

Draft 2/9/26 Windham Regional Commission Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Members Present: Stephan Chait, Chair, Nick Morgan, Andy Coyne, Rick Cowan, Georgianne Mora, Christine Howe, Pete Silverberg

Absent: None

Guests: Abe Koffman (VTrans),

Staff present: Colin Bratton

Meeting convened at approximately 4:00 p.m.

Changes to Agenda: None

Approval of Minutes from 12/8/25 Meeting: Draft minutes of Transportation Advisory Committee from December 8th, 2025 approved unanimously.

Update on Depot Street Bridge Project in Rockingham: Commissioner Rick Cowan and VTrans Planning Coordinator Abe Koffman gave an update on the ongoing Depot Street bridge project in Rockingham and of the site visit from VTrans Planning staff the town hosted in November. This project is to replace the existing Depot Street bridge connecting “The Island”, including the Bellows Falls Transportation Center with the Downtown area, including a new off-alignment bridge over the canal and a dedicated pedestrian bridge. This project is vital to overall multimodal connectivity in Rockingham and is a center piece of the long-term redevelopment strategy for the Island and Downtown Bellows Falls.

The project has experienced substantial delays. Initially scheduled for construction in 2028, the updated construction schedule does not have the project completed until 2032. This is a major concern for the town given the significance of this bridge to the overall economic development strategy for the area. Furthermore, continued cost increases due to inflation and the town’s match funding threaten to drive up costs and will only increase as construction is delayed. During the site visit, VTrans staff were given more information about the broader planning context and strategic location of this structure.

Delays to major projects are an issue across Vermont and the Windham Region. It was noted that there are several other bridge projects in the region that have also been delayed substantially, including the Western Ave bridge in Brattleboro and the Jamaica State Park bridge. The scope of the Jamaica State park bridge was recently revised after VTrans determined the original designs were not cost effective. The Transportation Committee will continue to stay informed about these regionally significant projects and explore options for the committee to help our town’s coordinate with VTrans and avoid further delays.

Transportation Committee Discussion Topics: VTrans has once again delayed the Vermont Project Prioritization process and the Transportation Committee will not be undertaking the regional project ranking and selection work that normally occupies a substantial amount of the committee’s time in the Spring and early Summer. This means that the Committee will have greater time and flexibility to explore relevant discussion topics and agenda items in 2026. The Committee discussed what discussion topics are relevant to their towns and potential options for the Committee to explore these topics in detail in order to provide technical assistance to towns.

Discussion included town highway paving and the important decision of paving or not paving town highways. In particular, how best to quantify long term vs short term maintenance costs of paved or gravel roads, as well as the often understated scenic and character value that gravel roads provide in

a rural context. Challenges navigating state highways in towns and villages was another topic of discussion. Towns have limited control over state-maintained highways that have a major impact on the safety and character of important commercial and cultural centers. Navigating state level processes to impact decisions that deeply impact communities can be arduous. Hogback Mountain on Route 9 in Marlboro was cited as a specific regional example. Continued overall increases to annual town highway budgets was also raised and how to manage our roads in a sustainable, cost effective manner, including further exploration of Capital Planning at the municipal level. Public Transportation, the impact of Act 181 and balancing environmental concerns with transportation efficiency were also named as relevant topics.

Staff will compile a full list of topics discussed at this meeting and contemplate next steps for the Committee. This may include hosting experts, inviting VTrans staff, and potential holding region wide webinars to provide towns with more information are potential next steps. This will be revisited at a future TAC meeting.

Next Meeting Scheduled: Monday, March 9th 2026 4:00pm

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Colin Bratton, Staff

NOTE: These are draft minutes, which are subject to change during final review and approval.