

## MEETING NOTES

June 16, 2022

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 20190630.C01  
**PROJECT NAME:** Cornwall – Middlebury STP0172(11)  
**ATTENDEES:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Company</u>
Taylor Sisson	Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)
Benjamin Tietze	Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)
Steven Rheaume	Town of Cornwall
Luther Tenny	Middlebury College
Ben Marks	Town of Cornwall Selectboard Chair
Nicole Fox	Fuss & O'Neill
Jacob Fowler	Fuss & O'Neill

**RE:** Local Concerns Meeting  
**SUBMITTED BY:** Jacob Fowler

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The following overview is from Local Concerns Meeting, that took place on Thursday, June 16, 2022, at 7:00 pm the Town Hall in Cornwall, VT.

Taylor Sisson, project manager at Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), introduced the project, *Cornwall – Middlebury STP0172(11)*. Following this introduction, Nicole Fox from Fuss & O'Neill made a brief presentation, starting with the project team.

The project consists of a corridor starting in Cornwall, VT near the intersection of VT Route 125 and Hamblin Road. The project continues east along VT Route 125 to the town line of Cornwall and Middlebury. The project ends approximately 0.1 miles east of the town line in Middlebury, just before the intersection of VT Route 125, Bicentennial Way, and Ridgeline Road.

Project Team includes:

- VTrans Project Manager – Taylor Sisson, PE
- VTrans Transportation Design Engineer – Benjamin Tietze, PE
- Fuss & O'Neill Project Manager – Nicole Fox, PE
- Fuss & O'Neill – Jacob Fowler, EIT

Also included in the presentation was a project map outlining the general project limits and location, a map and pictures of several concern areas, a general background of the project, the project development process, the purpose of the meeting, and the project schedule. The purpose of the Local Concerns Meeting is to gather feedback on issues, concerns, and ideas from the public and other stakeholders. After the presentation the floor was opened for questions, comments, and/or concerns. A summary of that input follows.

### **Public Questions, Comments, and Concerns:**

**Summary of Major Concerns:**

Many attendees and commenters had similar concerns that are summarized below.

A significant issue of concern identified by those in attendance were the traffic speed and sight distance at the “knoll” locations in Cornwall near the Middlebury town line. Vehicular travel is dangerous due to the reduced sight lines caused by the vertical alignment and the presence of pedestrian and bicycle traffic increases the danger to all users.

Another area of concern was the intersection of VT 125 with James Road and Cider Mill Road. Concerns about the intersection included sight distance from the side roads, vertical curves, and other site characteristics along with the speed of traffic. The intersection has undergone recent improvements with the Town of Cornwall adding pavement markings and signage for a stop condition ahead. The intersection also has flashing yellow beacons on VT Route 125 and flashing red beacons for both side roads along with a flashing beacon west of the intersection to warn drivers of the crossing. The vertical alignment on VT Route 125 decreases intersection sight distance for vehicles turning onto VT Route 125 from either direction. There are also some obstacles that cause even more sight distance problems for certain vehicles.

The intersection of VT 125 and Ridge Road was also raised as a concern. The intersection is currently aligned at a 60° angle reducing the ability of a driver to see west along VT 125, and the vertical alignment around the intersection causes some difficult sight lines.

**Individual Comments:**

- There is a second knoll just west of the initial larger knoll also has limited sight distance and should be fixed.
- There is a route from the college along VT Route 125 and then along either Cider Mill Road or James Road, location is a popular running route for many college student. Bike traffic is also prevalent along the corridor past the intersection.
- One resident expressed concern that if visibility were increased and the roadway was widened, vehicular speeds would increase as well.
- A commenter suggested a separate path for pedestrians and bicyclists off the roadway separated by a green strip.
- Plow trucks have a difficult time at James Road and Cider Mill Road due to the sight line obstructions and the danger of vehicles travelling east on VT 125. Commenter added that if the backslope of surrounding grade were pulled back it could help increase sight distance. Snow storage further reduces visibility in winter.
- One person noted the danger of moving farm equipment along VT 125 because of the difference in speed between cars and the farm equipment.
- Luther Tenny, a representative from Middlebury College, added that the College is willing to work with VTrans to make the roadway safer for pedestrians and vehicles. The College owns a significant amount of land between the east side of the project and the intersection of Cider Mill

Road and James Road and would be willing to consider temporary or permanent roadway needs to improve safety.

- Luther also noted that after building the gravel path to the college farm that students still use VT 125 for exercise.
- A commenter requested consideration for a 4-way stop sign at the VT 125, Cider Mill Road, and James Road intersection.
  - VTrans noted that because of the limited sight distance at the intersection the 4-way stop would be likely to create a greater safety issue if vehicles were stopped on VT 125.
- A commenter recommendation of removing the passing zone just east of the Cider Mill Road and James Road intersection.
  - Noted that could be a possibility and could be added to a district request prior to the future construction of project.
- One person recommended consideration of a roundabout at the intersection to reduce speeds.
  - Nicole noted that roundabouts have a maximum vertical grade and the location is most likely too steep.
- A resident noted that a large bike race takes place every year on VT 125.
  - Noted that race may be impacted by construction and will be included in matrix.

#### Questions and Answers

- A question was asked if ADTs (Average Daily Traffic) show an increase in traffic along corridor.
  - VTrans stated the most recent ADTs do not show much increase along the corridor.
- Commenter asked if the state has analyzed the corridor previously and if we could use past research in our project. The question comes from a will to shorten the time from meeting to construction.
  - VTrans stated they are not aware of past projects, but they will investigate it and will supply F&O with any information.
- An attendee asked if the study area was just VT 125 or surrounding areas are included.
  - Noted that the project is primarily for VT 125 but if safety issues are identified on side roads, then they would be a possibility for investigation.
- A commenter wanted to know if the project would create two different purpose and need statements for the “knoll” section and the 4-way intersection.
  - Nicole responded that the purpose and need could be written to include some specifics for both areas, but the safety issues are similar enough that one statement could cover both.
- A question was asked if we prioritize alternatives based off cost or safety.
  - Nicole replied that we supply an alternative matrix with the improvements to safety, cost, and other factors that could all influence decisions.
- A commenter asked about the ability for the Towns to seek funding for other projects to create the most amount of improvement in the corridor all at once.
  - VTrans answered that the project we are scoping could possibly be federally funded through design and construction.

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- A question was asked about who had final decision over the selection of alternatives once presented.
  - VTrans stated that they would be open to collaboration and discussion with the Towns, Middlebury College, and Addison County Regional Planning Commission but ultimately it would be VTrans decision.
- A question was asked if designers could preemptively recommend improvements prior to project completion.
  - Nicole stated that easy improvements could be recommended and completed by the Town or district maintenance if recognized to try and expedite the safety improvements of the corridor.