led by WSP, Inc. that includes Dubois and King (D&K) and Arnett Muldrow (the Study Team).

This Vergennes PEL Study Report (Report) describes the approach used for the Study and summarizes the conclusions and findings of the study. The Study Team used a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making, known as PEL, to build on previous planning efforts and to inform the process of meeting environmental review requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulatory requirements that may be required for future transportation projects in this corridor. This is a transportation planning document and no specific transportation project(s) have yet been identified for design and construction within the Route 22A study corridor. The Study is not a substitute for the project-level environmental review and documentation required by NEPA. Rather, the Study is a transportation planning product that should accelerate project delivery in the Route 22A corridor by allowing FHWA, as the lead Federal Agency, to use this study to inform the NEPA process for future transportation improvement projects in the Route 22A study corridor to meet the transportation needs of the study area described in this Report.

The Study was completed in a manner consistent with the FHWA PEL process. This includes:

- Public Engagement/Outreach
- Outreach to State and Federal resource agencies
- Documentation consistent with commonly accepted PEL practices so information developed in this study can be used to inform or to be incorporated by reference in future NEPA documents.
- Completion of the PEL questionnaire for submittal to FHWA.

This Report documents preliminary data, analyses, and information from the Study that can be used to inform the future project-specific environmental review and documentation that may be required by NEPA for any projects in the Route 22A study corridor, including the scoping, purpose and need, and objectives for transportation improvement projects, the existing

environmental constraints and existing conditions, and a range of reasonable alternatives. This Report is presented in an easily understandable format to facilitate public review and comments. Technical details and further information regarding the conceptual transportation solutions considered are contained in the attachments.

The Study and this Report have been prepared in anticipation of specific transportation improvement projects that could address the transportation needs of the study area. AOT intends to use this Study to aid in the identification and prioritization of any such future projects. Consistent with the statutory provisions of 23 United States Code (U.S.C.) 168 and 23 U.S.C. 139(f)(4)(E), AOT intends the information, analysis, and findings developed as a part of the Study to be used to inform the environmental review process under NEPA for future transportation projects in the study area. By integrating these considerations and engaging stakeholders and agencies before formally initiating NEPA, AOT expects the Study to better incorporate multiple interests and transportation objectives along the Route 22A study corridor into future efforts, while also reducing the redundancy and the duration of the NEPA phase of the project development process.

1.1 WHAT IS THE VERGENNES PEL STUDY?

The Study is a transportation planning approach that fosters a collaborative and integrated transportation decision-making process. Executed early in the transportation planning process, this approach allows decision-makers to consider environmental, community, and economic goals prior to identifying specific transportation projects in the Route 22A study corridor, so that the information developed in the Study can be carried forward quickly and without duplication into the project development and environmental review processes, and ultimately through design, construction, and maintenance of projects in the Route 22A study corridor. The goal of the Study is to create a seamless decision-making process that minimizes duplication of effort, promotes environmental stewardship, and reduces delay from planning through project implementation.

Specifically, the Study was conducted to identify the transportation needs of the Route 22A study corridor; develop a statement of purpose and objectives to address those needs; identify a potential reasonable range of alternatives for further study during NEPA review that could accomplish the identified purpose and need; and present these planning products in a manner that would allow AOT to identify projects within the Study corridor and would allow the NEPA lead agency for those project(s) to use, adopt, or otherwise incorporate these products into the subsequent NEPA process. Compliance with NEPA is required whenever a federal agency proposes an action, grants a permit, or agrees to fund or authorize any other entity to undertake an action that has the potential to affect environmental resources.

The PEL process was created by FHWA to facilitate a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making that "uses transportation planning decisions and analysis, including purpose and need, identification of preliminary alternatives, and elimination of unreasonable alternatives, to inform NEPA." It identifies all the pertinent stakeholders – planning and environmental agencies, state and local transportation departments, community organizations, etc. – at the start of the Study, enabling cross-agency coordination and fostering robust communication. The PEL process considers the anticipated benefits and negative impacts of a proposed project on the environment, mobility and economy of the community or communities involved. PEL studies are frequently recommended when projects are regionally significant, are expected to be environmentally sensitive, are especially costly, or may be controversial, among other considerations.

By identifying and addressing the likely environmental concerns during the early stage of the planning process, rather than as a discrete phase later, project sponsors like AOT can adopt or incorporate products, analyses, and decisions developed during the PEL Study into NEPA documents required as part of the FHWA funding approval process, thereby moving the project to implementation more quickly than the traditional method allows.

1.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The study team utilized a public involvement process to help gather input from affected municipalities, agencies and stakeholders and provide the opportunity to share valuable information about the transportation needs in the Route 22A study corridor. Details of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP), including meeting and public workshop summaries can be found in Section 6 of this report and Attachment 6, Public Involvement and Agency Coordination.

1.3 COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

The study team consulted with specialized committees/working groups to provide topic-specific input and play a role in guiding the study direction. Committee members included representatives from regional or state agencies and local businesses and organizations. Committees were notified of the availability of study results and were given opportunities to provide comments and consultation at various stages throughout the planning process. The Technical Committee, Policy Committee, and Interagency Coordination efforts are outlined below.

1.3.1 Technical Committee

The Technical Committee consisted of subject matter experts that review and verify the scope of work, methods and assumptions used by the consultants to carry out the study and any resulting recommendations. The Technical Committee's role was to ensure that the Policy

Committee has reliable information on which to base its findings and decisions. Technical Committee members evolved throughout the Study. The current committee list is as follows:

- Matthew Arancio, AOT
- Jeff Ramsey, AOT
- Bruce Martin, AOT
- Fred Kenney, Addison County Economic Development
- Jim Larrow, City of Vergennes
- John Bull, Town of Ferrisburgh
- Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC
- Mike Winslow, ACRPC
- Shannon Haggett, City of Vergennes
- Joel Perrigo, AOT
- Alysha Kane, AOT

1.3.2 Policy Committee

The Policy Committee was charged with endorsing the findings in the PEL and making recommendations on study planning decisions (i.e., Statement of Purpose and Need, Initial Short-list of Alternatives) which would be carried forward into a future environmental review. It supported the Study with extensive knowledge in support of many communities impacted by this Study, while considering recommendations from the Technical Committee in its decision-making process. It consisted of representatives from the seven municipalities potentially affected by the alternatives (Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, New Haven, Vergennes, Waltham, and Weybridge), AOT, and other stakeholders representing the region, environment, and economy. Policy Committee members evolved throughout the Study. The current committee list is as follows:

- Ron Redmond, City of Vergennes
- Matthew Bogaczyk, AOT
- Matthew Arancio, AOT
- Mary Rudd, Town of Panton
- Matt Birong, State Rep. from Vergennes, Ferrisburgh, Waltham, Panton and Addison
- Mike Audy, Town of New Haven
- John Roleau, Town of New Haven
- Renny Perry, Vergennes Partnership
- Phil Summers, Addison County Chamber
- Rhonda Williams, Town of Waltham
- Brent Rakowski, ACRPC TAC
- Jubilee MGill, State Rep. from New Haven, Weybridge and Bridport

1.3.3 Agency Coordination

In addition to the PIP, an Agency Coordination Plan (ACP) (Attachment 6) was prepared to identify likely cooperating and likely participating agencies and the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the study process consistent with 23 U.S.C 139. In anticipation of initiating future NEPA environmental reviews for projects in the Study corridor, the Study Team, in cooperation with FHWA, collaborated with likely cooperating and participating agencies in reviewing and refining the Study purpose and need, preliminary range of alternatives, methodologies for documenting environmental conditions, and assessing impacts. While consensus is not required in the development of impact assessment methodologies, the Study Team, in cooperation with FHWA, considered the views of the agencies with relevant interests before deciding on a particular methodology. Starting in November 2022, the Technical Committee and cooperating and participating agencies elected to have future meetings jointly.

1.4 STUDY PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES

As outlined in FHWA's PEL Fact Sheet, the PEL process "uses transportation planning decisions and analysis, including purpose and need, identification of preliminary alternatives, and elimination of unreasonable alternatives, to inform NEPA." The Study was conducted using a multi-step process in alignment with the FHWA PEL process:

Step 1: Identify Transportation Needs/Develop Statement of Purpose – Based on previous studies as well as extensive public outreach and data collection efforts, the Study Team identified transportation needs for the Route 22A study corridor and developed a statement of purpose and objectives to address those needs

Step 2: Identify a Reasonable Range of Alternatives –The Study Team identified a potential reasonable range of alternatives for further study during NEPA review that could accomplish the stated purpose and objectives for the Route 22A study corridor. Thirteen alternatives were screened during the initial screening resulting in five alternatives that advanced for secondary screening.

Step 3: Conceptual Designs –The Study Team defined the alternatives screened through the initial and secondary screening to a greater level of detail so that the alternatives could be further evaluated during the PEL Study.

Step 4: Develop Land Use Scenarios –The Study Team conducted a land use visioning process that included an organized series of meetings and workshops, and a public survey to develop land use visions that reflect individual or community goals and priorities.

Step 5: Evaluate the Alternatives –The Study Team evaluated five alternatives using more detailed criteria (qualitative and quantitative) to identify recommended alternatives to move forward into NEPA.

Step 6: Finalize PEL Report –The Study Team is issuing this Report based on public and agency comment, cost estimates, identified constraints, and study findings.

1.5 ATTACHMENTS

To provide a detailed record of the information considered and analysis completed during this study, several technical memorandums are included as attachments to the Report. They include:

Attachment 1 (Purpose and Need Technical Memorandum) outlines the purpose and need for the Study. The purpose and need establishes the foundation for the study and supports the alternatives development, refinement, and analysis.

Attachment 2 (Alternatives Development and Screening Technical Memorandum) describes the alternatives development and screening process used to identify a reasonable range of improvements for the Route 22A corridor that address the transportation problems identified in the Purpose and Need.

Attachment 3 (Conceptual Designs Technical Memorandum) defines the alternatives screened through the initial and secondary screening to a greater level of detail so that the alternatives can be further evaluated during the PEL Study.

Attachment 4 (Land Use Visioning Technical Memorandum) describes the land use visioning process used to develop future land use scenarios that support the transportation alternatives.

Attachment 5 (Alternatives Evaluation Technical Memorandum) describes the evaluation of the five alternatives, compared to the No Build Alternative, and identifies the alternatives that will be advanced for further evaluation. Attachment 5 also includes the economic assessment conducted to support the alternatives evaluation.

Attachment 6 (Public Involvement Plan and Agency Coordination) contains documentation of the agency coordination and public involvement efforts which have taken place since Study inception, including the outreach conducted by the study's community liaison.

2. Route 22A Study Corridor

While the focus of the Study is to reduce the impacts of large trucks on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes, a larger study area, as described in Section 2.3 has been defined to encompass the surrounding towns and major U.S./State highways in Addison County.

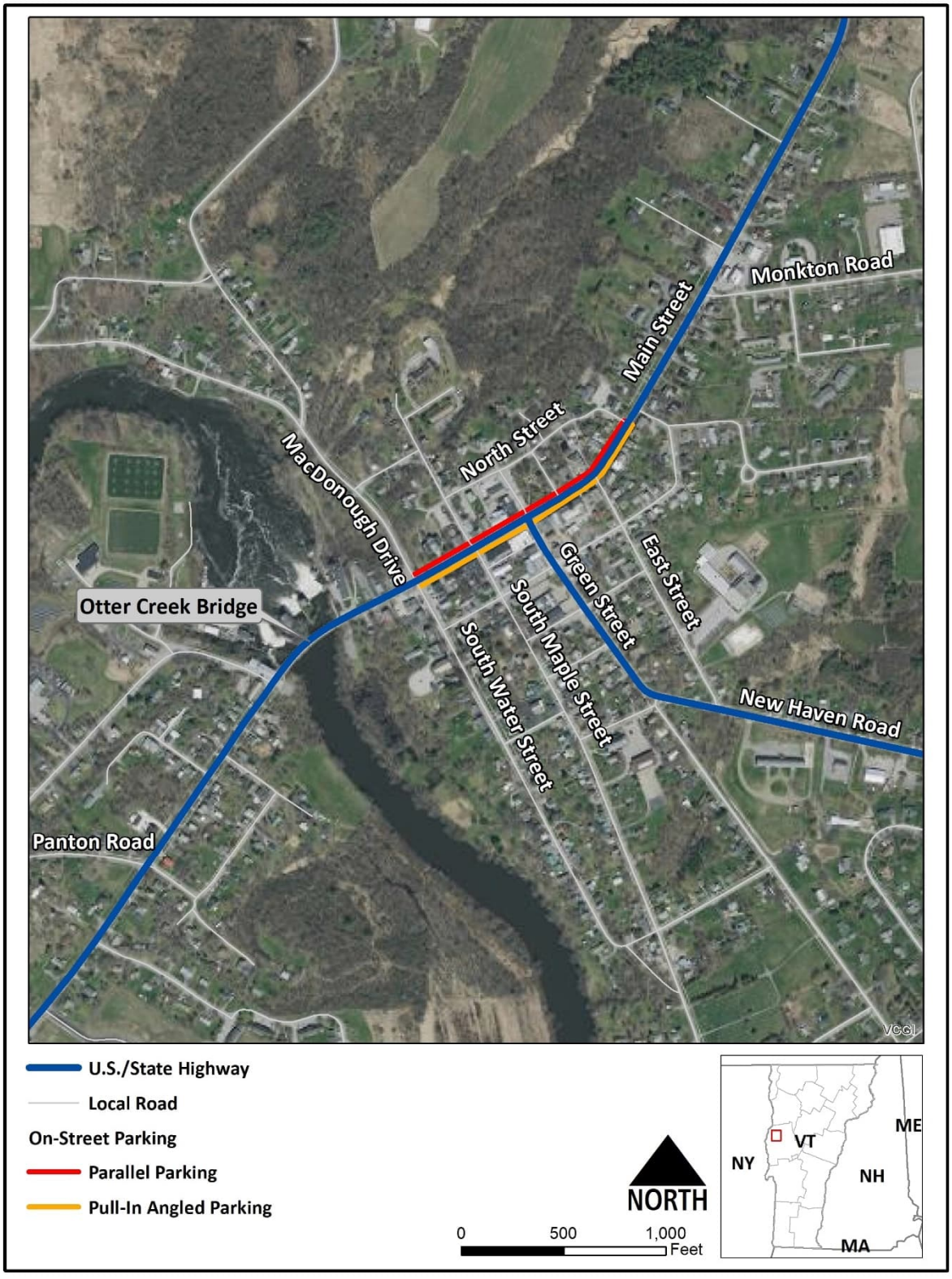
2.1 ROUTE 22A CORRIDOR

Vermont Route 22A (Route 22A) is approximately 45 miles in length and is functionally classified as a minor arterial roadway. It has two-lanes, with widths that vary between 24 and 39 feet beginning at the New York State line in Fair Haven with its northern terminus at the junction of U.S. Route 7 in Ferrisburgh. This corridor is an extension of New York State Route 22A, which runs for approximately 11 miles in Washington County, NY, before reaching Fair Haven. Route 22A provides the most direct route for traffic in western Vermont to points south and west, including for travelers from Burlington and other parts of northwestern Vermont via its junction with U.S. Route 7 in Ferrisburgh and U.S. Business 4 in Fair Haven. Most of the corridor is under the jurisdiction of AOT, with the exception of the approximately 2.2-mile segment within Vergennes – designated as Class 1 Town Highway – is under the City's jurisdiction.

The segment of Route 22A within downtown Vergennes is illustrated in Figure 2-1. The remaining portions of the road, outside Vergennes, are primarily rural in context. Speed limits along Route 22A are closely aligned with the adjacent roadway contexts, with posted speed limits of 25 or 30 miles per hour within the more densely developed Vergennes, and 40 or 50 miles per hour through the rural southern section of the corridor in Addison and Panton. Within Vergennes, there is one primary structure on Route 22A, a 338-foot city-owned bridge over Otter Creek that was reconstructed in 1969. At last inspection in 2024, the bridge received ratings between “good” and “poor” for all categories, and there are no posted weight or size restrictions. A project has been programmed for the bridge, Vergennes BF 017-1(19), and the AOT scoping effort is underway, anticipated to be completed in 2025.

Entering Route 22A from the north (Ferrisburgh), the roadway within Vergennes exhibits a slight grade. However, there is a significant grade (approximately 11%) that occurs at the southern end of downtown, from south of the intersection of Main Street and South Maple Street, extending to the Otter Creek Bridge. There is on-street parking on both sides of the street between Water Street/MacDonough Drive and North Street, with parallel parking adjacent to the southbound travel lane, and pull-in angle parking adjacent to the northbound travel lane.

Figure 2-1 Route 22A in Downtown Vergennes



As a primary south-north corridor within Addison County, Route 22A is currently heavily utilized by truck freight operations. With an estimated 800 trucks daily pass-through downtown Vergennes, Route 22A provides the most direct route for traffic along Vermont's western border, linking northern Vermont with points south and west, including New York. Within downtown Vergennes, large truck[1] traffic is a visible presence and impacts the local community (Figure 2-2). This was confirmed by origin/destination input received as part of a Study survey deployed by the Vermont Truck and Bus Association (VTBA), as summarized in Attachment 1.

