

LAMOILLE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES April 24, 2024 Hybrid Meeting – 12:00 PM

Approved:

Community/ Mode	Representative		Community/ Mode	Representative	
Belvidere	Ken Adams (<i>Phone</i>) Vacant (alt)	X	Cambridge	Eric Boozan (<i>Video</i>) Vacant (alt)	X
Eden	Vacant Vacant (alat)		Elmore	Vacant Vacant (alt)	
Hyde Park	Richard Pearson Vacant (alt)	X	Johnson	Tom Galinat Vacant (alt)	
Morristown	Gerard Thorne Martin Green	X X	Stowe	Chris Jolly (<i>Video</i>) Harry Shepard (alt)	X X
Waterville	Vacant Vacant (alt)		Wolcott	Linda Martin (<i>Video</i>) Dillan Cafferkey (alt)	

Additional Guests & LCPC Staff Present:

LCPC: Alec Jones, Alberto Della Torre, Melissa Manka, Victoria Hellwig

Guests: Bob Burley, Spencer Howard, Jens Hilke, Mathew Arancio (*Video*), Abe Koffman (video), Faith Doll (Video)

Eric Boozan opened the meeting at 12:00 pm.

Welcome & Introductions, Changes to Agenda, Public Comments

There was a round of introductions. There were no changes to the agenda and no public comment.

Emergency Vehicle Postings on Bridges Presentation

Spencer Howard, Bridge Management & Bridge Inspection Program Manager for AOT

In 2022, the State inspected all state and local bridges 20 ft or greater in length to determine their weight limit for emergency vehicles. In 2023, VTrans installed emergency vehicle weight limit signage. These actions were federally required pursuant to the 2015 FAST Act. Limits were determined based on a worst case scenario – i.e. two vehicles of the same wight passing in opposite directions at the same time on the weakest portion of the bridge.

Spencer Howard from VTrans stated that many of our bridges were constructed in the 1930s or 1940s and emergency vehicles are far larger and heavier today. Although, the State posted bridge weight limits as required by the Act, emergency vehicles are protected under the law during time of emergency, meaning they may use a bridge for which they are overlimit if they so choose and if necessary to respond. However, it is advised that overweight emergency vehicles use an alternate route, if possible, when leaving a scene to reduce risk. Emergency personnel should be made aware of the postings and bridge limits in each town in order to determine and plan routing.

Harry Shaepard from Stowe stated local bridges are inadequate to meet the needs of modern society (ex. emergency vehicles, plow trucks, fuel trucks, etc.) as they are structurally deficient. This should be a wake-up call and reported as such to the legislature. He appealed to VTrans to work with the legislature to have more bridge upgrades funded per year.

Bob Burley from Elmore said their town is gathering information on load ratings and planning and prioritizing

replacement based on traffic counts and residents served.

Matt Arancio from VTrans said they recognize the gap and will bring these concerns to higher ups.

Spencer Howard stated that State sent two letters via certified mail 1) pre-evaluation: informing municipalities that bridges were being evaluated and 2) post-evaluation: what bridges would be posted. There is a VTrans website which identifies all bridges posted for emergency vehicles. He added that municipalities can also request a load rating list for each bridge in their town. VTrans inspects bridges bi-annually and annually if in poor condition.

Wildlife Crossings Presentation

Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist for VT Fish and Wildlife

Jens Hilke from VT Fish and Wildlife stated he assists towns, regions and State with wildlife ecology and planning, which is used for land protection, land use planning and road crossings. He added that he is the VTrans point person on road-wildlife ecology. He went on to state large mammals have extensive ranges and utilize multiple forest blocks making road crossings critical to their survival. He added that crossings are also highly important to amphibians during breeding season. He said safe wildlife crossings are imperative to a healthy and diverse ecology and is especially important due to mass northern migration resulting from climate change. He explained wildlife often uses areas where traffic is low and forests meet roadways on either side, hedgerow areas and culverts to cross roads. Adding there are approximately 300,000 culverts in the State of Vermont. He said some animals do not have an issue with walking in water such as deer, otters, etc. but other species like Bobcat prefer a dry area or ledge to pass through culverts. Ultimately, design matters when it comes to which animals you are providing a crossing for. He also noted that rip rapped abutments can hinder passage and earthen shelves or erosion control matting can make these areas more appealing to wildlife for passage.

Jens said there is a Highways and Habitat Training on the Learning Training System for municipal roads crews. Also, the State is analyzing all State culverts and bridges as wildlife crossings and/or candidates for passage improvement. That information will be placed on the Biofinder. After the State culverts and bridges are completed, local ones will be evaluated.

Acceptance of March 27, 2024 TAC Minutes

The Committee will take action on the March 27, 2024 Minutes at their next meeting.

Discussion of future topics

Possible future TAC meeting topics include:

1. VTrans MVTCE
2. VTrans Safety Toolkit
3. Fall Foliage Traffic Volumes & Mitigation
4. Invasive Species management (i.e. Emerald Ash Borer, Japanese Knotweed, Etc.)
5. Sharing of Equipment and Technology b/t Municipalities

New Meeting time for May

The next TAC meeting will be held on June 26th.

Adjourn: 1:33pm