

Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)

Brief History of the TPI

The TPI program began in the early 1990's and grew out of the public perception that transportation system design decisions were made with limited input from the public and strict adherence to national design standards resulting in projects that were out of character for Vermont.

In 1988, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 200, which set the goal to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to ensure that decisions were made at the most local level possible. State agencies with programs that impact land use and development must engage with the public to discuss issues of local importance such as development along highways, public transit, multi-modal transportation options, and environmental protection.

In 1990, the Vermont Legislature commissioned an analysis of the Agency of Transportation's management structure and effectiveness. The findings were for the Agency to develop a formal planning department responsible for all planning and relationship building with other levels of government and the public. In 1993, the TPI was created as a response to those findings. Since then, the program has gone through continual reevaluation and modernization, but the most essential element of the program remains to support public involvement and participation in state transportation and regional planning.

Program Partners

TPI is a partnership between VTrans and 10 of Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs). Chittenden County Regional Commission is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is not directly funded through the TPI, its work is done in concert with VTrans and other TPI partners and they actively participate in all TPI activities.

VTrans

The VTrans Policy, Planning, and Research Bureau carries out the TPI in partnership with the RPCs and the MPO, through VTrans Planning Coordinators. The Bureau plays a key role in the Agency's public outreach efforts – working collaboratively with the RPCs and other state agencies, VTrans program managers, municipalities and many public and private organizations to inform the public on important transportation issues, programs, projects, planning activities, and to facilitate the flow of accurate information affecting and/or involving the public.

Regional Planning Commissions

The RPCs serve as program leaders and administrators, adapting their program to meet state and federal priorities annually. Through the TPI program, they are able to offer a wide range of services to municipalities requiring a level of expertise that local governments may not have access to otherwise. RPCs provide technical assistance, give municipalities a voice in the project prioritization process, and keep VTrans apprised of on-the-ground conditions, including public sentiment towards proposed transportation improvements. Most importantly, RPCs provide the education and outreach needed to keep communities abreast of new issues at the state and federal level.

Guiding Principles

Conformance with federal transportation law (local consultation and broad citizen participation)

Conformance with Vermont's Act 200 (decentralized and coordinated decision making and developing regional plans)

To develop and maintain comprehensive transportation plans at the regional level

To provide transportation planning support and resources to towns

To develop and sustain a collaborative and cooperative transportation planning relationship between VTrans, VT municipalities and regions.

To assist VTrans with public outreach for high profile & impact VTrans projects

To ensure that there is a strong link between transportation planning and the programs it relates to.

To provide a platform for discussing complex state, regional and municipal issues as they relate to transportation.

Program Funding

Funding for the TPI is comprised of allocations from the FHWA, the Agency of Transportation and Regional Planning Commissions. All TPI efforts are subject to the rules and regulations that govern the use of Federal and State funds.



For More Information

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/policy-planning/regional>

Transportation Advisory Committees (TAC)

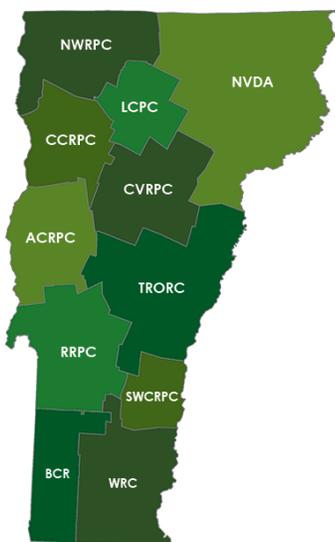
As part of the requirement to ensure “local consultation and broad citizen participation,” each Regional Commission has created a TAC. The TAC consists of members of the public including local officials and, in some instances, representatives from local stakeholder groups (including transit and multi-modal groups or other interests). The TAC is intended to act as a liaison between local communities and VTrans, providing local and regional input on transportation issues and transportation projects important to their regions.

TPI - Ongoing Success

Since its beginnings in the early 1990's, the TPI Program has been a vital component of Vermont's transportation planning landscape. It has a long history in Vermont, and has served as a model for the effectiveness of collaboration between state, regional and municipal governments. The U.S. Congress used components of Vermont's laws regarding transportation projects and communication with impacted citizens and communities in the federal law (FAST Act, 2015). Through the opportunities the TPI creates for public input and transparency, all Vermonters have an opportunity to participate in transportation planning. The benefits of the TPI program include:

- A clear process for local officials to be involved in transportation issues.
- A unified program of regional transportation planning.
- The facilitation of communication between states, regions and municipalities about transportation projects and project development.
- A clear process for reviewing and approving the state's statewide transportation improvement plan (STIP).
- Opportunities for municipalities and regions to be involved in identifying and prioritizing transportation projects.
- Increased citizen participation.
- Coordination with other sectors on issues that intersect with transportation such as hazard mitigation & resiliency, environmental protection and energy.

As a result of the work funded by the TPI Program, municipal officials' understanding of Vermont's transportation system has significantly improved. Access to information is better for communities, regional commissions and the state. Most importantly, communities feel that they have a voice that is heard throughout the project development and implementation process.



Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions

- **Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC)** - 802-388-3141
- **Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC)** - 802-442-0713
- **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)**- 802-846-4490
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC)** - 802-229-0389
- **Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC)** - 802-888-4548
- **Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)** - 802-524-5958
- **Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)** - 802-748-5181
- **Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)** - 802-775-0871
- **Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC)** - 802-674-9201
- **Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC)** - 802-457-3188
- **Windham Regional Commission (WRC)** - 802-257-4547