Figure 2-2 Truck Traffic in Downtown Vergennes

2.2 CITY OF VERGENNES

Vergennes was Vermont's first incorporated city and is currently the least populous city in the state, with about 2,600 residents in 2023. The city is 2.5 square miles in size and is compact and walkable, with many local destinations connected by its sidewalk network. Vergennes is a tourist destination because of its natural features, including Otter Creek and Vergennes Falls (Figure 2-3), as well as its downtown commercial core of architecturally distinct storefronts and numerous independent retailers. Additionally, Vergennes has regionally significant destinations, including the Vergennes Opera House, City Park, and Falls Park. It is one of 23 municipalities enrolled in the Vermont Downtown Program, which helps support community revitalization while preserving the historic character of medium to large-sized historic centers.

[1] For the purpose of this study, a "large truck" is defined as any vehicle with four or more axles, representing FHWA Vehicle Classes 7 through 13. (https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/tmguide/tmg_2013/vehicle-types.cfm)

Route 22A runs through the Vergennes Historic District, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976.

Vergennes has retained much of the architecture and character from its 19th century manufacturing and mercantile history. In recent years, the city has benefited from revitalization within the downtown and former industrial zones. Specifically, the retail and food service sectors have been central to growth in Vergennes.

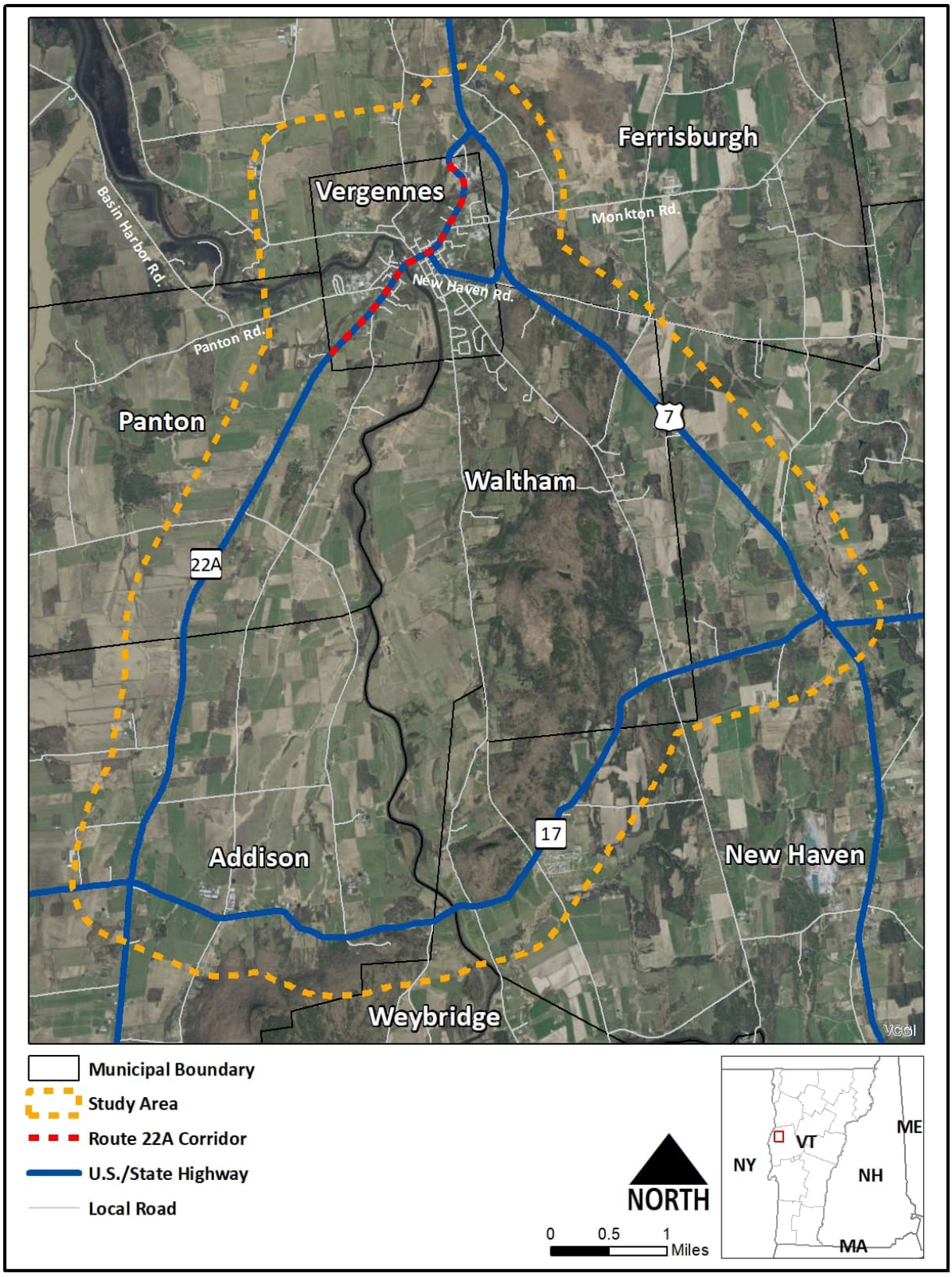
While Vergennes is a year-round destination, the city experiences peak tourism during the summer months because of its location within the Lake Champlain Byway, and its proximity to several state parks and Lake Champlain. Travelers typically visit for outdoor recreational activities as well as seasonal fairs, and events such as Vergennes Day and Vergennes City Band concerts.

Figure 2-3 Vergennes Falls

2.3 STUDY AREA

The focus of the Study is to reduce the impacts of large trucks on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. However, a larger study area that incorporates the neighboring towns of Addison, Ferrisburgh, New Haven, Panton, Waltham, and Weybridge was established to account for the potential impacts to, and opportunities for those towns from future alternative solutions. The study area includes the area bounded by Route 22A from U.S. Route 7 in the town of Ferrisburgh to VT Route 17 (Route 17) in the Town of Addison; Route 17 from Route 22A to U.S. Route 7 in the Town of New Haven; and U.S. Route 7 from its intersection with Route 17 to its intersection with Route 22A, and extending approximately one-half mile beyond each of those roadways (Figure 2-4).

Figure 2-4 Route 22A Corridor and Study Area



Outside Vergennes, Route 22A passes through predominantly agricultural and rural lands (Figure 2-5), and except for Weybridge, they are bisected either by Route 22A or U.S. Route 7. Within the study area, low-density residential and agriculture are the predominant land-use types adjacent to Route 22A, Route 17, and U.S. Route 7.

Figure 2-5 Rural context surrounding Route 22A and Downtown Vergennes

3. Route 22A Corridor History, Vision / Goals, Needs, and Objectives

3.1 ROUTE 22A CORRIDOR HISTORY

The Route 22A corridor has been the subject of several previous studies. The Study has built on these, with a reinvigorated focus on inclusive and visible outreach and greater emphasis on understanding existing and future land uses. This section summaries the previous studies conducted for Route 22A.

3.1.1 Vergennes Route 22A Bypass Preliminary Design Report (1995)

Initiated by the ACRPC, the 1995 *Vergennes Route 22A Bypass Preliminary Design Report*[2] reviewed feasible options for a bypass around downtown Vergennes. The study followed previously completed efforts that recommended consideration of a bypass including 1) the *Route 7 Corridor Transportation Study* (1994), 2) the *Addison County Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan* (1994), and 3) a 1989 survey of Vergennes voters, during which 89% of respondents supported the idea of a bypass. The study identified three potential corridors for a proposed bypass:

- Corridor A: 4.6-to-5.4-mile corridor extending through Panton and Ferrisburgh
- Corridor B: 2.9-mile corridor within Panton and Vergennes (or, alternatively, only Vergennes)
- Corridor C: 2.4-mile corridor extending through Panton, Waltham, and Vergennes

Corridor B was selected as the preferred alternative and several options for conceptual alignments along this corridor were investigated. Each of the three options (illustrated in Figure 3-1) included identical alignments until their intersection with MacDonough Drive, beginning at Route 22A at the Vergennes city line west to Comfort Hill Road, ultimately turning south, intersecting with MacDonough Drive. From here the options differed:

- Option A: South to Otter Creek with a proposed new crossing, south through a portion of the existing Otter Creek Mobile Home Park and other private property, following an existing drainage basin to Panton Road, ultimately continuing south where it would reconnect with Route 22A in Panton, just southwest of the Vergennes municipal boundary.
- Option B: The proposed route is similar to Option A, but would divert west, south of the new Otter Creek crossing.

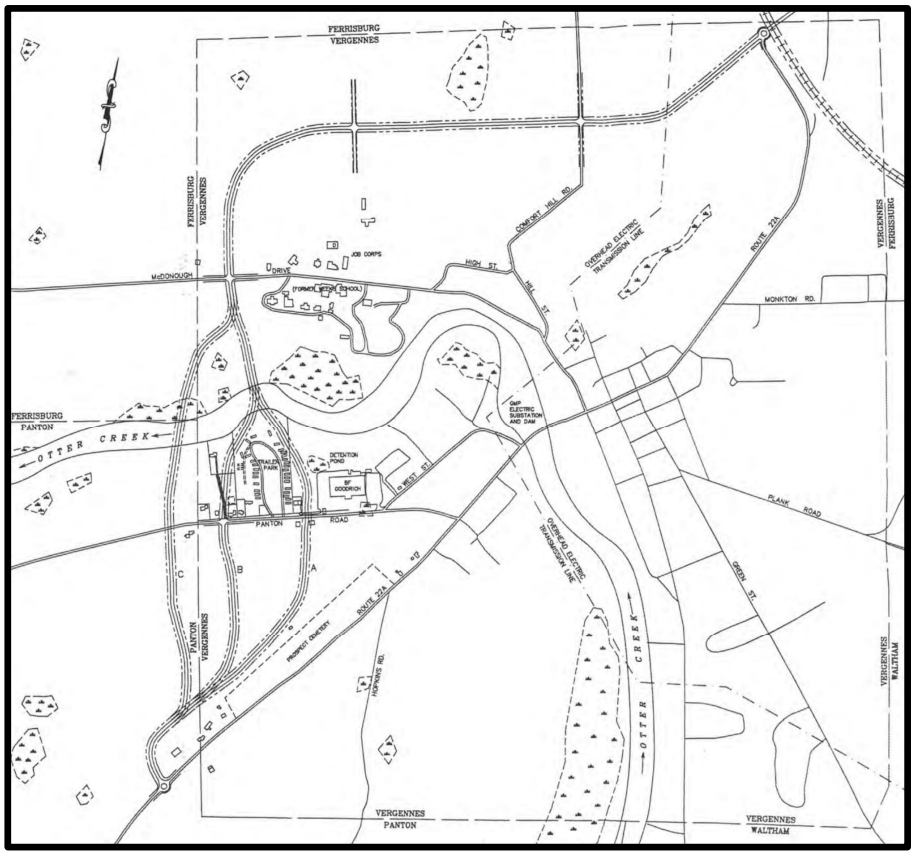
[2] Vergennes Route 22A Bypass, Preliminary Design Report (1995): https://vergennespel.com/media/phwk50ya/vergennes_22a_-bypass-1995.pdf

- Option C: This proposed route is further west than Options A and B, just south of the MacDonough Drive intersection, crossing Otter Creek in Panton, and continuing south, allowing the design to take advantage of open space in the area.

The study recommended that roundabouts be utilized at both the northern and southern termini of the bypass at the connection to Route 22A. However, a preferred option for Corridor B was not determined as part of this study.

The study also investigated the potential for associated improvements with the construction of a bypass, highlighting several development scenarios that could occur, including scenarios that included rural residential, higher density residential, recreational, industrial, or mixed-use opportunities.

Figure 3-1 Corridor B Options, 1995 Bypass Study



3.1.2 Greater Vergennes Traffic Impact Feasibility Study (2002)

Following the completion of the 1995 Preliminary Design Report, which analyzed potential alternatives for a bypass to divert truck traffic around downtown Vergennes, public feedback differed greatly between residents of Vergennes and the surrounding communities. While most residents in Vergennes supported the development of a bypass, residents in surrounding

communities voiced concerns that any bypass would have negative effects on the quality of life in their communities. As such, the ACRPC initiated a series of public workshops to determine major issues, concerns, and feasible alternatives, the results of which were summarized as the 2002 Feasibility Study.[3]

Community concerns related to the bypass were centered on several elements, including the design, impact, and cost of the bypass, truck traffic, environmental concerns, land uses (illustrated in Figure 3-2), economic issues, safety, or access and safety impacts for cyclists or pedestrians. ACRPC considered several methods that, applied individually or in combination, could address community concerns. The four designated solution areas discussed at the public meetings included:

- Bypass route around Vergennes
- Alternative routes for truck traffic
- Alternative transportation systems (Intelligent Transportation Systems, enforcement, and traffic calming)
- Improvements to downtown Vergennes

Ultimately, the study recommended removal of truck traffic through downtown Vergennes, with mandatory compliance by all truck drivers. It indicated that Corridor B remained the preferred alignment, as designated in the previous study, with modifications – particularly regarding bridge location – to be considered, as well as an emphasis on Route 17 improvements as an appropriate alternative.

[3] Greater Vergennes Traffic Impact Feasibility Study (2002): https://acrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/VERG_TrafficImpact_200207.pdf

Figure 3-2 Land Use Review, 2002 Study

3.1.3 Route 22A Truck Route Study (2019)

The 2019 *Route 22A Truck Route Study*[4], led by ACPRC in partnership with AOT, was initiated in response to renewed interest in addressing truck traffic in Downtown Vergennes. A major outcome of this effort was the development of a purpose and need statement, which ultimately serves as the starting point for the Vergennes PEL Study.

2019 Purpose and Need Statement

Enhance the economic vitality and quality of life in downtown Vergennes by reducing the noise, vibration, fume, and dust impacts of truck traffic while:

- *Maintaining a high level of service for the movement of freight in the region*
- *Minimizing and/or mitigating traffic impacts to other transportation corridors*
- *Minimizing property and environmental resource impacts in neighboring communities*
- *Supporting the continued movement of non-truck traffic through downtown Vergennes*
- *Providing a cost-effective use of resources.*

In addition to the development of a purpose and need statement, the study resulted in the evaluation of three alternatives:

- Alternative A – In-Line Alternative (Figure 3-3): Route 22A would remain as the principal north/south truck route, but modifications would be made to provide for safer pedestrian and bicycle movements and smoother truck operations, with fewer vehicle starts and stops.
- Alternative B– New Alignment Alternative/Truck Bypass (Figure 3-4): Construction of a new bypass combined with a restriction on truck traffic through downtown Vergennes. A separate "Induced Development" Alternative B investigated potential traffic impacts associated with development along the bypass.
- Alternative C –Route 17 Truck Route: This alternative would restrict truck trips through Vergennes, directing those vehicles to U.S. Route 7 and Route 17 to travel between Ferrisburgh and Addison.

Alternatives A and B were the preferred alternatives and were deemed worthwhile investments. Alternative C was not recommended because of strong opposition from residents in the affected towns as well as the additional costs and travel time it would impose on trucks.

A portion of Alterntaive A was implemented as part of a 2020 resurfacing project. This included the construction of curb extensions to shorten pedestrian crossings, the installation of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at several marked crosswalks along Route 22A,

[4] VT 22A Truck Route Study (2019): https://acrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2019-05-16_Final22ATruckTrafficStudy.pdf

and pedestrian signal heads at signalized intersections along Route 22A at Green Street and Monkton Road that are compliant with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD).

The 2019*Route 22A Truck Route Study* helped advance potential solutions through data collection to establish existing conditions and conceptual alternatives development, building on the concepts considered in the 1995 *Vergennes Route 22A Bypass Preliminary Design Report*. Two public information meetings were held during the study that built support from the surrounding towns that the impacts of large trucks on Vergennes was a critical regional issue that required mitigation. The Vergennes PEL Study is a logical extension of the 2019 Study, as it broadens oversight of the effort to AOT and includes an expanded outreach program to engage the public, agencies and other stakeholders in the development of alternatives, and outcomes to be advanced in a subsequent NEPA process.

