

State of Vermont

Agency of Transportation

One National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05633-5001
www.aot.state.vt.us

[phone] 802-279-9599
[fax] 802-828-2640
[ttd] 800-253-0191

To: Travel Information Council Members
From: Toni May
Date: November 8, 2023
Subject: **DRAFT** Minutes of the 314th Meeting of the Travel Information Council

DATE: October 25, 2023
TIME: 10:00 A.M.
PLACE: Virtual via Microsoft Teams & in-person at The Dill Building, located in Berlin, VT.
PRESENT: John W Kessler, Chair Designee, Travel Information Council
Francis Heald, Member TIC (Recreation)
Elizabeth Kennett, Member TIC (Agriculture)
Mandy White, Member TIC (AOT Representative)
Toni May, TIC (staff)
Ian Degutis, State Traffic Engineer
Kristin Driscoll, Traffic Operations Manager
Jackie Cassino, VTrans Rail Trail Program Manager
Chris Hunt, VTrans Project Manager
Amy Bell, VTrans Policy, Planning & Research Director
Brandon Roberts, VHB Project Manager
Gail Henderson-King, CVMC appeal, White & Burke
Eileen Hee, CVMC, Director of Projects & Properties
Lauren Masseria,

Mr. Kessler called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

1. Review and act upon a motion to approve the minutes of the 09/09/21 meeting

Motion: Francis Heald made a motion to accept the minutes

Second: Elizabeth Kennett

Vote: Passed

2. CVMC Orthopedics OBDS Appeal

Reason for review:

The business applied for 2 OBDS on VT 100 in Waterbury and were initially approved. Shortly after the signs were installed, a local private citizen, who claimed to be familiar with the program regulations, brought it to the Agency's attention that he felt the guidelines of the program may not have been met. So, a 2nd site visit was conducted, visibility measurements were taken, and the applications were disapproved. The business chose to appeal the district committee's decision to disapprove their applications.

Thoughts/Discussion:

Ms. Hee said there were challenges locating the facility in 2016, when an Express Care office was located there. So, when the Orthopedic Center opened, they decided to apply for OBDS. She added it's a very busy stretch of highway.

The business understands that the rules say the sign only needs to be visible, not readable. But from their perspective, if you can't read the sign until you're on top of it, that creates a safety issue.

Ms. King said there's vegetation, a wooded area, a pond & wetlands between the on-premises sign and the building. She said the area is under the control of The Agency of Natural Resources & The Town of Waterbury.

Overview

The current on-premises sign, which includes three different businesses, is the maximum size allowed per local zoning laws. The CVMC sign has the UVM logo on it.

The building is on McNeil Road. Putting a sign on the building won't help because it sits so far back from VT100.

Ms. Kennett said there is a case to be made that the building is up the hill and off VT 100. The UVM branding is useful to patients in recognizing the sign.

The SL was reduced from 50 to 40 mph. However, according to traffic data provided by the business, the average speed is still up around 50 in this area.

Special note about the southbound sign:

This sign was removed by the citizen who filed the complaint about them.

Mr. Heald said the citizen who removed the sign should be made aware of state guidelines and the extra work his actions have created. Ms. May said she explained that the signs belong to the state and removing one of them is considered theft of state property. She told him private citizens are not allowed to work within the highway right of way. She also told him depending on the council's decision today, there might be a cost to him if the sign needs to be reinstalled. Mr. Pierce was apologetic and said he would do whatever necessary to make sure everything was taken care of properly.

Motion: Elizabeth Kennett made a motion to keep the signs in place and reverse the district committee's decision to remove them.

Second: Francis Heald

Vote: Passed

3. State Rail Trail Community Wayfinding Sign Guidance

Reason for review:

The Rail Trail Project team has worked on the Rail Trail Guidance for over a year, with support & input from VTrans Traffic Ops., ACCD General Counsel, Municipal Reps., and other various Agencies. The team is hoping for an endorsement from the TIC to adopt the wayfinding guidance that they have developed so all trails in the state have the same guidelines to follow.

