



Environmental Assessment Public Hearing



PRESENTED TO
Town of Middlebury

PRESENTED BY
VTrans and VHB

May 11, 2017



Community Project Goals

- Protect safety of the community: people, property, environment
- Minimize project impact on vitality of the downtown community: businesses, residents, institutions
- Maintain traffic flow and pedestrian access
- Develop and maintain a credible schedule
- Engage with the local community and facilitate clear communication with all stakeholders



Introductions





Hearing Overview

- Review of Timelines
- Environmental Assessment Process
- Upcoming Next Steps
- Public Comment Period



Overall Timeline

- Temporary bridges to be installed Summer 2017
- Current Project schedule
- Target Project construction schedule 2018–2021

2017

2018

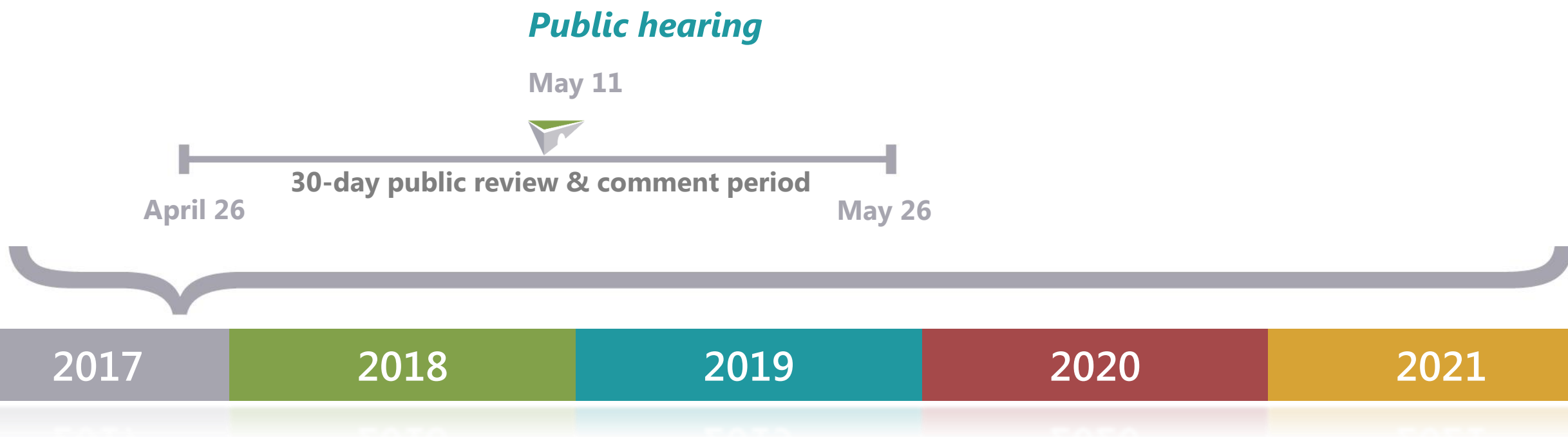
2019

2020

2021



EA Public Review and Comment Period





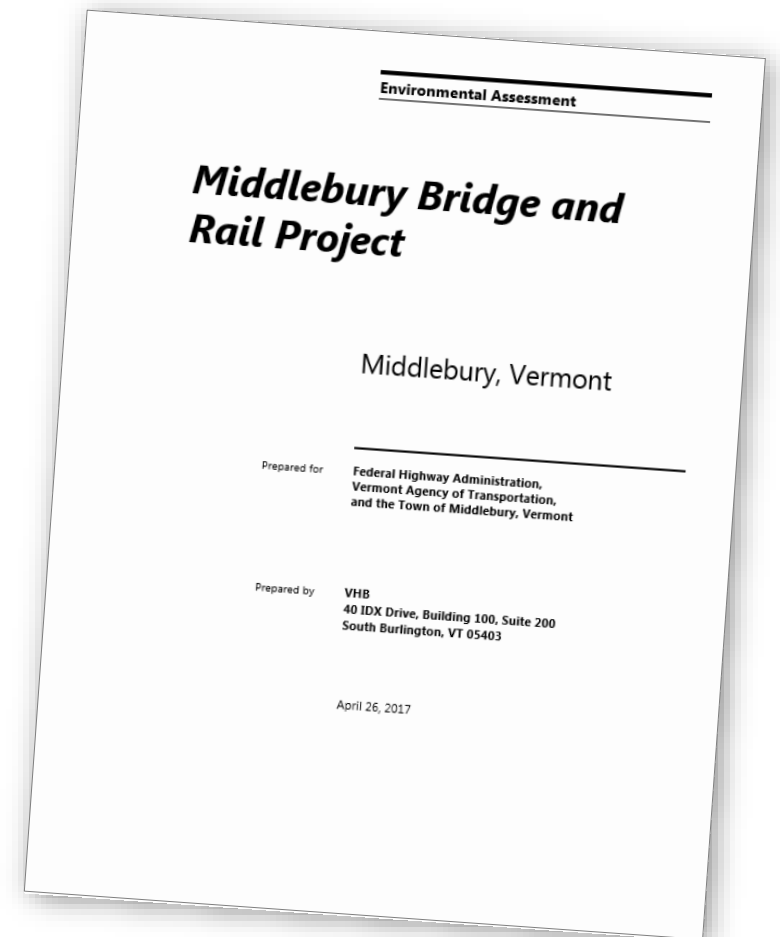
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Federal requirement that federal agencies must assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to undertaking major federal actions including expenditure of federal funds.