Figure 3-3 Alternative A, 2019 Route 22A Truck Study

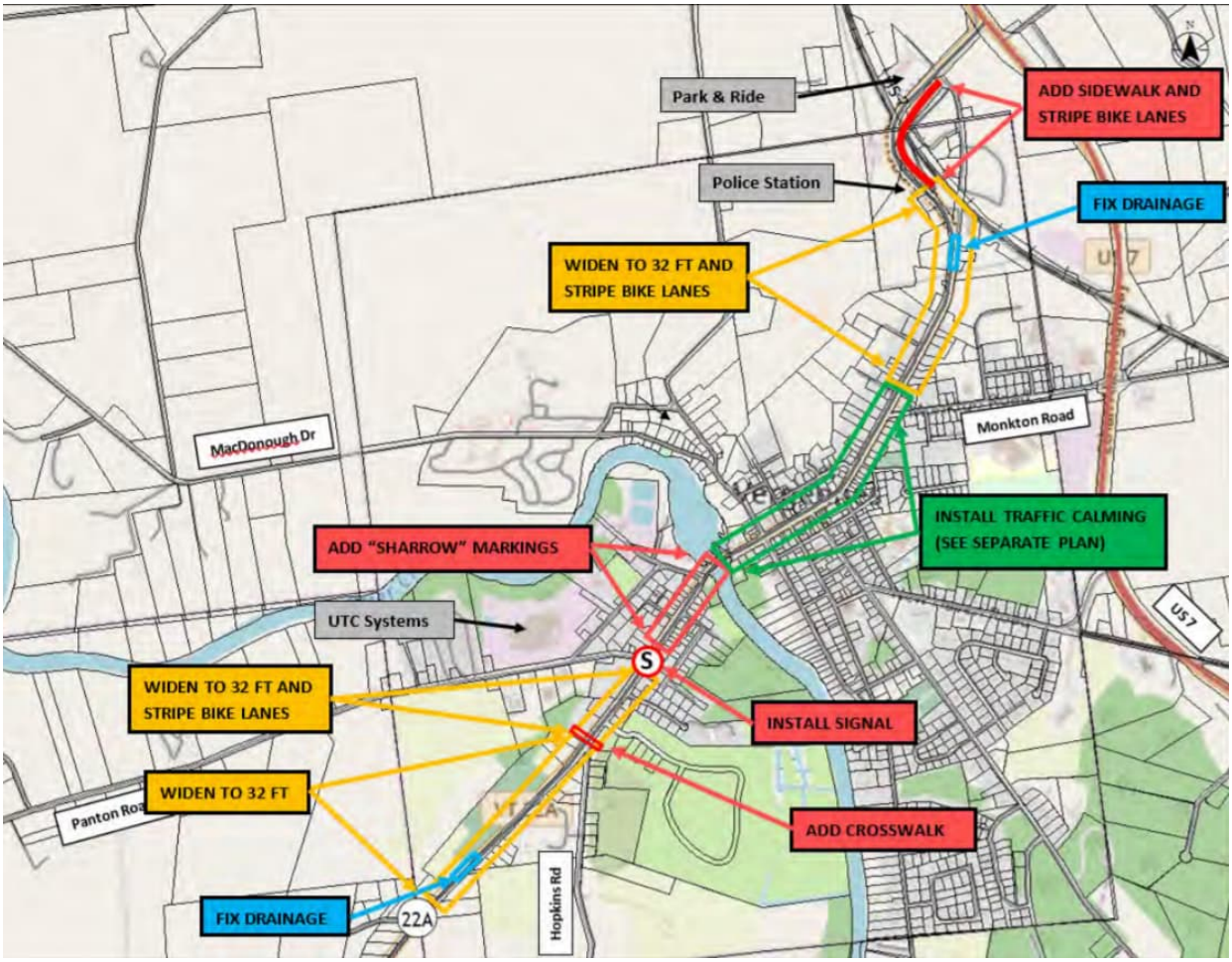
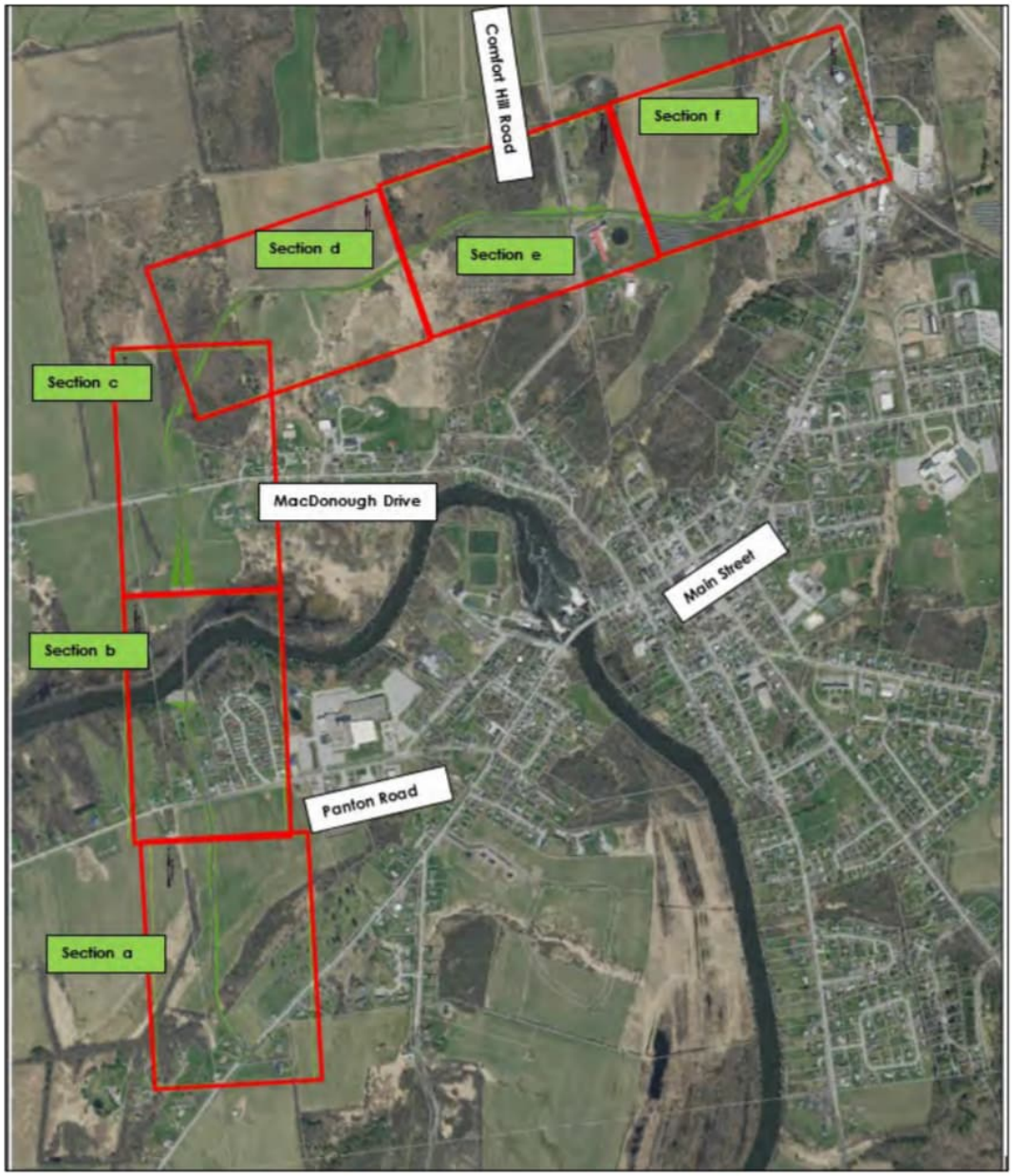


Figure 3-4 Alternative B, 2019 Route 22A Truck Study



3.1.4 Planned Route 22A Improvements and Maintenance

AOT has allocated funds for seven capital improvement projects to address safety and maintenance concerns along Route 22A corridor south of Addison and a town highway bridge replacement within the Class 1 Town highway portion of 22A in downtown Vergennes. As of the publishing of the Report, AOT has completed an accelerated resurfacing project from the north end of the Fair Haven village limits through Orwell to VT Route 73. There is an upcoming reclamation project for the 20-mile section from Orwell at VT Route 73 north to Addison. In addition, roadway widening projects are planned for more than 11 miles of Route 22A from

West Haven to Orwell at the intersection with VT73. The width of the travel lanes – currently 10 feet – will be increased to 11 feet, and the shoulders will be widened from 2 feet to 6 feet. These improvements will provide a 10-foot wider pavement surface (from 24 to 34 feet wide).

3.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

One of the first major steps in the PEL process is to develop a "purpose and need statement," which determines the specific problems to be addressed. The purpose defines the transportation problem to be solved; the need provides evidence that supports the assertion made in the purpose. The purpose and need statement developed for this Study builds upon the 2019 purpose and need and reflects extensive public outreach and data collection efforts described in Attachment 1.

The *purpose* of this Study is to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic – including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust – on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. Transportation solutions that reduce truck-related quality of life impacts should also meet the mobility, safety, and economic vitality needs of Vergennes and the neighboring communities. A summary of the *needs* identified are detailed below.

	Mobility and Access: Maintain opportunities for the movement of freight in the region and minimize and/or mitigate traffic impacts to other transportation corridors.
	Safety, Circulation, and Resilience: Support the continued movement, resilience and safety of travel through downtown Vergennes and in the neighboring communities.
	Quality of Life: Improve the quality of life and minimize negative property and environmental resource impacts in downtown Vergennes and neighboring communities.
	Economic Vitality: Promote economic vitality of downtown Vergennes, goods movement in Vergennes and neighboring communities, and support rural economy.
	Land Use: Support local and regional land use plans and policies and state land use goals.

4. Alternatives

This section provides a summary description of the transportation alternatives developed by the study and the screening process applied to identify a range of reasonable alternatives that can be advanced for further study under the NEPA review initiated for future projects. Further discussion and more detailed descriptions of the alternatives, screening process, and range of reasonable alternatives are provided in Attachment 2, Attachment 3, and Attachment 5.

The screening and evaluation of alternatives included the following steps:

- Development of a long list of alternatives
- Development of screening criteria based on the study purpose and need
- Initial screening of alternatives, based on screening criteria
- Secondary screening of alternatives using geographic information systems (GIS) data
- Elimination of alternatives not advanced for further study
- Detailed evaluation of alternatives

4.1 LONG LIST OF ALTERNATIVES

Following the development of the Purpose and Need statement, the study team developed a long list of alternatives that contains a comprehensive range of possible solutions to the issues in the study corridor identified in the Purpose and Need and the study goals. The long list of alternatives includes those proposed in previous studies (1995, 2002, 2019), alternatives identified by the study team, and community and stakeholder proposals received during public meetings and stakeholder interviews held as part of this Study. A total of 12 alternatives were identified as possible solutions to reduce the impact of large truck traffic on Route 22A and within downtown Vergennes. The initial long list of alternatives was introduced to the public in spring 2022 to promote discussion and to gather community input to support the alternatives screening. An additional alternative was identified based on input received during these public outreach sessions.

The long list of alternatives includes alternatives that use existing roads (including Route 22A), alternatives that include the construction of new roadways, and those that focus on improvements to other freight modes. In addition, a No Build Alternative is carried forward as a baseline for comparison to the alternatives evaluated during the Study. A summary of each of the long list of alternatives is included below.

Existing Road Alternatives

- Systemwide Alternative: The Systemwide Alternative would restrict truck trips along Route 22A through Downtown Vergennes, utilizing the existing roadway network to support the movement of trucks throughout the region.
- Route 17/Route 7 Alternative: This alternative is a more focused version of the Systemwide Alternative, restricting truck trips along Route 22A, shifting truck trips to Route 17 and US-7 in both directions,

Route 22A Alternatives

- Route 22A Corridor Improvements: This alternative would incorporate roadway improvements, along Route 22A, including roadway reconstruction or widening, bicycle or pedestrian improvements, traffic calming, traffic signal upgrades, or other infrastructure improvements aimed at improving the safety and functionality of the roadway for all expected users.
- Route 17 Northbound/Route 22A Southbound (Purple Route): This alternative would shift northbound through-truck traffic currently using Route 22A to Route 17 and U.S. Route 7, maintaining southbound truck trips on Route 22A through Vergennes.

New Road Alternatives

- Panton-Ferrisburgh West Routing 1 (Red Route): This alternative connects Route 22A approximately one-mile south of the Vergennes-Panton municipal boundary with Route 7 in the vicinity of Little Chicago Road in Ferrisburgh. This alternative would include a new crossing of Otter Creek and may use a portion of existing roadways, including Walker Road and Little Chicago Road, each of which would require significant improvements to support additional traffic.
- Vergennes West Routing 2 (Turquoise Route): This alternative connects Vermont Route 22A near the Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary with Vermont Route 22A near the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh municipal boundary. This alternative would include a new crossing of Otter Creek and has the potential to impact the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park and Prospect Cemetery.
- Vergennes West Routing 3 (Pink Route): This alternative connects Vermont Route 22A near the Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary with Vermont Route 22A near the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh municipal boundary. This alternative would include a new crossing of Otter Creek and would likely travel primarily in Vergennes. However, further east, the new roadway has the potential to impact the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park and Prospect Cemetery.
- Vergennes West Routing 4 (Blue Route): This alternative connects Vermont Route 22A near the Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary with Vermont Route

22A near the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh municipal boundary. This alternative would include a new crossing of Otter Creek. The southern segment of the new roadway would travel through the town of Panton, further west of the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park and Prospect Cemetery than the Pink Route or Turquoise Route.

- Panton Vergennes Waltham Southeast Routing (Green Route): This alternative would connect U.S. Route 7 in the vicinity of New Haven Road in Waltham or Ferrisburgh with Route 22A approximately one mile south of the Vergennes/Panton municipal boundary. The new roadway would intersect with several existing roadways, including Green Street and Maple Street in Waltham and Hopkins Road in Panton. This alternative would include a new crossing of Otter Creek at the Panton/Waltham town line.
- Vergennes Main Street Parallel Route (Orange Route): This alternative includes the construction of a new roadway west of Route 22A, in closer proximity to downtown, linking Route 22A in the vicinity of the Ferrisburgh/Vergennes municipal boundary with MacDonough Drive west of Route 22A, connecting with Route 22A north of the Otter Creek Bridge.

Other Freight Modes

- Rail Mode Alternative: This alternative would promote the shift of some cargo currently moving by truck to rail through an understanding of what types of cargo may move more efficiently by rail, infrastructure improvements, including new rail lines, sidings, upgrades of existing rail lines for weight (286k) or clearance (Plate F), or financial incentives.
- Water Mode Alternative: This alternative would promote the shift of some cargo currently moving by truck to barge or ship, via Lake Champlain, the Champlain Canal, and Hudson River (M-87 Marine Highway).
- Smart Freight Solutions: This alternative would utilize technology enabled infrastructure and vehicles to support or expand the transition to Zero Emissions Vehicles and/or connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) trucks. While this was screened as an independent alternative, smart freight solutions could be incorporated into the other alternatives to support freight operations.

No Build Alternative

- No Build Alternative: The No Build Alternative would advance only currently planned improvements included in the fiscally constrained AOT Transportation Capital Budget and routine maintenance. While the No Build does not meet the

Purpose and Need, it is carried forward as a baseline for comparison to the alternative evaluated during the PEL Study.

4.2 INITIAL SCREENING

The alternatives were screened using a rating system shown in Table 4-1. Each of the criteria were scored using one of five ratings denoting: Substantial Positive Effect (+ +), Some Positive Effect (+), Neutral(o), Some Negative Effect (-), and Substantial Negative Effect (- -). The ratings for each criterion were compiled to determine a total rating for each alternative. This total rating was used to determine which alternatives should be advanced for further study.

Table 4-1 Rating

RATING	MEANING
+ +	Substantial Positive Effect
+	Some Positive Effect
o	No Effect or Neutral
-	Some Negative Effect
- -	Substantial Negative Effect

Table 4-2 presents the screening for all 13 alternatives. Figures for each of these alternatives are provided in Attachment 2. The Water Mode Options scored the lowest, followed by the Route 22A Corridor Improvements. The alternatives that received the highest total score include the Red Route (Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4)) with a total score of 7, followed by the Purple Route (Route 17 Northbound/Route 22A Southbound) and Orange Route (Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route) – each with a score of 6. Based on the initial screening, seven alternatives were dismissed for not meeting the purpose and need. The No Build Alternatives also does not meet the Purpose and Need, but is carried forward as a baseline for comparison, per NEPA.

Table 4-2 Screening Matrix

Screening Criteria	Systemwide	Route 17 / Route 7	Route 22A Corridor Improvements	Purple Route – Route 17 Northbound/Route 22A Southbound	Red Route – Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1)	Turquoise Route – Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 2)	Pink Route – Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3)	Blue Route – Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4)	Green Route – Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing)	Orange Route – Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route	Rail Mode Options	Water Mode Options	Smart Freight Solutions	No Build
Quality of Life														
Reduces truck noise, dust, and emissions in downtown Vergennes	++	++	--	+	++	++	++	++	++	+	-	-	+	--
Avoids potential impacts to natural and water resources	0	0	0	+	--	--	--	--	-	0	0	--	+	0
Maintains and/or supports community character of downtown Vergennes	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	+	-	+	0	0	-
Equity														
Balances distribution of transportation resource benefits	0	-	0	+	-	0	0	0	-	++	+	+	+	0
Avoids impacts to surrounding communities, including disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities	-	--	0	0	--	--	--	0	-	0	0	0	0	0
Mobility and Access														
Maintains freight mobility throughout the region	--	-	-	0	0	+	+	+	-	+	-	--	0	0

Improves access to destinations in downtown Vergennes for all modes of transportation	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	--
Economic Vitality														
Promotes economic vitality of Downtown Vergennes	+	0	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	-	-	0	0
Promotes regional economic vitality	+	0	-	0	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0
Safety, Circulation, and Resilience														
Creates redundancies to improve resilience of road network	0	0	0	0	++	++	++	++	++	0	0	0	0	0
Improves motorized circulation through and within the region	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	-
Improves active transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, transit) through and within the region	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improves motorized and non-motorized safety on Vermont Route 22A through downtown Vergennes	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	-
Land Use														
Consistent with existing regional land uses	0	-	0	-	--	--	--	--	--	-	+	-	0	0
Aligns with future and projected regional land uses and statewide goals	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	0	-	0	0

4.3 SECONDARY SCREENING

Following the stakeholder and public outreach activities, a secondary screening was conducted for the alternatives that met the Purpose and Need during the initial screening. The secondary screening consisted of geographic information system desktop level analysis of six of the thirteen alternatives that were carried forward to a secondary screening. GIS data were organized by three themes, detailed below:

 Human considerations	• Residential properties (single and multi-family housing) • Nursing homes, hospitals/medical centers • Government and educational facilities • Historic buildings/structures • Cemeteries • Hazardous sites
 Water resources and threatened and endangered species	• Water resources • River corridors • Significant Class 2 wetlands • Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard areas • Rare, threatened, and endangered species habitats (federal and state)
 Protected lands and agricultural soils	• Prime agricultural soils (local prime, prime, and statewide prime) • Protected land (conserved land, wildlife management area, state, and municipal land)

A buffer of 150 feet was used surrounding existing roadways (300-foot swath) and a buffer of 500 feet was used for new roadway sections (1000-foot swath). The 500-foot buffer (1000-foot swath) was modified when potential impacts were unavoidable.

