

Technical Committee & Agency Partner Meeting Notes

Subject	Vergennes PEL Study Technical Committee & Agency Partners Meeting
Date and Time	December 13, 2024, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Policy Committee Member Attendees	<p>Voting Members:</p> <p>Chair – Matthew Arancio (Transportation Planning), VTrans</p> <p>John Bull (Municipal Public Works) Town of Ferrisburgh</p> <p>Alysha Kane (District Maintenance), VTrans**</p> <p>Shannon Haggett (Land Use), City of Vergennes</p> <p>Fred Kenney (Economic), Addison County Economic Development</p> <p>Jim Larrow (Municipal Public Works), City of Vergennes</p> <p>Bruce Martin (Roadway Design), VTrans</p> <p>Joel Perrigo (Municipal Assistance), VTrans**</p> <p>Katie Raycroft-Meyer (Land Use Planning), ACRPC</p> <p>Jeff Ramsey (Environmental), VTrans**</p> <p>Mike Winslow (Transportation Planning), ACRPC</p> <p>Non-Voting Members:</p> <p>Jacqueline DeMent (Planning), FHWA</p> <p>Elizabeth Shipley (Environmental), FHWA</p> <p>James LaCroix (Structures), VTrans</p> <p>Adam Lougee (Planning), ACRPC</p> <p>Amanda Holland (Bike-Ped), VTrans</p>
Agency Coordination Partners	<p>Federal Agencies</p> <p>Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Elizabeth Shipley</p> <p>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Michael Adams**</p> <p>U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Gary Croot**</p> <p>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Beth Alafat & Tim Timmerman</p> <p>U.S.D.A – Natural Resource Conservation Service, Obediah Racicot**</p> <p>Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), David Robbins** & Erik Kuns**</p> <p>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Susi von Oettingen**</p> <p>State Agencies</p> <p>Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Billy Coster**</p> <p>Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Laura Trieschmann</p> <p>Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), Department of Housing and Community Development, Chris Cochran* & Gary Halloway</p> <p>Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Ari Rockland-Miller & Ryan Patch*</p> <p>Buildings and General Services (BGS), Vermont Agency of Administration, Eric Pembroke*</p>
Study Team	Amy Bell (VTrans)

Attendees	Ken Robie (D&K) Jim Gish (VHB) Stephanie Camay (WSP) Stephen Chiaramonte (WSP) Delia Makhetha (WSP) Maya Miller (WSP)
------------------	--

*Joined late

**Invited, but not present

The Policy Committee meeting presentation is available on the Vergennes PEL Study website, Committees and Agency Coordination Section (<https://vergennespel.com/committees-agency-coordination>) under Technical Committee & Agency Coordination Meeting Materials: https://www.vergennespel.com/media/husfcgrq/20240723_policy-committee-meeting.pdf

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to order

Matthew Arancio, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and Chair of the Technical Committee (the committee), started the meeting at 11:04 a.m., on Friday, December 13, 2024. Matthew welcomed everyone to the Technical Committee & Agency Partners meeting before turning the meeting over to Delia Makhetha, WSP, for a Zoom Orientation and Roll Call.

2. Roll Call

Delia conducted roll call. Eight of the eleven voting members and five of the six non-voting members were present. Five of the sixteen Agency Partners had representatives at the meeting. Seven study team members from WSP, Dubois & King (D&K), and VHB were in attendance.

A quorum was not required for the consensus point of this meeting.

No changes were made to the agenda as presented.

3. PEL Study Background

Stephanie Camay, WSP, summarized the activities since the previous Technical Committee meeting. She noted input received on the evaluation criteria from the Technical and Policy committees has been incorporated and the route alternatives have been evaluated. Today, the Technical Committee will review the alternatives recommended by the consultant team to move forward into National Environment Policy Act (NEPA). The Vergennes PEL Study team is looking for the Technical Committee's input on the recommendations.

Stephanie provided an overview of the PEL Study, emphasizing its role in addressing truck volume issues in Downtown Vergennes identified over 25 years of studies. She reiterated that the three-year study aims to bridge past research with future NEPA environmental planning by developing detailed, actionable data. Significant focus has been placed on community outreach to ensure public engagement in transportation solutions. As the study concludes in early 2025, the team is preparing an implementation plan and final report. Stephanie noted that the PEL Study is

part of the VTrans project initiation process, with next steps including funding authorization, design, engineering, environmental studies, and permitting.

Stephanie reinforced the roles of the Technical Committee and Agency Partners.

Stephanie explained that the voting members will be asked to vote on the consensus point discussed today. She emphasized that the Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) phase is just a planning stage, meaning that any recommendations made at this point are not binding. The goal of a PEL study is to narrow down the number of alternatives and identify potential impacts, which will be further examined during the NEPA process.

Stephanie opened the floor to the committee for questions or comments. There were no questions or comments.

4. Alternatives Evaluation

Stephanie Camay, WSP reminded the committee that there are four new roadways, one concept to improve the existing Route 17 roadway and the “no build” option for the corridor.

Stephanie noted the Purpose and Need is to reduce truck traffic and address safety, quality of life, land use and economic vitality.