Thoughts/Discussion:

The Team is looking for input & approval on three sign categories:

1. Vehicular Signs
2. Trailhead Signs within the state rail trail corridor
3. Signs on sidewalks/roadways with a municipal connection leading to downtown amenities.

Council members applauded the Team for the work they've put into this. They also encouraged them to reach out to other trail systems and encourage them to get on board with adopting this so there's consistency for anyone using the trails.

Overview

Wherever possible, they tried to stay within the MUTCD guidelines.

Rail Trail Councils have been developed for all the trails. Regional Planning Commissions help staff the councils which also include representatives from municipalities, local businesses, trail towns and different trail users (VAST, VT Horse Council, Local Motion, etc.).

Trail etiquette courtesy signs at Trailheads and standardized language in the kiosks will be provided.

VAST has a safety committee and will also be responsible for some temporary winter signage and will be assisting with maintaining the trails in the winter.

A complete copy of the Wayfinding sign Guidance with photos of sign assembly's & locations is included with the minutes from this meeting, for further clarification.

Project Goals

- Support community and economic development potential through cohesive wayfinding signs leading from the roadway to trail access points and from the trail to municipal centers with trail specific amenities.
- Develop a consistent approach to off-trail directional signs following the MUTCD and the Vermont Sign law (10 V.S.A., Chapter 21)

Desired Outcome

- Receive approval from the Travel Information Council (TIC) for their approach to wayfinding signs to and from trails that will allow municipalities to install these sign packages through a streamlined process. Details are in the Guidance document but will include approval from AOT and the Rail Trail Councils.

Motion: Mandy Shatney made a motion to accept & approve the final document as guidance.

Second: Francis Heald

Vote: Passed

4. Non-conforming review for Cabot Annex Complex OBDS-VT 100 Waterbury

Reason for review:

On a site review for the CVMC appeal, the district committee noticed a couple of signs on the sign assemblies for businesses at the Cabot Annex needed replacing. He noticed that several things had changed since the signs were installed. He did a complete review of each of the assemblies and submitted it to the Travel Information Council for a non-conforming review.

Thoughts/Discussion:

Signs included in this non-conforming review:

Northbound & Southbound facing signs for Cabot Creamery Annex Store, Danforth Pewter, Lake Champlain Chocolates and Smugglers Notch Distillery.

District Committee's field review findings:

Took measurements of when the on-premises sign was visible.

The speed limit has been reduced from 50 mph to 40 mph.

A turn lane facing northbound traffic as well as a warning sign for the turn lane has been added.

The district committee's opinion is that the OBDS for all these businesses are no longer warranted.

Council Thoughts/Comments:

In full disclosure, Beth Kennett said she is part of the Agri mark family but felt she could be objective in the discussion and in her opinion.

Frank Heald said it was a matter of safety for the traveling public, not where the signs are directing people to.

John Kessler said leaving the new CVMC signage up but taking away the annex signage at the same time gives the appearance of not being consistent. The annex isn't set back on a hill but it's in a congested area.

Traffic patterns show that even though the speed limit has been reduced in this area, people consistently travel over 50 mph.

The data also shows there have been no crashes in this area in the last five years. The council said that proves the signage was working.

Adding a turn lane increases the safety of the traveling public but does not mean the OBDS are no longer needed.

Motion: Frank Heald made a motion to leave the signs in place for safety reasons.

Second: Beth Kennett

Vote: Passed

Staff Reports & Other Business

John Kessler reached out to Megan Sullivan at the State Chamber of Commerce office for possible assistance in our ongoing problem of staffing the council. We've been without a Lodging Representative and a Restaurant Representative for 7-9 years. He said he would check back with her to see if she has any recommendations.

Motion: Frank Heald made a motion to adjourn

Second: Beth Kennett

Vote: Passed

The meeting adjourned at 11:45