Based on the secondary screening, five alternatives were recommended to advance to a conceptual level of detail and one alternative (red route) was eliminated for further study. While the red route meets the Purpose and Need, it scored lower during the initial screening. The secondary screening confirmed the findings of the initial screening and added the presence of federal and state threatened and endangered species along most of the route. Figure 4-1 presents the five alternatives, categorized by color. A summary of the screening results is presented in Table 4-3. The screening process included soliciting feedback from local agencies, regional

stakeholders, federal and state agencies, and the public. A variety of outreach methods were used including meetings, attendance at local events, and the deployment of an online survey.

Figure 4-1 Secondary Screening Results

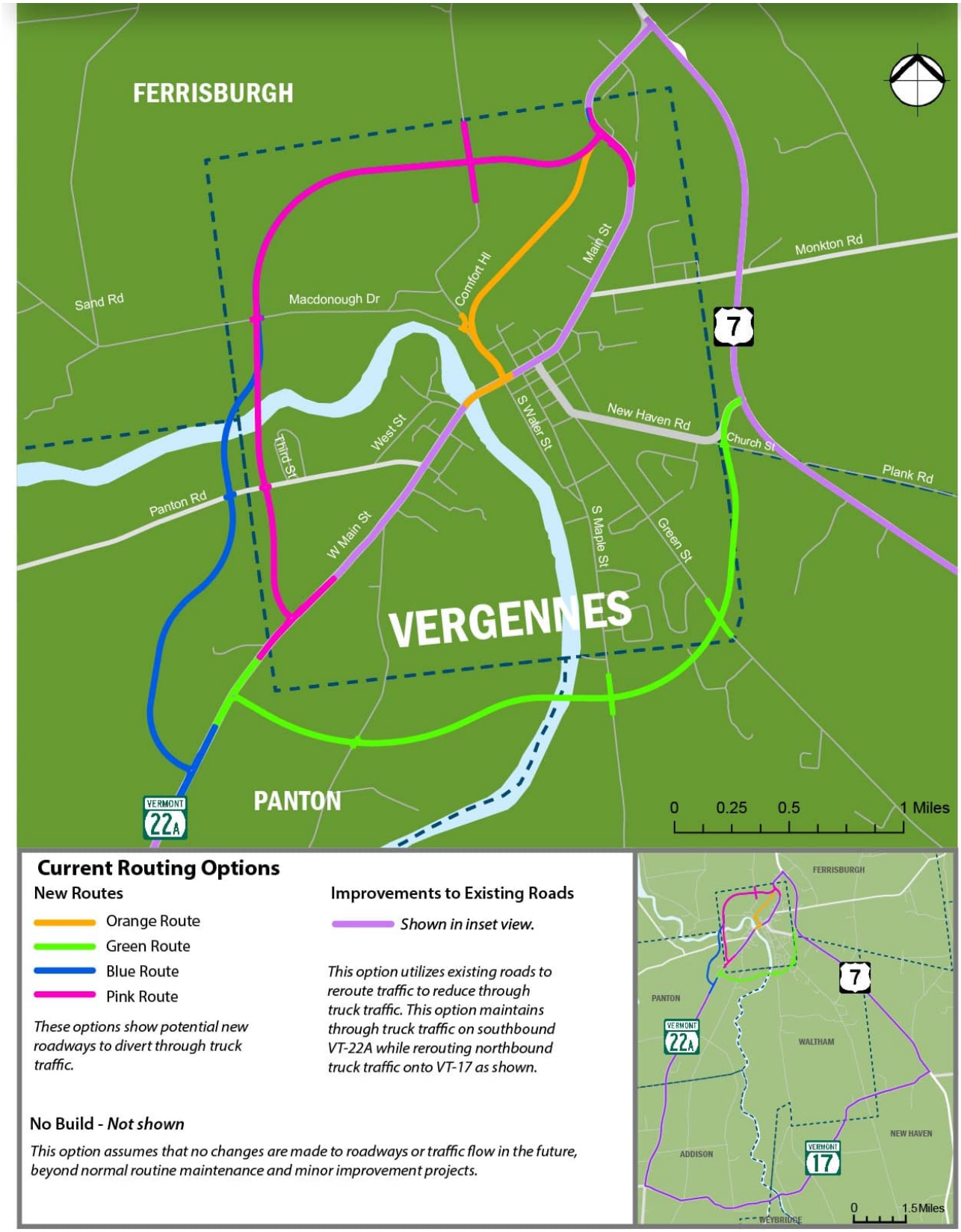


Table 4-3 Secondary Screening Results

ROUTE ALTERNATIVE NAME	MEETS PURPOSE AND NEED	SECONDARY SCREENING RESULTS
Purple – Route 17 Northbound/Route 22A Southbound	Yes	The Route 17 Northbound/Route 22A Southbound alternative (Purple Route) meets the purpose and need and scored high during the initial screening.
Pink – Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3)	Yes	The Vergennes New Roadway West Routing Option 3 (Pink Route) meets the Purpose and Need and scored high during the initial screening. .
Blue– Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4)	Yes	The Vergennes New Roadway West Routing Option 4 (Blue Route) meets the Purpose and Need and scored high during the initial screening. .
Green – Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing)	Yes	The Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) alternative (Green Route) meets the Purpose and Need but scored lower than the Pink, Blue, and Purple Routes during the initial screening. During the secondary screening, potential environmental impacts (particularly to wetlands) were identified. However, a new Otter Creek crossing upstream of the Vergennes Falls may be less challenging than the proposed crossings downstream (Blue, and Pink Routes) due to reduced waterway clearance requirements.
Orange – Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route	Yes	The Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route alternative (Orange Route) meets the purpose and need and scored high during the initial screening. The secondary screening identified extensive property impacts in the vicinity of the MacDonough Drive/Comfort Hill intersection.

4.4 CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS

Following the initial and secondary screenings, conceptual designs were developed for each of the five alternatives, as described in Attachment 3. The conceptual designs provided a footprint to allow for a preliminary evaluation of environmental resource impacts as well as an estimate of potential property acquisitions specific to a particular horizonal and vertical alignment. Table 4-4 presents an overview of the five alternatives including the mileage, design speed, number of intersections, number of river crossings, and municipalities the route alternatives would traverse.

Table 4-4 Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE		MILEAGE	DESIGN SPEED	# OF INTERSECTIONS	# OF STREAM CROSSINGS	MUNICIPALITIES
Pink Alternative		2.3 miles	50 mph	5 (New)	6 (New)	Panton, Vergennes
Blue Alternative		2.5 miles	50 mph	5 (New)	6 (New)	Panton, Vergennes
Green Alternative		2.3 miles	50 mph	6 (New)	10 (New)	Panton, Waltham, Vergennes, Ferrisburgh
Orange Alternative		1 mile	35 – 45 mph	1 (Existing) 2 (New)	2 (New)	Vergennes
Purple Route Alternative	VT Route 17	10.2 miles	45mph	13(Existing)	20 (Existing)	Addison, Weybridge, Waltham, New Haven
	U.S. Route 7	7.5 miles	50mph	10 (Existing)	15 (Existing)	New Haven, Waltham, Ferrisburgh
	VT Route 22A	12.7 miles	50 mph	36 (Existing)	25 (Existing)	Vergennes, Panton, Addison Ferrisburgh

4.5 LAND USE SCENARIOS

An important outcome of the Study is the coordination of reasonable transportation alternatives with local land use planning. Therefore, the land use visioning process included an organized series of meetings, workshops, and a public survey was conducted to develop land use visions that reflect individual or community goals and priorities. The land use visioning process afforded residents, business owners, local institutions, municipal planners, and other stakeholders the opportunity to express ideas about the future of their community and how the new routes could affect the surrounding land uses.

The study team integrated background information, input from the municipal planning commission meetings, land use forecasting, and public input from five land use visioning workshops as well as the 2024 public survey to develop land use scenarios aligned with each of the proposed routes. The land use vision scenarios were shared with the seven Study municipalities during planning commission meetings in March and April 2024 to provide the opportunity to review and discuss planning implications within their community.

Each land use vision scenario depicts some or all of the six land use types explored during the visioning workshops:

- Residential/Housing
- Agricultural/Farmland
- Open Space/Recreation
- Commercial/Retail
- Industrial

- Municipal/Community Center

There is some overlap between these general categories. For example, an area that is currently in Agricultural/Farmland use, or is illustrated as such in these vision scenarios, could also support residential uses, or may include commercial uses that are open to the public such as farm stands or farm stores. Similarly, a Residential/Housing area, such as in downtown Vergennes, may also accommodate non-residential uses such as offices or home-based businesses.

The land use vision scenarios (Figure 4-2 through Figure 4-5) convey a community-guided, high-level image of spatial form and function, should one of the Study routes be built. They are intended for discussion purposes as the illustrative product of a "what if" exercise and do not imply or authorize changes in property ownership or other legal condition. For each route, highlighted areas are shown for planning purposes with a 500-foot setback. In many locations along the potential routes, workshop participants generally preferred that future land uses reflect the status quo. Therefore, many of the land uses illustrated in the land use vision scenarios are consistent with their current use.

Since the conclusion of the Study and the advent of Vermont ACT 181, the State's Regional Planning Commissions are charged with devising uniform future land use maps; the outcomes of this Study's land use scenarios may diverge from the results of the formal ACT 181 mapping process.

