



APPROVED MINUTES
WRC Transportation Committee
February 12th, 2024
4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Stephan Chait, Chair, Susan Hammond, Andy Coyne, Georgianne Mora

Staff present: Colin Bratton

Guests: None

Meeting convened at 4:01 p.m.

Changes to Agenda: None

Minutes: Motion to accept the minutes of 12/11/23 as amended was made by Commissioner Mora, seconded by Commissioner Coyne. Minutes from 12/11/23 meeting are approved unanimously.

Discussion of the update to the Transportation Section of the Windham Regional Plan: The committee reviewed a draft version of the Transportation Section of the Windham Regional Plan. This meeting was the final preliminary review of the document before the transportation section will be incorporated into the larger draft of the Windham Regional Plan and converted into the online format used for the plan update. The Committee will reconvene and have the opportunity to make further changes and comment on the online formatting in the coming months.

Major points of discussion were the need for greater evidence and data supporting some of the statements made in the plan, in particular related to the bicycle and pedestrian as well as the transit sections. Further research into multi modal transportation, including data collected by the Windham Regional Commission through our transportation count program, census commuter data for the Windham Region as well as statewide data available through various VTrans planning projects will strengthen the claims made in the draft transportation section. This could also include reaching out to various advocacy organizations in the region, including the Bellows Falls Bike Project and the Brattleboro Coalition for Active Transportation.

Expansion of the Transportation Committee: The process to expand municipal representation on the Transportation Advisory Committee is moving forward. Staff has begun scheduling meetings with Selectboards for after town meeting day to discuss the additional transportation commissioner appointment and why participation on the committee is valuable for our towns. Currently meetings have been scheduled with Grafton, Guilford, Brattleboro and Athens. Furthermore, staff is meeting with the Bellows Falls Bike Project group to discuss their potential participation as a transportation advocacy group.

Update on Vermont Project Prioritization and Selection Process (VPSP2): VTrans has formally announced that they will once again be suspending the statewide Project Prioritization and Selection Process due to budgetary restraints from increasing project costs. 2024 is the second year in a row that the process has been suspended and that towns have not had the opportunity to submit bridge or highway construction projects to the Agency of Transportation for consideration. There is no official word on whether the process will be restarted in 2025, or what changes VTrans anticipates making to VPSP2 process in the future as a result of findings during the two-year pilot period in 2021 and 2022.

A relatively small number of projects submitted by towns were ultimately selected during the 2021 and 2021 VPSP2 pilot, in particular bridge projects where no town bridges in the Windham Region were ultimately chosen for inclusion in the capital program. The committee discussed opportunity for towns and the Windham Regional Commission to engage in longer term planning around their infrastructure needs during the pause in the AOT project selection process. This could potentially include a number of things related to the increasing costs of maintaining and replacing local transportation infrastructure in the Windham Region, in particular the opportunity for shared services and further steps to pool resources to reduce sand and gravel cost in particular.

Next Meeting Scheduled: 4:00pm March 11th, 2024.

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Colin Bratton, Staff