Stephanie explained there are pending edits, including additional historic and cultural resources, review of construction cost estimates, and the addition of development costs. These edits will not change the recommendations but are being added or amended. For historical resources it was noted there may be additional historical or cultural resources in the area that need to be studied. For the construction cost estimated VTrans provided feedback that the initial estimate costs were low. VTrans expressed that it would be helpful to include development costs. The Study team is reviewing and incorporating these updates.

In the evaluation Technical Memo the Study team took all of the evaluation criteria and grouped them into three categories – transportation impacts, local and regional issues, and environmental resources.

The evaluation process grouped criteria into transportation impacts, local and regional issues, and environmental resources. Based on this grouping, the Purple Route was excluded due to a lack of transportation benefits, and the Green and Orange Routes were excluded for failing to provide local or regional advantages. The Blue and Pink Routes fully meet the Purpose and Need, offering transportation and regional benefits. While all routes will have some environmental impacts, these will be addressed in greater detail during the NEPA process, where mitigation strategies will be developed.

Stephanie noted the costs listed in today’s presentation do not align with the costs outlined in the technical evaluation memo because the Study Team received updated costs from VTrans following the memo’s distribution.

- Fred Kenney, from Addison County Economic Development, asked if the additional historical and cultural analysis fall within the measures already listed or will new measures be added? He also asked if the recommendations based only the score or does it include the cost? Is cost separate?
- Stephanie Camay confirmed that recommendations are based on evaluation criteria rather

than costs, which are presented solely for context. She also highlighted the inclusion of a new Section 4(f) category, accounting for parks, wildlife, and historical buildings, which will require detailed analysis during NEPA. Additionally, a resource assessment has been conducted to identify potential impacts near the proposed routes, ensuring thorough review in subsequent planning stages.

- Fred Kenney, from Addison County Economic Development, asked if the new scores are reflected in the total scoring shared during the meeting?
- Stephanie Camay, responded, no the new scores will need to be incorporated.

Stephanie Camay reviewed each criterion. For Transportation, specifically travel time and mileage, the Purple Route Alternative scores lower.

- An unknown participant asked, if the colors correspond with the scoring.
- Stephanie Camay, responded yes, they do. Some criteria are looked at as a benefit – score would be “no benefit” to 1+ to 3+ and reflected on a green scale. Other criteria are looked at from an impact perspective. If there are no impacts, it is grey and moves to a 1- to 3- and red for greater possible impacts. If there is a number in the cell it is quantitative, if there is a + or – then it is a qualitative metric. For local and regional issues like quality of life and noise. Noise impacts focused on sensitive receptors near new roadways (e.g., residential buildings, churches, hospitals), with the longer Purple Route Alternative having more receptors. Property impacts considered potential full and partial acquisitions, with high impacts for the Orange Route Alternative due to grading. The team also conducted a qualitative economic assessment (property/sales tax revenue, job creation) and reviewed land use implications, such as zoning and environmental justice.
- Amanda Holland, VTrans, asked if the economic analysis conducted by Tripp Muldrow, was included in the technical memo anywhere else aside from the note in Section 7?
- Stephanie Camay stated that Tripp’s economic analysis is not included in the technical memo, it is a separate document. Stephanie said the Study team will circulate the economic analysis with the Technical Committee and Agency Partners.
- Matthew Arancio, VTrans, explained that the economic analysis was a two-pronged approach. The first prong was economic analysis as part of the evaluation matrix. The second prong was a “side quest” for Tripp to seek to understand from an economic perspective how deviations from alternatives may negatively impact Main Street in Vergennes from an economic vitality standpoint. Tripp’s analysis concluded that a substantial majority of the traffic on Main Street is through traffic, so moving that through traffic will help Main Street.
- Amanda Holland, VTrans, noted that the technical memo was very detailed and since the economic analysis and land use was explored greatly, it should be incorporated into memo so people can find that information.
- Tim Timmerman, EPA, asked if existing roadways with improvements will advance along with the alternatives the Study team wants to advance?
- Stephanie Camay, WSP, explained that the Purple Route Alternative was one alternative that use the existing Route 17 where existing improvements are planned.

- Tim Timmerman, EPA, stated his concern about a potential funding scenario where there are options to do improvements but because it does not score well it will not be considered.
- Ken Robie, D&K, explained there was an earlier alternative that had upgrades along Route 22A. In that scenario may have been paired with existing plan alternatives. But that earlier route alternative did not make it into the evaluation phase because it did not meet the Purpose and Need. This does not preclude future 22A improvements from happening in the future, but it is not included in these alternative evaluations.

Stephanie Camay explained that the environmental resources criteria look at potential impacts including wetlands, wildlife, surface water, floodplains, endangered species, cultural resources, hazardous materials, farmland and Section 4(f) resources.