Figure 4-2 Orange Route Land Use Scenario

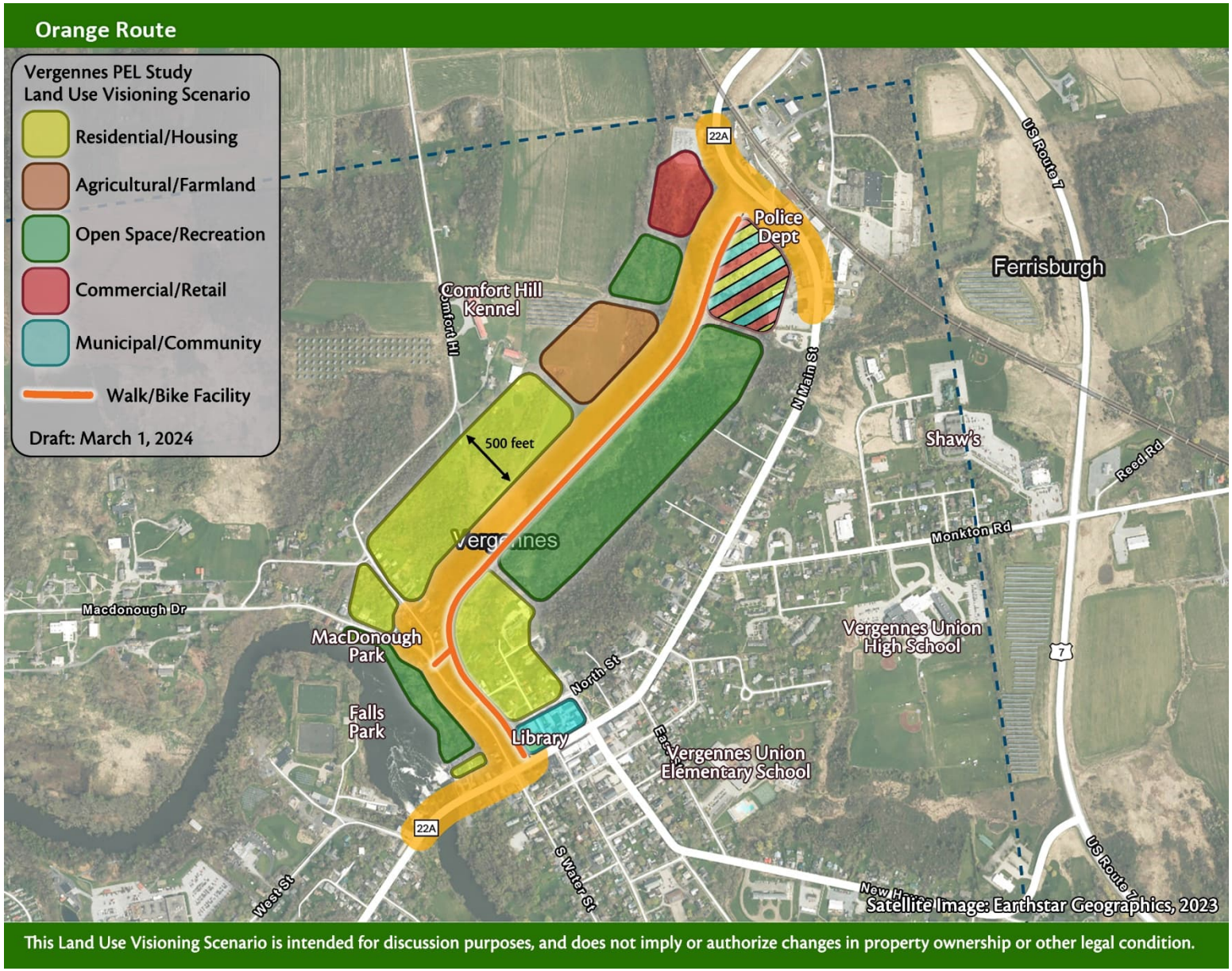


Figure 4-3 Pink and Blue Route Land Use Scenarios

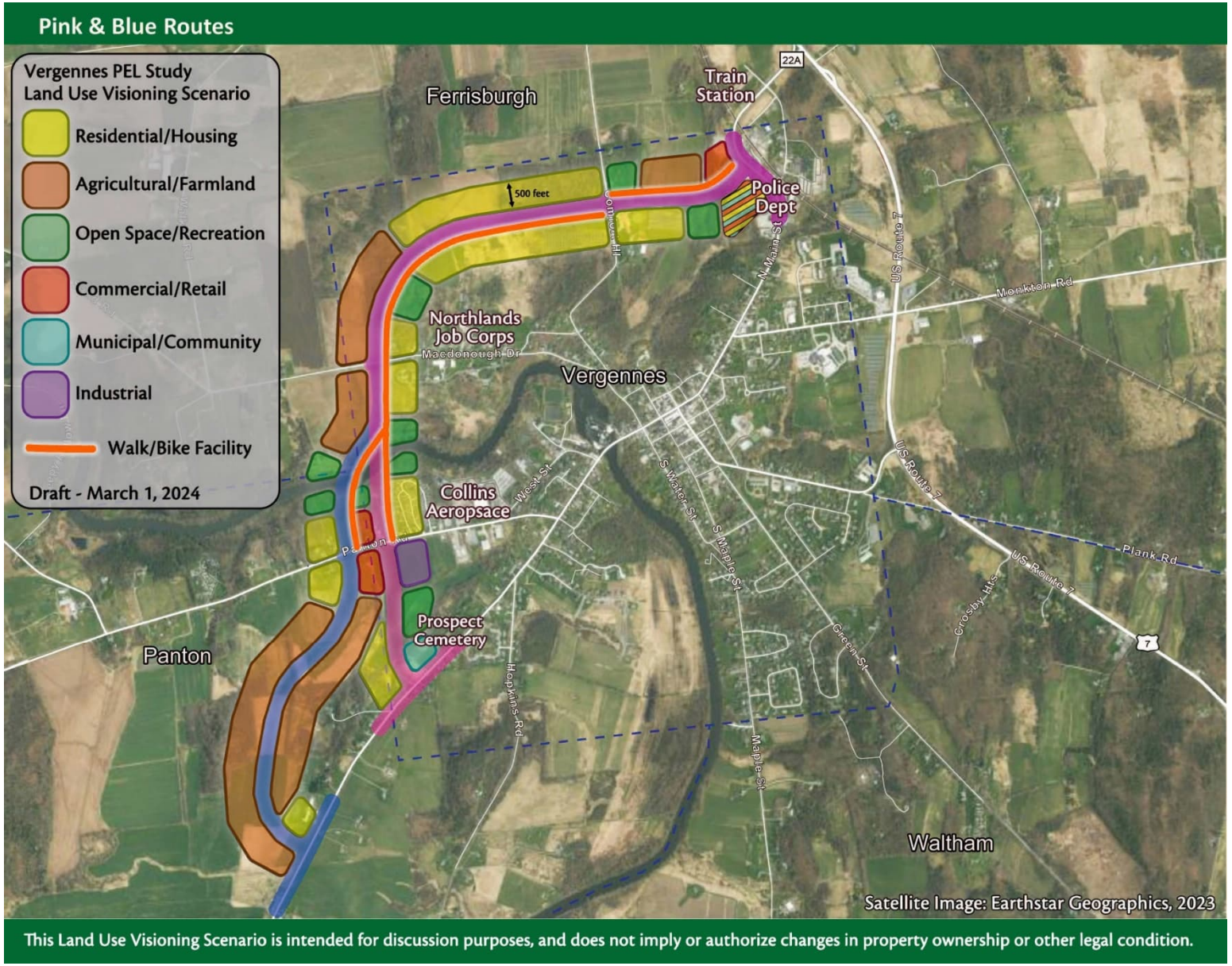


Figure 4-4 Green Route Land Use Scenario

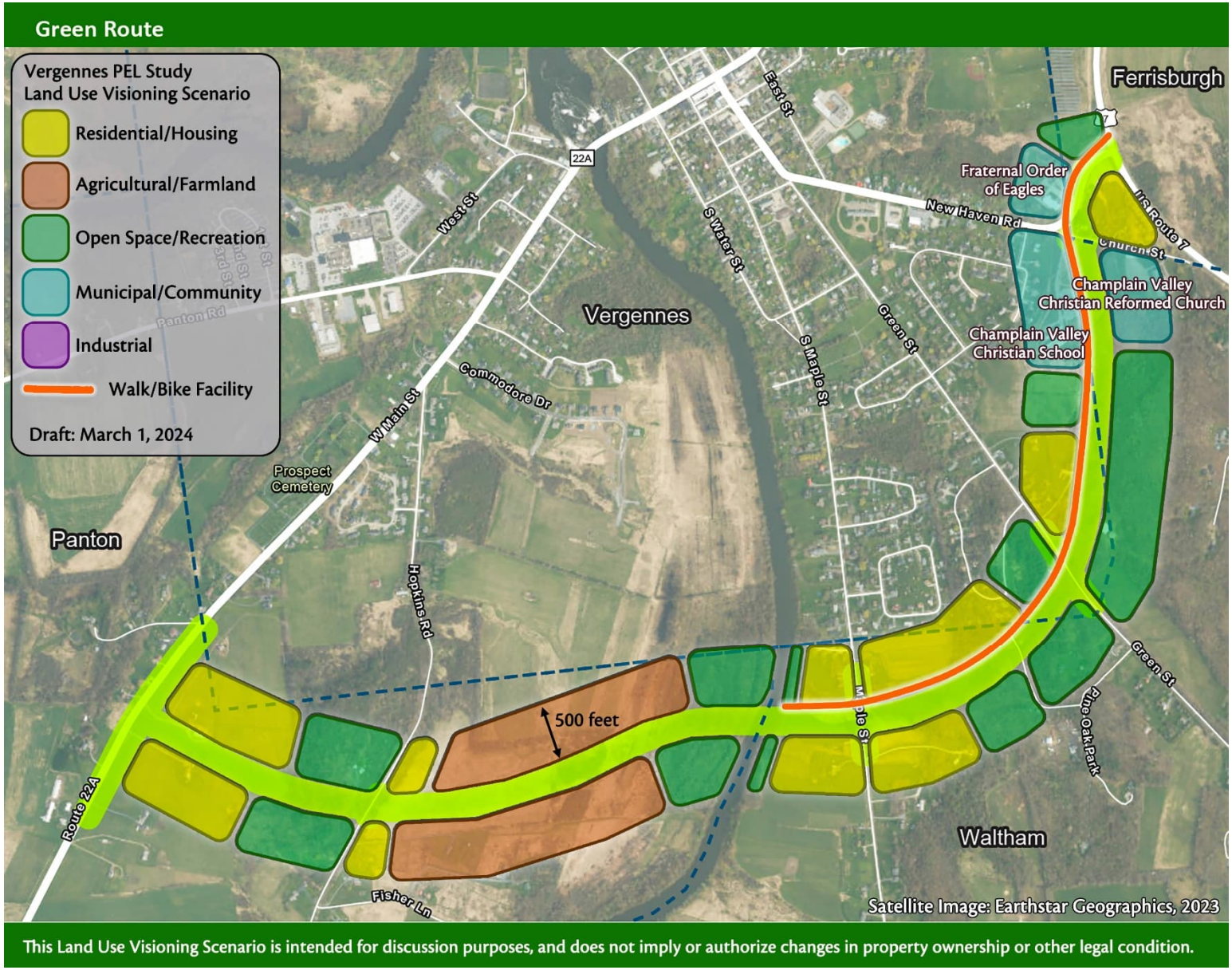
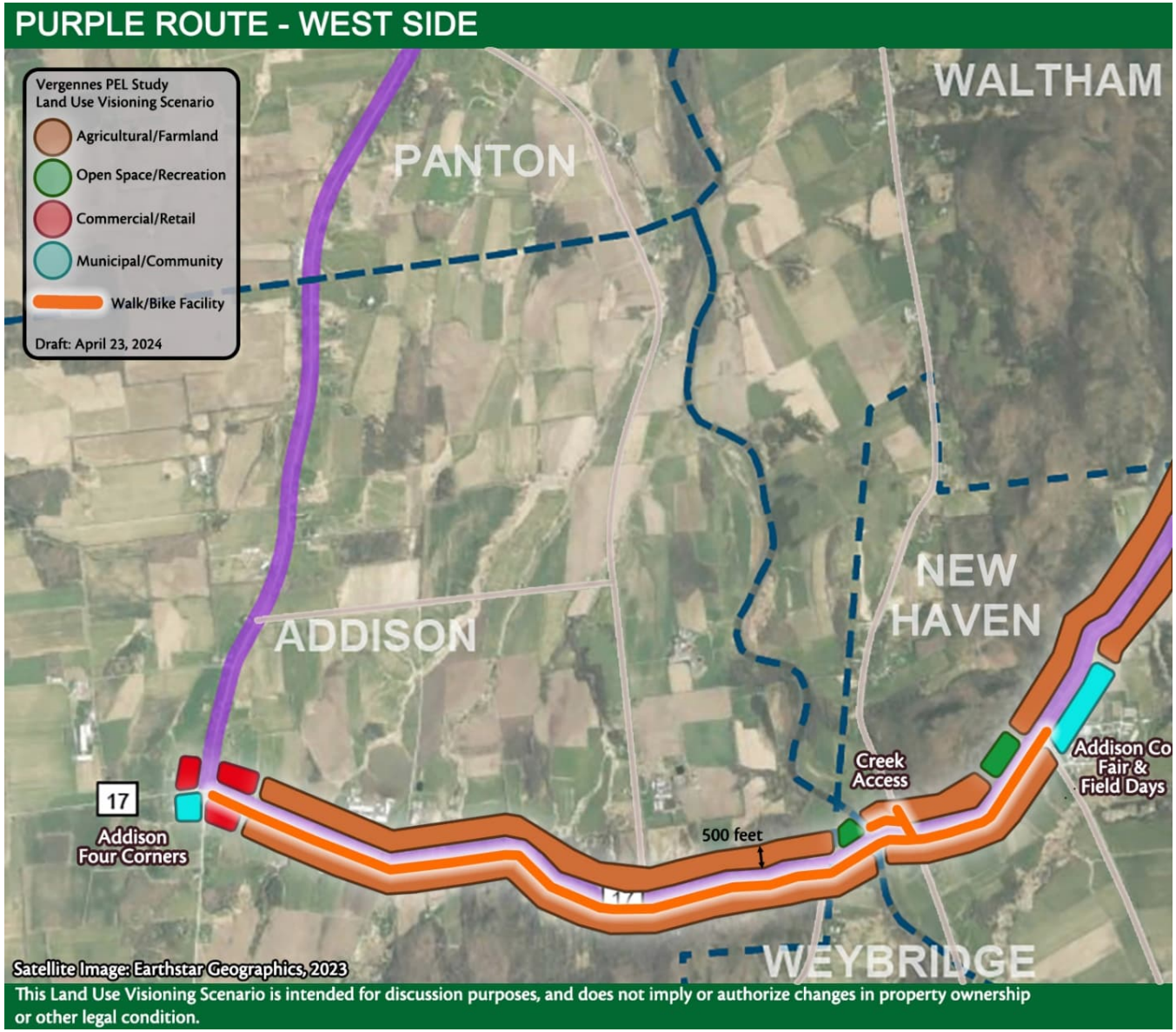
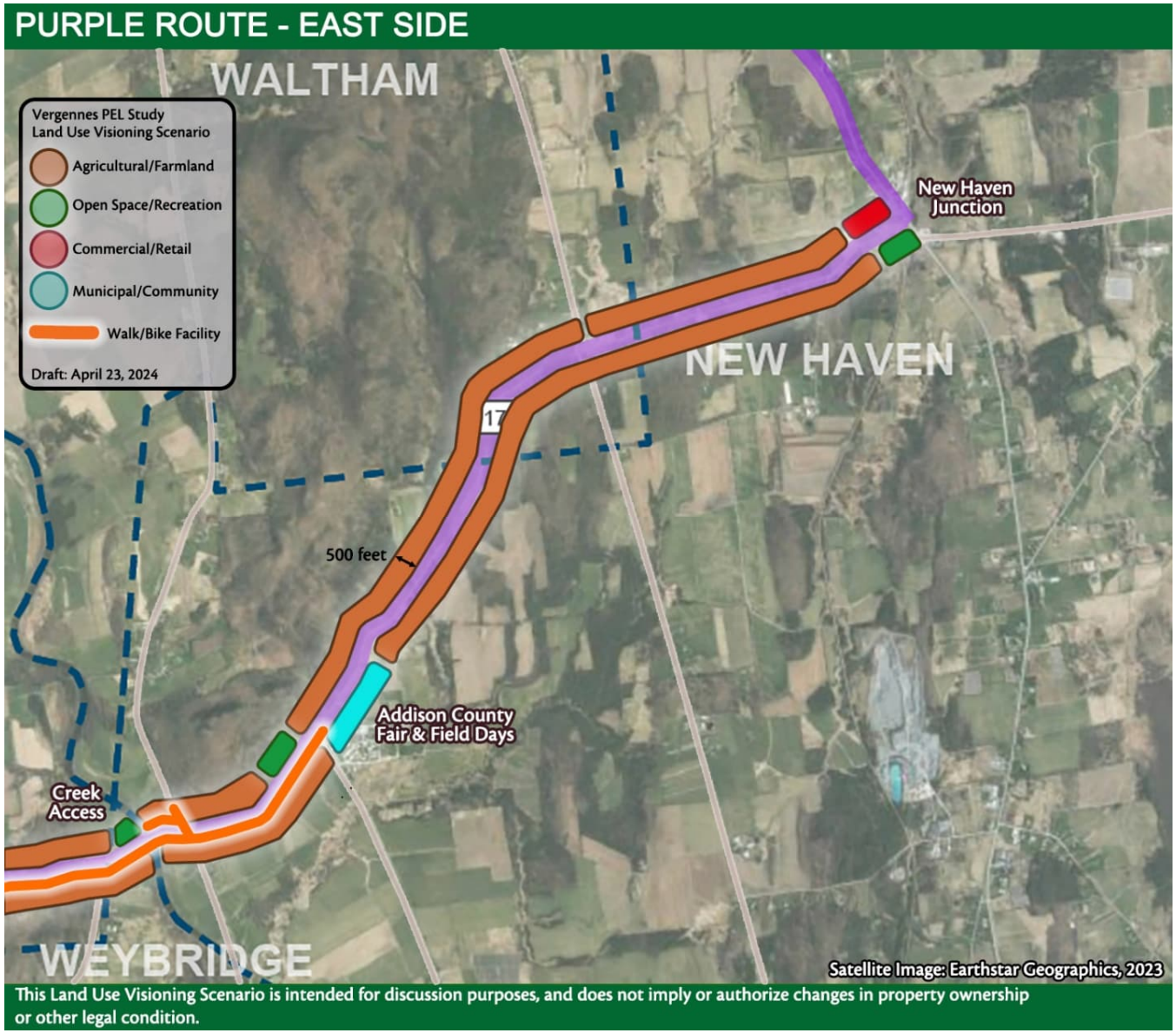


Figure 4-5 Purple Route Land Use Scenario – West and East Segments




PURPLE ROUTE - EAST SIDE
WALTHAM
NEW HAVEN
WEYBRIDGE
Vergennes PEL Study
Land Use Visioning Scenario
Agricultural/Farmland
Open Space/Recreation
Commercial/Retail
Municipal/Community
Walk/Bike Facility
Draft: April 23, 2024
New Haven Junction
17
500 feet
Addison County Fair & Field Days
Creek Access
Satellite Image: Earthstar Geographics, 2023
This Land Use Visioning Scenario is intended for discussion purposes, and does not imply or authorize changes in property ownership or other legal condition.

4.6 ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION

More detailed criteria (qualitative and quantitative) were developed for the evaluation of alternatives. The criteria were divided into categories, including transportation impacts, local and regional issues (including quality of life, economics, and land use), and environmental resources. The criteria are discussed below.

This section presents the evaluation matrix for the route alternatives and the No Build Alternative. Criteria are measured as a benefit (shown in green) or an impact (shown in red). For quantitative measures, a numerical entry (e.g., acreage, number) is provided in the table. For qualitative measures, a "+" or "-" scale is used. A score of zero (0) indicates that there is no tangible result (impact nor benefit) for that measure within that alternative.

← Greatest impact No impact Greatest benefit →

---	--	-	0	+	++	+++

Results and corresponding scoring for each of the criteria are presented in Table 4-5, and the final scores are summarized in Table 4-6.

Table 4-5 Evaluation Matrix

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	SPECIFIC MEASURE	ALTERNATIVES				
			PURPLE	BLUE	PINK	GREEN	ORANGE
TRANSPORTATION PERFORMANCE							
Transportation	Traffic Volume	Truck volumes on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes (AM/PM)	-85/-42	-123/-77	-123/-77	-123/-77	-123/-77 (north of Macdonough Drive)
	Traffic Operations	Change in overall network traffic operations	--	+	+	-	--
	Proposed Route Alternative	Travel times for freight vehicles	---	+	+	-	+
		Travel length in mileage	+5.2	+0.4	+0.4	+0.9	-0.1
	Bicycle and Pedestrian	Potential expansion of regional bicycle network	+	+	+	+	0
		Potential improvement to pedestrian circulation	0	0	0	0	+
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES							
Quality of Life	Noise and Air Quality	Decibel change at receptors along Route 22A in downtown Vergennes	1 dbA	4 dBA	4 dBA	4 dBA	0
		# of new sensitive receptors (residents, schools, churches, hospitals, historic buildings) within 500 feet of proposed route alternative	174	13	42	34	40
	Property Impacts	Partial and full acquisitions (acres)	28	60	65	24	44
		# of estimated full parcel acquisition	0	0	2	3	9
		# of estimated partial parcel acquisition	71	13	10	14	11
Economic Vitality	Property Tax Revenue	Potential to increase property tax revenue for Vergennes and Towns	++	+++	+++	+	++
	Sales Tax and Tourism Revenue	Potential to increase sales tax revenue for Vergennes and Towns and increase tourism visitation for Vergennes	+	++	++	+	+

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	SPECIFIC MEASURE	ALTERNATIVES				
			PURPLE	BLUE	PINK	GREEN	ORANGE
	Job Creation and Commercial Occupancy Rates	Potential to increase and retain jobs and increase commercial occupancy rates in downtown Vergennes and Towns	+	+++	+++	+	++
Land Use	Development Density Infill Versus Sprawl	Ability to foster infill development within Vergennes	+	+++	+++	+	++
	Zoning Changes, Comprehensive Plan, and Land Reclassification	Requires changes to zoning, comprehensive plans, or land classification	--	--	-	--	--
Equity	Environmental Justice	Potential for environmental justice populations within footprint of route alternative	-	--	--	-	--
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES							
Natural and Cultural Resources	Wetlands	Area of impacted Class II wetlands (acres)	4.3	9.3	7.9	9.9	0.8
	Surface Waters	# of new stream crossings	0	3	1	7	3
	Floodplains	Floodplain encroachment (acres)	0.5	3.5	4.4	4.9	0.6
		State River Corridors encroachment (acres)	3.3	4.0	4.9	5.4	1.1
	Vegetative Communities / Wildlife Habitat	# and acreage of significant habitats impacted	1 / 0.27 (1)	1 / 1.89 (13)	1 / 3.21 (22)	3 / 7.80 (19)	1 / 0.79 (2)
	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) Species	# of mapped RTE animal / plant species present within route alternative	3 / 0	15 / 0	15 / 0	7 / 0	4 / 1
		# of mapped uncommon animal / plant species present within route	7 / 2	3 / 2	3 / 2	1 / 0	0 / 0
		Acreage of significant natural communities impacted	0.6	0.6	1	0	0
	Farmlands	Acreage of primary agricultural soils impacted	29	22	26	22	6
	Historic Resources	# of historic resources entirely intersecting with route alternatives	9	1	0	0	2
		# of historic resources near (within 750 feet) route alternatives	5	10	7	3	8
		# of known archeological resources near route alternative	3	2	2	1	2

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	SPECIFIC MEASURE	ALTERNATIVES				
			PURPLE	BLUE	PINK	GREEN	ORANGE
	Hazardous Materials	# of hazardous sites within 150 feet of proposed route alternative	15	0	0	0	3
COST							
Cost	Conceptual Cost Estimate	Construction cost	$54 M	$107 M	$132 M	$103 M	$19 M
		Development cost	$21 M	$44 M	$54 M	$45 M	$12 M

Table 4-6 Alternatives Evaluation Summary

	PURPLE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	BLUE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	PINK ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	GREEN ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	ORANGE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE
Transportation Impacts	-6	5	5	1	3
Local and Regional Issues	-3	5	4	-2	-5
Environmental Resources	-17	-21	-18	-16	-11
	-26	-11	-9	-17	-13

4.7 PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES TO ADVANCE INTO NEPA

Based on the results of the alternatives development and evaluation process, two alternatives are considered reasonable and could be adopted in or used to inform future project level NEPA reviews and documentation for projects within the Route 22A study corridor:

- Blue Route Alternative
- Pink Route Alternative

Considering the transportation impacts, the Purple Route Alternative does not provide a transportation benefit. In addition, the Purple Route Alternative does not support the quality-of-life needs identified in the Purpose and Need Statement. Similarly, the Green Route Alternative and Orange Route Alternative do not support the local and regional issues related to quality of life, economic vitality, land use, and equity. Based on the additional analysis presented in this technical memorandum, the Purple Route Alternative, Green Route Alternative, and Orange Route Alternative do not fully meet the Purpose and Need and should be dismissed from further study.

