

Draft 6/8/26 Windham Regional Commission Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Members Present: Stephan Chait, Chair, Nick Morgan, Andy Coyne, Pete Silverberg, Christine Howe

Absent: Rick Cowan

Guests: Senator Wendy Harrison, Representative Mollie Burke

Staff present: Colin Bratton

Meeting convened at 4:00 p.m.

Changes to Agenda: Add Update on Amtrak Station Opening at end of Agenda.

Approval of Minutes from 5/11/26: Motion to approve the draft minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee May 11th, 2026 meeting made by Commissioner Morgan, second from Commissioner Chait. Minutes of May 12th approved with one abstention from Commissioner Silverberg.

Discussion of Transportation Committee Discussion Topics: The Committee reviewed the list of initial discussion topics developed at the April TAC meeting. The purpose of this discussion is to identify the Committee's priorities for further discussion at future meetings. Transportation maintenance costs remain a major concern for our towns. Costs for transportation maintenance and improvement have continued to rise across the board and town's ability to raise additional funds are limited, in particular given rising costs in other sectors that have driven up property taxes substantially. In that context, further exploration of how towns can make most efficient use of funding for transportation without jeopardizing the condition or resiliency of local roads.

Of particular importance is more detailed examination of short-term expense vs long term maintenance costs for infrastructure and the exploration of clear metrics to guide local decision making. Paving in particular remains a major expense for many towns and local officials feel unsure of exactly the scale of the long-term benefit weighed against up front costs, as well as the larger impact on rural community character. Furthermore, town's often feel obligated to pave when they've been awarded a Class 2 Town Highway paving grant from VTrans, one of the few state sources for paving grants and a program that is awarded on a rolling basis, meaning that when a town has reached the top of the priority list they must either accept the award or risk being demoted in the order and waiting several more years for another funding opportunity. The Committee would like to explore these issues of rising costs in more detail, including methodology for more quantitative, data-driven decision making, opportunities for improved efficiency and long-term sustainability in highway maintenance.

Environmental impact remains a significant concern. Beaver management in particular is a priority, the impact of beaver activity and the blocking of culverts a significant issue on rural roadways. Clearing beaver dams can be time consuming for town staff, in particular when clearing their dams is oftentimes only a temporary solution. More information on best practices for managing beavers and long-term solutions to limit related damages while balancing staff capacity would feel valuable for many towns in the region.

A number of other topics were discussed, including the impact of Act 181, in particular tier 1A and 1B status, and future development's impact on the transportation system, navigating local concerns related to the state highway system, persistent concerns related to speeding and traffic safety, among others. The Committee will break for the following two months, we expect to reconvene for September. In the interim, staff and the Committee Chair will begin work to develop a webinar program based on the priorities discussed at this meeting.

Update on Amtrak: The grand opening for the Brattleboro Amtrak station will be Wednesday June 24th

from 11:30am-1:00pm. Officials from Amtrak, the Federal Rail Administration, as well as Vermont's Congressional Delegation will be travelling by Amtrak to Brattleboro that morning for the ribbon cutting ceremony. After the ceremony, a meeting of local passenger rail advocates will be held to discuss ongoing efforts to increase passenger rail service availability in Brattleboro and Southern Vermont more broadly.

Next Meeting Scheduled: Monday, September 14th 4:00pm

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Colin Bratton, Staff

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