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Strong Communities, Better Connections Grants Awarded

MONTPELIER, Vt.—January 7, 2015—In a new collaboration to support vibrant community centers and increase in town and regional transportation options, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) are pleased to announce the Strong Communities, Better Connections (SCBC) Pilot Grant Program has funded three projects that help align land use planning and community revitalization efforts with transportation investments.

Grant Winners:

- Mad River Valley Towns (Warren, Waitsfield) will develop a unified, multi-town plan for non-motorized transportation facilities. (Josh Schwartz, Director, Mad River Valley Planning District, mrvpd@madriver.com)
- The Towns of Rutland and West Rutland increase transportation options connecting the two centers of commerce and activity. (Mary Ann Goulette, Town Manager, Town of West Rutland, mgoulette@westrutlandtown.com)
- The City of Vergennes will develop a master plan to improve the biking and walking connections between the downtown district and Basin Harbor. (Adam Lougee, Executive Director, Addison County Regional Planning Commission. alougee@acrpc.org)

“Vermonters depend upon their transportation system to provide access to work, school, shopping and other activities. We need to collaborate with communities and coordinate public polices and investments in order to grow our economy and reduce our energy consumption,” said Transportation Secretary Sue Minter. “This inter-agency collaboration is doing just that by helping communities to plan and grow in way that makes it easier for Vermonters to walk, bike, or take transit.”

“This unique partnership between agencies of transportation and commerce and community development is breaking down the government silos, aligning state investments to promote walkability and economic vitality in our community centers and giving Vermonters more freedom to choose how they move from place to place,” said Housing and Community Development Commissioner Noelle MacKay.

Annually, the program grants approximately \$200,000 to help Vermont municipalities outside of Chittenden County (Chittenden County has a similar program administered by its regional planning commission). The state received 8 applications, requesting approximately half a million in funding. Program Managers Jackie Cassino (VTrans) and Richard Amore (ACCD) said the communities summited strong proposals, making the inaugural round of the grant program extremely competitive. The grants are reviewed by a five-member selection committee comprised of representatives from state agencies and regional planning commissions.

For more information, visit the grant website <http://vtransplanning.vermont.gov/programs/scbc>.