This recommendation was reviewed with the Technical Committee during a joint Technical Committee and Federal and State Agency Partners meeting held on December 13, 2024. The Technical Committee was supportive of the recommendation to advance the Pink and Blue Alternatives. A Policy Committee meeting was held on January 6, 2025, to review the alternatives evaluation. A majority (ten out of twelve) of the Policy Committee members were supportive of the recommendation to advance the Pink and Blue Route Alternatives. The Policy Committee also requested that the Purple Route Alternative move forward for further evaluation during NEPA. Summaries of both meetings can be found on the study website (www.VergennesPEL.com).

These three alternatives are presented in Figure 4-6, Figure 4-7, and Figure 4-8. The No Build Alternative would also move forward, according to NEPA guidelines.

Figure 4-6 Pink Alternative

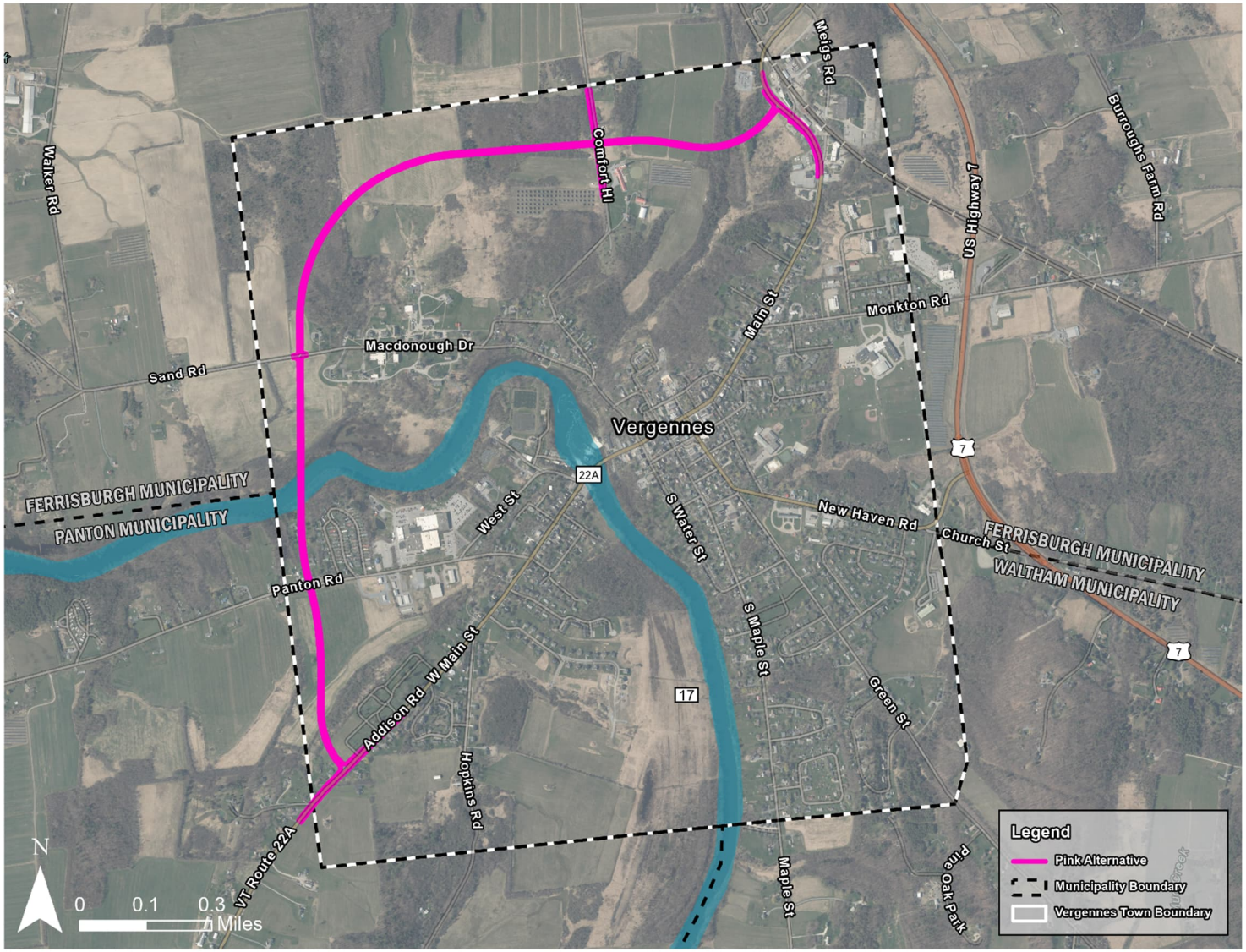


Figure 4-7 Blue Alternative

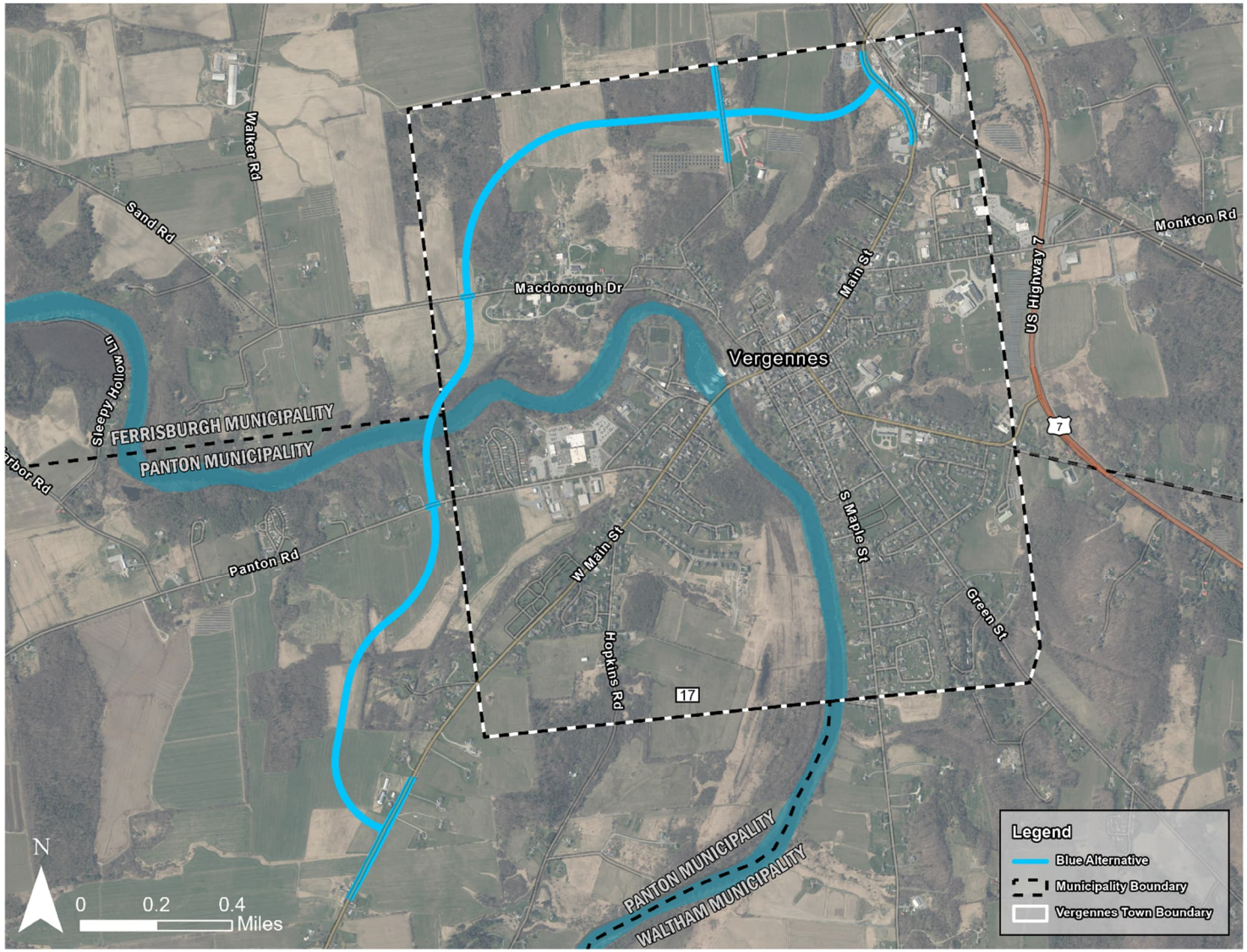
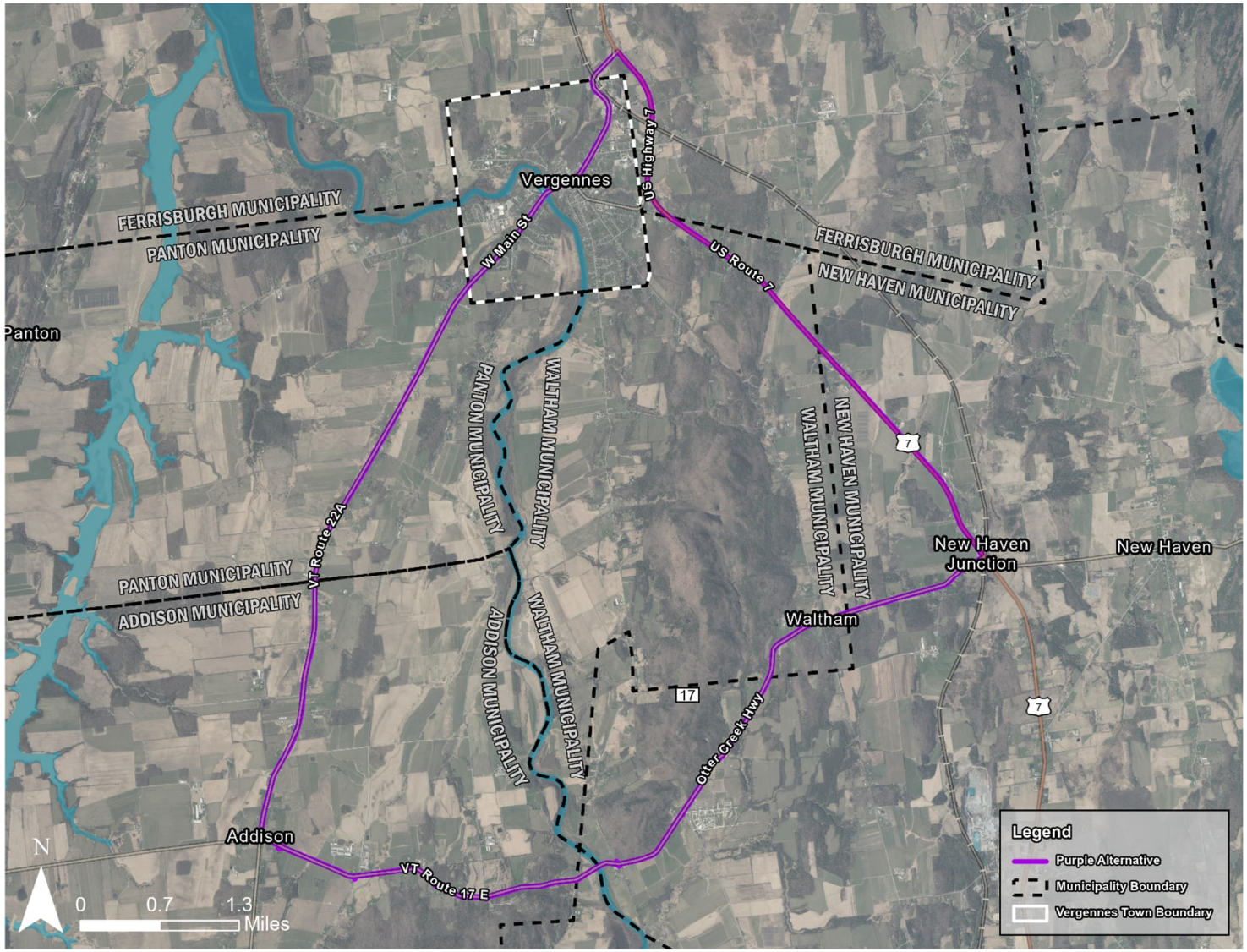


Figure 4-8 Purple Alternative



4.8 ANTICIPATED COSTS

Each alternative was assessed for construction and development costs based on the construction and development elements noted below. These cost estimates, developed through input from AOT on recent construction projects, shown in Table 4-7, are conceptual in nature and will be refined through future development of the route alternatives.

Construction Costs

- Approximate cubic yards of excavation
- Approximate cubic yards of fill
- Approximate cubic yards of crushed stone subbase
- Approximate tons of asphalt
- Bridge order of magnitude cost based on the number of spans, the probable type of structure and location/height of the piers

Development Costs

- Engineering and permitting
- Property acquisitions
- Archeological studies
- Wetland mitigation
- Agricultural mitigation
- Construction inspection

Table 4-7 Conceptual Cost Estimates (Millions)

ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	CONSTRUCTION COST	DEVELOPMENT COST	TOTAL CONCEPTUAL COST ESTIMATE
Purple	$54	$21	$75
Blue	$107	$44	$151
Pink	$132	$54	$186

4.9 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

As explained earlier, the PEL process facilitates meeting environmental review requirements under NEPA and other regulatory requirements that may be required for future transportation projects in the Route 22A study corridor. This Study is not a substitute for the project-level environmental review and documentation required by NEPA but could accelerate project delivery by allowing FHWA, as the lead NEPA agency, to use this information to inform the NEPA reviews and documentation for future projects in the Route 22A study corridor. AOT intends for FHWA to use the information, analysis, and products developed as a part of the Study to inform its NEPA analysis and expects reduced redundancy and duration of the NEPA

phase of the project development process for future Route 22A improvement projects. Therefore, this Study documents preliminary data, analysis and information that will be used to inform the environmental review and documentation that may be required by NEPA for future projects in the Route 22A study corridor, including the existing environmental conditions and potential environmental constraints for the reasonable alternatives identified in this Study.

Environmental resources were examined to establish a baseline context and generally describe the existing conditions within the study area. The results of this effort are presented in Attachment 2 and Attachment 5. Information gathered from existing online reports and GIS data were supplemented by findings from field work and information obtained from the Technical Committee and state and federal agency partners.

The Study Team utilized this information during its development of alternatives and the alternatives evaluation (described in Section 4 of this Report) to broadly assess the potential constraints associated with each of the evaluated alternatives. Attachment 5 of this Report presents analysis of potential constraints from each of the environmental resources for the five alternatives carried through after the initial and secondary screening. Since the analysis conducted for the Study is high-level and based on existing information, Attachment 5 also includes a discussion of additional data gathering, analyses, and agency consultation that would be required to determine impacts as part of the subsequent NEPA process. The potential need for mitigation and/or permitting is also addressed in Attachment 5. Table 5-1 summarizes potential constraints to the recommended alternatives.