- Fred Kenney, from Addison County Economic Development, looking at the property acquisition numbers, even if the acres is high, there may be fewer parcels – example was the Blue Route Alternative.
- Stephanie Camay responded that the methodology was if the acquisition resulted in the property being unusable then it was considered a full take. We did not identify any properties at this stage that will need to be acquired for the Blue Route Alternative. During preliminary design there could be changes to designs of the roadway to mitigate acquisition.
- Scott Dillon, Archaeologists with Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, said under the historic and cultural resources criteria, Section 4(f) analysis does not cover all aspects of historic review particularly with unknown archeological resources. Section 4(f) is not a good proxy. He noted the matrix is misleading regarding archeological potential because many of these routes have a high resource sensitivity based on location, so having the matrix at zero does not seem reasonable. There will need to be a lot of review of any preferred alternative.
- Matthew Arancio, VTrans, noted that the Study team struggled with this criteria. The Study team has considered the surface area on the map provided to convert to measurements for the matrix? The Study team had discussed a blanket statement to note the area has a high archeological sensitivity. However, the Study team is open to a better way to display this.
- Scott Dillon, Archaeologists with Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, responded that the map is a proxy of 11 different criteria that can be actualized on a GIS layer of overlapping criteria, so could serve as a preliminary proxy. There are a number of known sites in or adjacent to the Blue Route and Pink Route Alternatives, so there is a high likelihood archeological resources will be identified.
- Stephanie Camay, WSP, said the Study Team is looking to see what can be provided in a publicly sensitive document that is also not misleading.

Stephanie Camay, WSP, reiterated that the Study team's recommendation, which has been shared with, ACRPC and VTrans, includes the Blue Route and Pink Route moving forward with additional NEPA evaluation. Based on the evaluation, the other route alternatives no longer meet the Purpose and Need. She clarified that this does not mean the Blue or Pink Route Alternatives

will move forward but rather they should move forward for further consideration. The no build option will also move ahead into NEPA.

5. Consensus Point

Stephanie Camay, WSP, stated the Study team will provide additional time for the Technical Committee and Agency partners to review the memo. The Study team will meet with the Policy Committee in early January and get their recommendations as well.

Matthew Arancio, VTrans, thanked the committee for their understanding of the quick turnaround on reviewing the Technical memo. He also noted that VTrans and the Study team are happy to have a call to discuss any questions or concerns from the Technical Committee and Agency Partners.

- Fred Kenney, from Addison County Economic Development, when does the Study team expect to meet with the Policy Committee? When will the economic analysis and land use be provided to the Technical Committee?
- Matthew Arancio, VTrans, the Study team will be meeting with the Policy Committee on January 6, 2025. This will be after the Technical Committee comment period closes and the Study team plans to incorporate any feedback from the Technical Committee into the memo provided to the Policy Committee.
- Amy Bell, VTrans, the economic analysis and the land use visioning document will be sent out today or early next week. The archeological edits will come the following week.
- Matthew Arancio, VTrans, noted that the Study team is accepting additional comments until December 27, 2024.

Matthew Arancio, VTrans, explained the consensus point for the Technical Committee and Agency Partner meeting, asks the Technical Committee to weigh in on the following: Based on your review of the Alternatives Evaluation Technical Memorandum, do you confirm the recommendation for the Pink and Blue Route Alternatives. He noted a quorum is not required today but the group will take vote.

Stephanie Camay asked Delia Makhetha, WSP, to poll the present Technical Committee members for their vote:

John Bull (Municipal Public Works) Town of Ferrisburgh - Yes
Shannon Haggett (Land Use), City of Vergennes - Yes
Fred Kenney (Economic), Addison County Economic Development- Yes
Jim Larrow (Municipal Public Works), City of Vergennes - Yes
Bruce Martin (Roadway Design), VTrans - Yes
Katie Raycroft-Meyer (Land Use Planning), ACRPC - Yes
Jeff Ramsey (Environmental), VTrans - Yes
Mike Winslow (Transportation Planning), ACRPC- Yes
Matthew Arancio (Transportation Planning), VTrans - Yes

Of the eleven voting Policy Committee members, nine were present to vote. Nine responded “yes,” zero responded “no.” A consensus was reached. The Technical Committee confirmed the recommendation for the Pink and Blue Route Alternatives to move forward.

6. Next Steps

Stephanie Camay, WSP, provided the next steps. The Study Team has finished the evaluation of the route alternatives and after today's meeting will be meeting with the Policy Committee. Any additional comments received from the Technical Committee or Agency Partners will be shared with the Policy Committee. Any significant changes that may come from the Policy Committee, will be sent back to the Technical Committee for additional review.

Following the Policy Committee meeting the Study team will be developing an implementation plan and final PEL Report. Then there will be a final Public Informational meeting to share the results of the study and the recommendations. This public meeting is planned for early 2025.

Matthew Arancio, VTrans, reminded the Technical Committee that if they have questions or want to review specific sections, VTrans and the Study team are happy to review and discuss. He thanked the Technical Committee for their time and lending their expertise to the PEL Study.

- Fred Kenney, from Addison County Economic Development, asked if the PEL will be complete after the 2025 public information meeting?
- Matthew Arancio, VTrans, responded yes the PEL Study will be done following the early 2025 public information meeting.

Matthew Arancio, VTrans, thanked the Policy Committee for their review of the Technical Memo, and for their time today. Matthew adjourned the meeting at 12:08 p.m.