Table 4-8 Summary of Potential Environmental Constraints

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVE	POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS
Class II Wetlands	Purple	4.25 acres
	Blue	9.26 acres
	Pink	7.92 acres
Stream Crossings	Purple	Widening of Route 17 would likely involve replacement of 11 regulated stream crossings with larger culverts and would potentially impact side channels adjacent to the existing stream crossings. Modifications to the existing Otter Creek crossing would not be required.
	Pink	One new stream crossing of an approximate 300-foot-wide section of the Otter Creek.
	Blue	Three new stream crossings, including one spanning an approximate 200-foot-wide section of the Otter Creek.
Floodplains	Purple	Approximately 0.50 acres of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Otter Creek crossing and the floodplain of the unnamed tributary, are located within the proposed route along Route 17.
	Blue	Approximately 3.45 acres of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Otter Creek is present within the proposed route.
	Pink	Approximately 4.44 acres of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Otter Creek is present within the proposed route.
Vegetative Communities and Wildlife Habitat Potential Constraints	Purple	Approximately 0.27 acre of habitat block with a ranking of 4 is located within the route.
	Blue	Approximately 1.89 acres of habitat block with a ranking of 7 is located within the route associated with the Otter Creek crossing.
	Pink	Approximately 3.21 acres of habitat block with a ranking of 7 is located within the route associated with the Otter Creek crossing.
Farmland	Purple	Approximately 29.2 acres of prime and statewide farmland are located along most of the route, consisting of 90% of the Route 17 section.
	Blue	Approximately 21.87 acres of prime and statewide farmland are located along most of the route, consisting of 27% of the route.
	Pink	Approximately 26.16 acres of prime and statewide farmland are located along most of the route, consisting of 35% of the route.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVE	POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS
Conserved Lands	Purple	Five parcels, consisting of VLT easements with one containing Biodiversity Conservation Areas, would be affected. In addition, the Addison County fairgrounds property would be affected. Areas of conserved land affected include five parcels, approximately 2.43 acres, classified as Natural Resource Management Areas and 0.20 acre of Biodiversity Conservation Areas, totaling 2.63 acres.
	Blue	Four parcels, consisting of three VLT easements and one associated with the Lower Otter Creek WMA Biodiversity Conservation Area, would be affected. Areas of land affected include one parcel, approximately 5.20 acres, classified as Natural Resource Management Area, 0.04 acre on two parcels of uncategorized conserved area, and one parcel, 0.10 acre, categorized as Biodiversity Conservation Area, all totaling 5.34 acres.
	Pink	Three VLT easements parcels would be impacted. Areas of land affected include one parcel, approximately 5.18 acres, classified as Natural Resource Management Area and 0.04 acre on two parcels of uncategorized conserved area, all totaling 5.22 acres.
Historic Resources	Purple	The conceptual design footprint of the Purple Alternative intersects with nine identified historical resources, all SRHP-listed. Five historic resources are located near the Purple Route. The conceptual design for the Purple Alternative intersects one known archaeological site which is recorded as a national register-eligible pre-Contact archaeological site. There are two additional pre-Contact sites mapped within 300 feet of the Purple Alternative. Similar to the other routes, the highest pre-Contact sensitivity is mapped near the known archaeological sites and the drainages and waterbodies.
	Blue	The Blue Alternative footprint intersects with one historic resource, an SRHP-listed farm at 392 VT-22A in Panton. Ten historic resources, listed in the SRHP, are near the Blue Alternative from approximately 20 feet up to 740 feet. The Blue Alternative does not intersect with any known archaeological sites but there are two archaeological sites within 300 feet of both routes. Both of the known archaeological sites are recorded as pre-Contact sites. The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation Pre-Contact Native American sensitivity model shows varying degrees sensitivity for the Blue Alternative to contain pre-Contact archaeological resources. The areas with the highest sensitivity are mapped around the known archaeological sites and in dry, upland areas in proximity to drainages and other waterbodies such as Otter Creek.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVE	POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS
	Pink	The Pink Alternatives does not intersect with identified historic resources. Seven historic resources are near the Pink Alternative from approximately 20 feet up to 740 feet. The Pink Alternative does not intersect with any known archaeological sites but there are two archaeological sites within 300 feet of both routes. Both of the known archaeological sites are recorded as pre-Contact sites. The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation Pre-Contact Native American sensitivity model shows varying degrees sensitivity for the Pink Alternative to contain pre-Contact archaeological resources. The areas with the highest sensitivity are mapped around the known archaeological sites and in dry, upland areas in proximity to drainages and other waterbodies such as Otter Creek.

4.9.1 Anticipated Permits

Table 4-9 lists anticipated permits and continued coordination that may be required for specific transportation improvement projects advanced to design and construction within the Route 22 study corridor. Specific approvals, permits, and coordination will be determined for each project, once properly defined (including funding source). Table 4-9 lists potential requirements; however, this list is not exhaustive or inclusive of all approvals, permits and coordination that may be required for a future project within the Route 22A study corridor.

Table 4-9 Local, State, Federal Environmental Approval/Permitting

JURISDICTION	APPROVAL / PERMIT & AGENCY
FEDERAL	Section 404 and/or Section 10 (USACE-New England District)
	Section 404 and/or Section 10 (USACE- NY District)
	Section 408 (USACE)
	Bridge Permit (USCG)
	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species (USFWS)
	NEPA (FHWA)
STATE	Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor (DEC)
	Stream Alteration (DEC)
	Wetlands[1] (DEC)
	Shoreland Protection (DEC)
	Section 401 Water Quality Certification (DEC)
	Section 106 (DHP)
	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species (F&W)
	Stormwater Construction Permit (DEC)
	Stormwater Operational Permit (DEC)
	Act 250 Land Use Review Board
LOCAL	Floodplain

5. Implementation Plan

The PEL process is intended to provide the framework for the long-term implementation of the recommended alternative as funding is identified to advance the alternatives into NEPA. The Study is a transportation planning product that could accelerate project delivery in the Route 22A corridor by allowing AOT, as the lead state agency, and FHWA, as the lead NEPA agency, to use this information to inform NEPA through further evaluation of the developed purpose and need, identified alternatives for future transportation improvement projects in the Route 22A study corridor. The intent of the Route 22A PEL Study is to evaluate conceptual transportation solutions developed in prior studies of the Route 22A study corridor that would reduce the impacts of through truck traffic – including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust – on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. As funding becomes available, this Study can be used as a resource for future project development and to inform NEPA documentation within the Route 22A study corridor. The Study has also identified topics that will likely require additional evaluation in any future NEPA documentation.

Based on the results of the screening process conducted, the Study identifies a range of three reasonable alternatives, in addition to a no build alternative, that can be carried forward for consideration in project-specific NEPA reviews: the Pink Alternative, the Blue Alternative, and the Purple Alternative. As funding for design and construction a transportation project within the Study area has not yet been identified, project-specific details and determinations for the range of reasonable alternatives discussed in the Report remain to be analyzed and selected through future design and project development and the NEPA process. Future analysis will build upon the environmental work, public outreach, and agency coordination conducted as a part of this Study, when engaging in the environmental review process to comply with NEPA.

5.1 VERMONT PROJECT SELECTION AND PRIORITIZATION

Funding to advance the recommended range of alternatives would follow the Vermont Project Selection and Prioritization (VPSP2) Process. VPSP2 is a mechanism to identify, prioritize, and select state transportation capital improvement projects on the federal aid system.

VPSP2 is a system that aims to develop a performance-based, data driven project selection & prioritization framework that maximizes the “transportation value” delivered to Vermont taxpayers. This helps to maximize the way transportation funding is used in Vermont. VPSP2 is a data driven process and uses two main sources for understanding the transportation needs across the federal-aid transportation system. These are AOT asset management systems and the Regional Planning Commissions' regionally driven transportation needs. In combination, these

two sources evaluate each need across 8 criteria: safety, asset condition, mobility and connectivity, economic access, resiliency, environment, community, and health access.

The VPSP2 process is a collaborative effort between national, state, regional, and local agencies and interests. Participants include the Regional Planning Commissions, Vermont Department of Health, Agency of Natural Resources, Agency of Community Commerce and Development, Vermont Emergency Management, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Vermont Center of Independent Living, the Vermont Rail Council, Vermont Truck and Bus Association, amongst others.

5.2 FUNDING AND FINANCING RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a review of potential funding and financing options, the following programs could be considered by AOT to fund future Route 22A improvements.

PROGRAM	REVENUE POTENTIAL	ELIGIBILITY	LIKELIHOOD OF FUNDING	PARTNERSHIPS	STABILITY
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Program	BUILD (formerly known as RAISE) can fund projects up to $25M dollars. RAISE funding was used to help fund the Burlington Airport Terminal Expansion Project.	Main focus is generally on improving transportation infrastructure.	RAISE programs don't have as much of a heavy focus on freight movements.	AOT can apply on their own.	RAISE (IIJA funding) was replaced by BUILD but is the only DOT grant program that has gone through the Trump administration to date. However, it would still need a funding source past FY26 to continue.
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program	STBG is a part of formula funds, and so the amount of actual funding for a project varies. In FY22 and FY23 combined, Vermont received $129M in STBG funding. Required 80/20 local match.	The fund program has a large breadth and can apply to many different types of surface transportation projects, and the Project must comply with federal regulations.	Likely to receive funding.	AOT can apply for this on their own.	STBG was developed under IIJA, and funds from IIJA are appropriated through FY26. After that however, there isn't any current legislation continuing the program.
Infrastructure for Rebuilding America	INFRA funds can fund up to $200 million in grant funding for one project.	The grant program is very competitive, but the INFRA grant program focus tends to be on freight movement. Looking for high-impact projects to receive funding.	The grant program is very competitive.	AOT can apply for this on their own, but will need state and local help for NHS designation	MPDG and Mega are a part of IIJA, but INFRA was around before IIJA and is a continuation of FAST Act funding.

PROGRAM	REVENUE POTENTIAL	ELIGIBILITY	LIKELIHOOD OF FUNDING	PARTNERSHIPS	STABILITY
Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act	Varies, can be up to hundreds of millions but is a direct loan or line of credit that will need to be paid back.	This project would be eligible for the program, as it is a key problem to be addressed in the rural community.	Is a financing program, so wouldn't be receiving funding but likely to get support.	AOT can apply for this on their own, but project must be funded by a dedicated additional funding source.	Under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. Has been a permanent program since 1998.
Vermont State Infrastructure Bank	Varies, is a financing program that offers low interest loans, but would be on the higher end of loans provided by VSIB, but $1.5-$12M generally given to each state.	For construction projects of infrastructure.	Main focus is on new and renewed infrastructure, no specific priorities related to this project.	AOT will need someone else to sponsor the loan request since the program is run by AOT.	Local loan program, not expected to have any changes.

5.3 COMMUNITY ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the land use scenarios described in section 4.5, the following community zoning changes are recommended.

5.3.1 Addison

The land use scenario for the Purple Alternative in Addison is consistent with current Zoning. Accordingly, no changes are recommended to the Addison zoning and subdivision regulations.

5.3.2 Ferrisburgh

The land use scenario for the Blue Alternative in Ferrisburgh is consistent with current Zoning. Accordingly, no changes are recommended to the Ferrisburgh land use regulations.

5.3.3 New Haven

The land use scenario for the Purple Alternative is generally consistent with the existing zoning regulations in New Haven, particularly relative to Agricultural/Farmland, Open Space/Recreation, and Municipal/Community uses. However, there are two areas that the town could consider for modification.

As the current commercial use at the northwest corner of the Route 17 and Route 7 intersection is non-conforming, and in order to implement the desire expressed via the land use visioning, New Haven could consider rezoning this property from Rural/Agricultural 5 to Highway

Commercial. Should technology permit the installation of Level 3 EV Chargers at Addison County Fair & Field Days, such use would have to be permitted (potentially by Conditional Use) in the RA-5 District.

5.3.4 Panton

The land use scenarios for the Pink and Blue Alternatives are generally consistent with the existing Zoning Regulations. However, there are two areas that the town could consider for modification. Residential density could be increased in areas identified on for Residential/Housing. Strategies for implementation include "upzoning" some lands from districts with higher Lot Area Minimums to a district with a lower Lot Area Minimum, such as R-5 to R-2. In addition, or alternatively, housing types that accommodate more units, such as triplex or quadplex housing types, could be permitted in addition to the current one-or two-family dwelling housing types.

Should Panton wish to expand Commercial/Retail opportunities adjacent to Panton Road close to the City of Vergennes, it could rezone the approximate area indicated on the land use scenario to be within the Neighborhood Commercial District.

5.3.5 Vergennes

The land use scenario for the Pink and Blue Alternatives suggests several modifications to the Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, should the city wish to consider them. These include:

- Should a portion of the current Public (PUB) District at Northland Job Corp become available for development, it could be appropriate to rezone to Medium Residential Density (MDR) District.
- For consistency with the 2023 HOME Act (Act 47), two-family or "duplex" dwellings should be permitted within the Low Density Residential (LDR) District.
- Denser residential development could be supported on lands that become available in the west and north of Vergennes via rezoning portions of these lands from Low Density Residential (LDR) to Medium Density Residential (MDR).
- Commercial/Retail development at the west end of Panton Road (as depicted in Vergennes) could be supported via rezoning from the current Medium Density Residential District to the Commercial District.

5.3.6 Waltham

The land use scenario for the Purple Alternative in Waltham is consistent with current Zoning. Accordingly, no changes are recommended to Waltham zoning, subdivision and floodplain regulations in order to implement the Land Use Visioning.

5.3.7 Weybridge

The land use scenario map for the Purple Alternative in Weybridge is consistent with current Zoning. Accordingly, no changes are recommended to the Weybridge Zoning Regulations in order to implement the land use visioning.

5.4 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The recommended range of alternatives would be required to follow AOT Project Development Process. The Project Development process is an established process to review and approve transportation projects and generally includes the following steps:

- Project Selection – Addison County municipalities may request that projects be added to the AOT program through the ACRPC. Projects are added to ACRPC prioritized project list and submitted to AOT. Route 22A is currently on the candidate list and will need to remain a regional priority as it is weighed against other statewide priorities.
- Project Programming – In order for AOT to spend funds on a project it must be listed in the Capital Program. The Governor submits a Capital Program to the legislature each year and the legislature must approve the list in order for projects to advance.
- Project Definition begins after a need has been identified, and a project to meet those needs has been programmed. It ends when a decision has been made on how to proceed, as expressed through the definition of a preferred alternative.
- Project Design can take place after project definition is complete, and approval and funding to proceed are obtained. Project design encompasses several activities, including detailed engineering design, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation, schedule and cost estimates, public outreach, environmental documentation, and permitting if needed. Project design is finished when a complete set of final plans is produced to a level that can be advertised or issued for construction.
- Construction takes place after project design is complete and pending approvals and funding. Construction is the physical transformation of material resources into a transportation asset.

6. Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

Local agencies and the public were involved throughout the Study process. Participants included federal, state, and local government representatives; regional transportation planning entities; transit operators; community groups; businesses; property owners; and residents. To support these efforts, the Study Team developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) and a Draft Agency Coordination Plan (ACP), which can be found in Attachment 6. The PIP was developed to establish a process for soliciting early and frequent feedback from the public; encouraging open discussion of study details and issues of concern; and providing opportunities for public comments and questions throughout study development. Input was gathered from individuals who live, work, and/or own properties or businesses adjacent to the study corridor. The ACP was developed to guide coordination activities through the duration of the PEL Study with interested, involved agencies that may be likely cooperating and participating agencies under NEPA.

6.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following methods of outreach and information sharing were employed to facilitate sharing information with and receiving input from the public and stakeholders.

6.1.1 Website

A website was developed for the Study, https://www.vergennespel.com/. This website includes information on the PEL process, study activities and progress, public participation opportunities, study documents, community liaison blog posts, and contact information. Study documents and videos are available for download and review. The website provides a link to allow people to sign up for the mailing list and submit comments electronically.

6.1.2 Community Liaison

In 2022, AOT identified the need for a locally based community liaison to work directly within the study area. The community liaison supported and led outreach to businesses, municipalities, and community members, documenting stakeholder concerns, educating stakeholders about the PEL process and goals, answering stakeholder questions, and organizing and attending engagement events, including, for example, Vergennes Day and Addison County Field Days. The community liaison's effort included:

90 meetings with stakeholders (1:1, small group, large group)
200 total hours meeting with stakeholders
2,440 miles driven in Addison County to meet with stakeholders.

A summary of the community liaison's work and observations is presented in Attachment 6 of this Final Report.

6.1.3 Public Meetings

Public meetings were scheduled to gather input in support of and coincide with the completion of major Study milestones.

2021 Public Meeting

A public meeting was held on November 4, 2021, at The Vergennes Opera House in downtown Vergennes with in-person and virtual accommodations provided. Approximately 40 people attended in person, with 76 attendees participating remotely. The purpose of the meeting was to help develop a purpose and need statement for the PEL study. The presentation focused on an overview of past Vergennes studies, updated traffic data, and themes of the current Study: mobility, equity, environmental, and economic vitality. The previous (2019) purpose and need statement, public outreach activities and planned outreach activities for the PEL study were also presented. Following the presentation, the Study Team fielded questions from attendees in the room and attendees participating virtually to provide feedback. Public input focused on key themes considered in the study, which are listed below.

Mobility

- Otter Creek bridge is a concern for emergency services because there are no convenient detour options
- Have other modes (rail/barge) been considered as an alternative to trucks?
- How will COVID impacts on traffic be reflected in the effort?
- Overall concerns about impacts that a bypass may have on economic viability of downtown Vergennes.

Equity

- How will the impacts to long-term residents in Otter Creek Mobile Home Park be minimized or mitigated?

Economic Vitality

- How can alternatives be leveraged to maximize potential growth opportunities?

Environmental

- What are potential land use impacts beyond Vergennes?

2022 Public Meeting

An in-person public meeting was held on November 3, 2022, at the Vergennes Opera House and virtually via Zoom. Approximately 34 people joined in person and 25 joined online. The meeting was primarily attended by Vergennes residents. The Study Team shared how the screening criteria were applied to the long list of alternatives, the alternatives proposed to be advanced, and the alternatives proposed to be dismissed. The Study Team collected feedback using polls as well as both verbal and written comments.

The following summarizes the input gathered during the meeting:

Attendees generally supported the Vergennes-Panton New Roadway alternative (West Routing Option 1, also called the Red Route) but shared concerns about enforcement, the location of a future Otter Creek bridge, impacts to downtown, and potential impacts in Panton.

- Attendees generally opposed advancing the Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route alternative (Orange Route). Concerns were expressed about excessive grades and difficult turning movements, the stability of existing Otter Creek Bridge, and the perception that the alternative will not remove truck traffic in Vergennes nor mitigate its impacts.
- The attendees had mixed reactions to the VT-17 Northbound/VT 22A Southbound alternative (Purple Route). Some attendees expressed support for this route as an interim solution and supported the alternative because it would not require new infrastructure. The public also stated reasons they did not support the alternative, which included, a lack of redundancy for Otter Creek crossings, shifting traffic impacts to other communities, and the perception that Route 17 is not suitable for trucks.

Some attendees suggested the study team reconsider the Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) alternative (Green Route) and Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1) alternative (Red Route).

2025 Public Open House

An in-person public open house was held on April 2, 2025, at the American Legion in Vergennes. Approximately 147 people attended the open house. The purpose of the public open house was to share the policy committee recommendation with the public. The study team was available to answer any questions about the study process including project milestones, major decision points, and the culmination of the study recommendations.

6.1.4 Workshops

Two rounds of workshops were held throughout the Study. The first round was held in 2022 to obtain input on alternatives to be considered in the initial screening, as well as feedback on the proposed initial screening criteria. A second series of workshops were held in 2023 and 2024 to solicit ideas about how the new routes could affect the surrounding land uses.

Alternatives Screening Workshops

The Vergennes PEL study team conducted three workshops between May 2022 and June 2022 to present the draft long list of alternatives to the public and to develop screening criteria to be used in the next phase of alternatives evaluation. To engage with as many people as possible, workshops were provided both in-person and virtually, and one workshop specifically targeted key stakeholders in the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park community.

In-Person Workshop

A public workshop was held at the Vergennes Opera House on Thursday, May 26, 2022. This workshop started with a short presentation about the Study, the draft long list of alternatives, and the screening criteria. After the presentation, attendees were separated into two groups to review the various alternative types. The groups rotated after 20 minutes to allow attendees time to review content, ask questions and comment on all alternatives presented. The stations were:

- New Road Alternatives (new roadways to divert through truck traffic)
- Existing Road Alternatives (VT 17, US 4, US 7, I-87, etc.)
- Route 22A Alternatives (changes to improve the route without redirecting traffic, No-Build)
- Other Freight Modes (rail, water, freight technologies, etc.)

Following the small group discussions, the larger group returned to share takeaways and discussed the next steps in the PEL Study process. Hard copy pamphlets were handed out to attendees providing an overview of each of the alternatives and the draft screening criteria. Attendees were encouraged to take the pamphlets home, and if additional thoughts came to mind, to share with the Study Team.

The workshop was attended by more than 20 participants, the majority of which were Vergennes residents, as well as some residents from Addison. Participants were interested in the opinions heard during the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park workshop and expressed concern for the potential impacts to its residents. Attendees noted the importance of coordination and planning with neighboring towns.

There was general support for grouping alternatives or elements of alternatives together in final recommendations. In terms of the screening criteria, attendees commented that the criteria should include impacts on nearby communities as well as the cost of the alternatives. While cost was not a criterion at the initial level of screening, it was considered as potential alternatives progressed. There was general concern regarding the lack of redundancy in the transportation system and the need for an additional bridge, especially for emergency response.

Otter Creek Mobile Home Park

A supplemental workshop was held at the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park on Tuesday, May 24, 2022, with the goal of directly engaging with the residents and neighbors living along Panton Road. More than 40 residents attended. This workshop featured an open house format with four stations to describe the different groups of alternatives. Attendees had time to review the alternatives, ask questions, and provide comments. The stations were:

- New Road Alternatives (new roadways to divert through truck traffic)
- Existing Road Alternatives (Route 17, US Route 4, US Route 7, Interstate 87, etc.)
- Route 22A Alternatives (changes to improve the route without redirecting traffic, No-Build)
- Other Freight Modes (rail, water, freight technologies, etc.)

A board with the draft screening criteria was also presented and discussed at the workshop. Hard copy pamphlets were handed out to attendees that provided an overview of each of the alternatives and the draft screening criteria.

Participants appreciated the opportunity to see all options and provide input, and the majority appeared pleased with the variety of options presented. There were mixed opinions about whether truck traffic in downtown Vergennes is a problem. Participant concerns included how potential new road alternatives would impact Otter Creek Mobile Home Park, and how the real estate market in the area could be negatively affected by the study.

Virtual Workshop

A virtual workshop was conducted via Zoom on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, and attended by more than 20 participants. The workshop started with a short presentation about the Study, the draft long list of alternatives, and the screening criteria. Attendees were divided into two breakout rooms, one for each alternative. After 20 minutes to discuss each category, the facilitators rotated to the other breakout room so that all attendees had the opportunity to provide feedback on all alternative options in a small group setting. Attendees had time to review the alternatives, ask questions, and provide comments. The breakout rooms were:

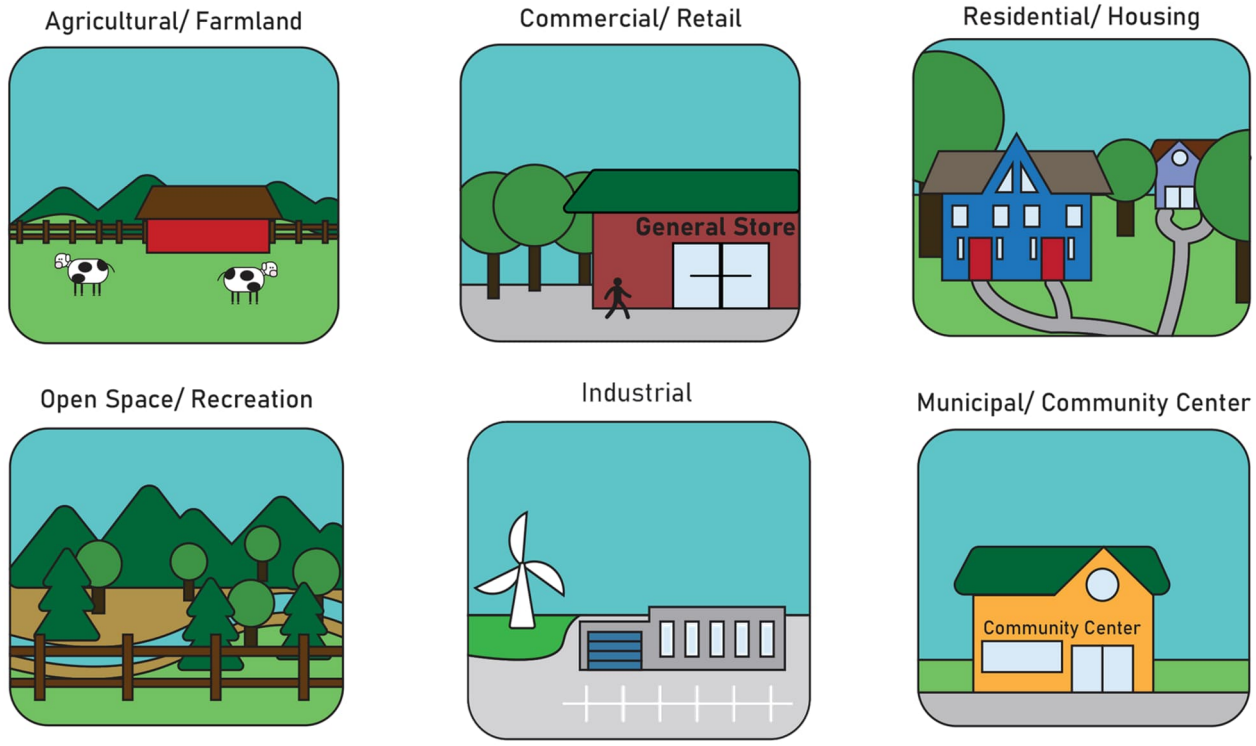
- Room 1: Route 22A Alternatives (changes to improve the route without redirecting traffic, No-Build) and Existing Road Alternatives (Route 17, US Route 4, US Route 7, Interstate 87, etc.)
- Room 2: New Road Alternatives (new roadways to divert through truck traffic) and Other Freight Modes (rail, water, freight technologies, etc.).

Following the breakout sessions, the group reconvened to share highlights from the discussion and discuss the next steps in the Vergennes PEL Study process. Attendees noted the importance of public outreach and expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to review the alternatives. Many expressed that they would like to be included throughout the entire process. Attendees also noted that outreach should be expanded to the towns of New Haven, Panton, Waltham, and Ferrisburgh. In terms of the screening criteria, participants noted that cost should be a screening criterion and considered early in the screening process.

Land Use Visioning Workshops

Land use visioning workshops were held December 2023 and January 2024. The format of the workshop included a presentation of the Study purpose and need, the PEL Study process, visualizations of the proposed route/s, "land" and "use" examples, and an overview of the mapping exercise. Participants then engaged in a collaborative group process that allowed them

to identify locations along potential new routes where six land use types could be appropriate, including:



Existing and potential bicycle or pedestrian facilities were also discussed, recognizing opportunities for active transportation and recreation connections along each of the proposed alternatives.

In addition to supporting discussion of future land use options, the workshops also offered participants the opportunity to provide local information that could be useful in other parts of the study, including the evaluation and design refinement. Some examples of the information shared are safety concerns, wildlife habitat and crossings, the presence of natural features such as wetlands or exposed bedrock, and current motorized and non-motorized travel patterns, including those of farm vehicles or bicycles.

6.1.5 Surveys

In 2021, a survey was conducted to collect input from people who drive trucks on Route-22A. It was distributed with support from the Vermont Truck and Bus Association. The survey content was used to inform the purpose and need statement and initial project screening by providing information about how drivers travel the area and how they perceive potential changes. The survey received a total of 36 responses from across the industry, including details about their cargo, travel habits, and experiences along the corridor.

In 2023, a second survey was conducted to better understand the issues that are important to the public. The survey allowed the public to provide comments on the transportation solutions being evaluated including new roadways, improvements to existing roadways, and an option where traffic flow does not change. The public survey was available on the Vergennes PEL Study website and in paper format. The survey was promoted through in-person events, emails to a stakeholder distribution list, social media posts by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and direct outreach to municipalities and local organizations who shared it with their contacts.

There were 903 responses to the public survey, including 901 responses submitted through the online platform and two responses submitted as paper surveys. Key findings of the survey include the following:

- The route option with the highest or most favorable average rating among survey respondents was the Blue Alternative (rated 3.32 out of 5) followed by the Pink Alternative (3.24). The Orange Alternative had the lowest average rating (1.87), while the Purple Alternative, Green Alternative, and No Build options were rated in the middle (2.29, 2.43, and 2.48 respectively.)
- Survey respondents were asked about their land use preferences in three areas that would be affected by a new route. Respondents provided their preference for keeping land use as it is today, adding more housing, and adding more commercial or industrial land use. Overall, respondents preferred to add housing in all locations, and to add commercial or industrial land use around a new route intersection with Route 22A.
- Survey respondents were asked about their preferences related to truck traffic through two trade-off questions. The first question asked, if moving trucks also means moving passenger vehicles, would respondents prefer to keep all traffic on Route 22A/Main Street (representing the No Build option) or to shift all traffic to a new roadway (Blue, Pink, Green, or Orange Alternatives). Overall, survey respondents were willing to accept shifting both truck and passenger vehicle traffic away from Route 22A/Main Street to a new roadway or an improved Route 17. The second question focused on truck traffic only and asked if respondents preferred to keep existing truck traffic on Route 22A/Main Street (representing the No Build Alternative) or to shift northbound truck traffic to an improved Route 17 (Purple Alternative). Respondents had a strong preference for shifting northbound truck traffic to an improved Route 17 (Purple Alternative) compared to keeping existing truck traffic on Route 22A/Main Street in Vergennes.
- Respondents had the opportunity to leave open-ended comments on each screen of the survey. There were 2,119 received in total. These comments were coded by sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral), theme (e.g., noise, traffic congestion), alternative, and impact area (e.g., a specific street or municipality). Most of these comments (63%) were negative in sentiment. The alternatives receiving the highest proportion of positive comments were the

Blue Alternative (41%), Pink Alternative (40%), while the Orange Alternative (8%), Green Alternative (14%), No Build Alternative (21%), and Purple Alternative (27%) received the lowest proportion of positive comments. These results align with the ratings of alternatives collected on screen 2 of the survey.

6.1.6 Focus Group Meetings

Four focus group meetings were held as part of the development of the purpose and need. The meetings provided an opportunity for focused discussions on key themes, including mobility, equity, economic vitality, and environmental. Attendees were identified given their expertise in each of the four themes. Key takeaways from each focus group include:

Mobility

The mobility group included representatives from Vermont Rail Action Network, Tri-Valley Transit, Vergennes Public Works, Vermont State Police, the Walk Bike Council of Addison County, Local Motion, and the town of Ferrisburgh. This group expressed a desire to understand how to improve conditions for vulnerable users. Discussion focused on how trucks impact downtown, including congestion, noise, and overall quality of life. The group also discussed transit use in the corridor.

Equity

The equity group included representatives from local and state agencies focused on supporting community needs, including the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Addison County Community Trust, United Way, AARP Vermont, and Counseling Services of Addison County. Discussion was primarily focused on impacts to affordable housing, particularly the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park. Discussion also included strategizing outreach methods to reach traditionally underserved populations in the area.

Economic Vitality

The economic focus group included public and private stakeholders, including the Addison County Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce, the Vergennes Partnership, and Collins Aerospace. The group discussed positive and negative benefits of a potential bypass, including loss of economic activity in downtown Vergennes due to reduced traffic.

Environmental

The environmental focus group included representatives from numerous local and regional groups, including the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Addison County Farm Bureau, Vermont Land Trust, and Lake Champlain Committee. The group noted that the Study needs to be mindful of significant agricultural activity within study area, cultural resources, land conservation, and aquatic resources.

6.1.7 One-on-One Interviews

As a follow up to the focus group meetings, one-on-one interviews were held in December 2022 with representatives from the Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Rescue Squad, Vergennes and Ferrisburgh Volunteer Fire Departments, and a resident of the Otter Creek Mobile Home Park. The key takeaways from each interview are noted below.

- Otter Creek Mobile Home Park –Although some residents may not be opposed to a new roadway alternative, there are major concerns about impacts to or the possible loss of their homes.
- Vermont Land Trust – They understand the need to improve truck traffic along Route 22A but would like to identify a solution that has little to no impact on conserved land.
- Vergennes Rescue Squad – Safety was the major concern identified by this group and any improvements that make it easier for emergency vehicles to travel Route 22A will be welcomed
- Ferrisburgh Volunteer Fire Department – This group noted that emergency responses on Route 22A are most impacted by seasonal traffic during peak summer months. Emergency vehicle preemption should be considered as part of any improvement scheme.
- Vergennes Volunteer Fire Department – They noted that trucks do not necessarily impact emergency response times. Emergency vehicle preemption was already installed at Green Street but should be considered at additional intersections within the study area.

6.1.8 Municipal Meetings

Individual meetings with each of the seven communities in the study area were conducted through the City Council and Selectboard meetings. Representatives from the Study Team attended city council and Selectboard meetings for the City of Vergennes and each of the six additional towns within the study area through the months of October and November 2021. These meetings were intended to formally introduce the Vergennes PEL Study as the continuation of work previously completed during the 2019 Truck Route Study. The most shared themes during these meetings included:

- Acknowledging the need to address truck traffic through downtown Vergennes
- Maintaining the economic vitality of downtown Vergennes as the economic center for several of the towns
- A desire for inclusivity and increased participation from all interested and potentially impacted parties in the study
- A desire for clarification on what alternatives may be considered
- For towns served by US Route 7 or Route 17, an understanding of potential impacts to those routes
- Maintaining rural character of the surrounding area.

6.1.9 Stakeholder Contact Database and Mailing List

A stakeholder email list as developed that includes elected officials, public agency contacts, stakeholders and community groups, and members of the public with an interest in the Vergennes PEL Study. The email list was used to distribute meeting announcements and information about the study. Direct mailers (mass mailers) were used to distribute public meetings, workshops and public survey information to residents, businesses and P.O. boxes. The email list was updated throughout the life of the study to include new contacts obtained from meetings and the study website.

6.1.10 Local Events

Additional opportunities for outreach were identified throughout the study, such as the use of kiosks at local gatherings (i.e. Addison County Field Days, August 2023), coordinating to provide materials for use at other community events (i.e. Vergennes Day, August 2023), and partnering with community-based organizations to share information and feedback opportunities. Participation at local events provided a unique opportunity to reach different segments of the population, including those who may not attend public meetings or workshops, for example:

- Addison County Field Days/ Fair – people who work in agriculture, young families, young adults, low income, rural residents, longtime residents of the region
- Vergennes Day – wide cross-section of Vergennes residents and businesses