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- Levels of NEPA environmental review
 - Categorical Exclusion (CE)
 - **Environmental Assessment (EA)**
 - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)





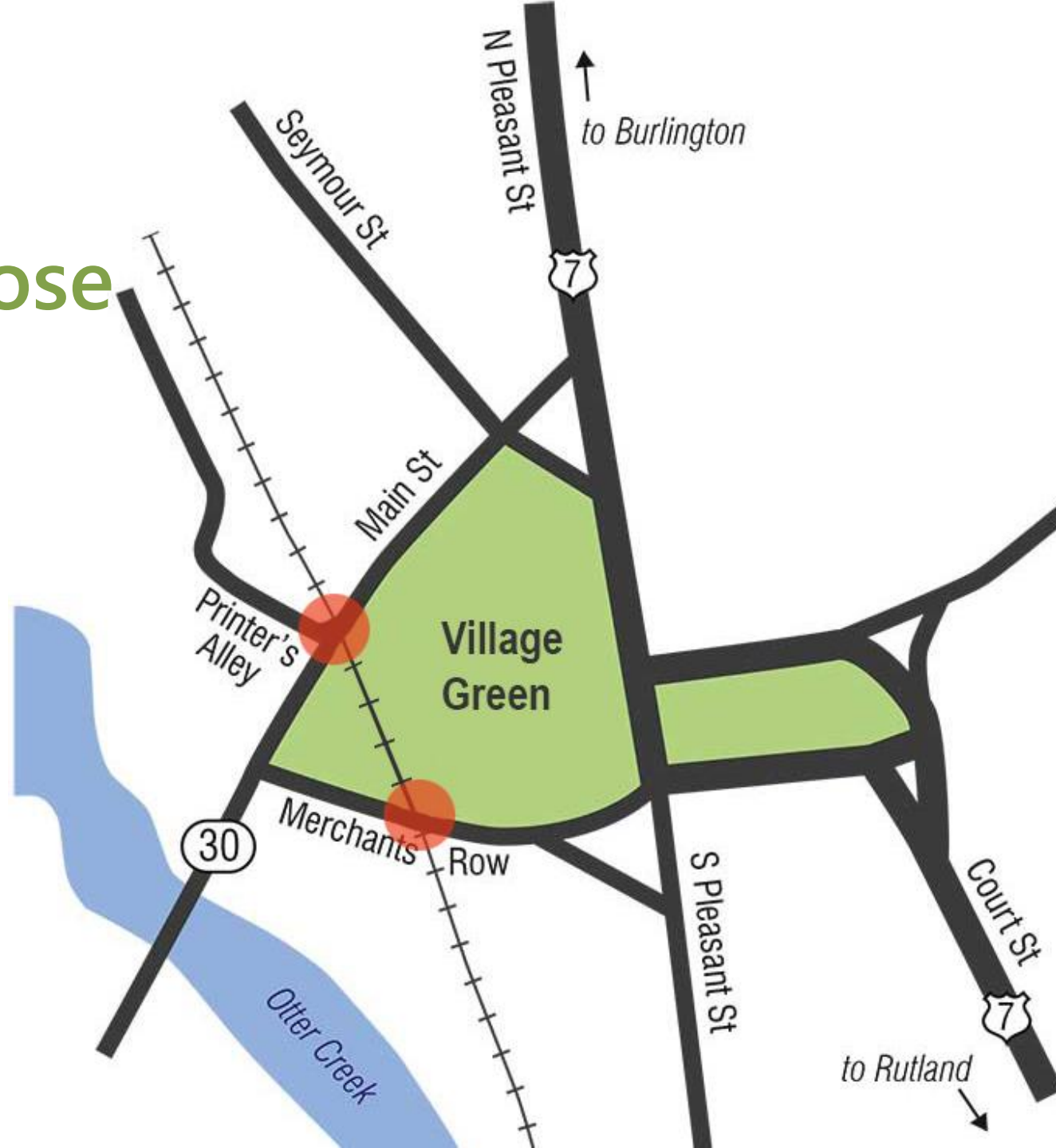
Environmental Assessment Process

- ✓ **Purpose and need**
- ✓ Alternatives considered
- ✓ Identification of Proposed Action
- ✓ Resource assessment, effects & mitigation
 - Public Hearing & Comment Period
 - FHWA determination
 - Finding of no significant impact (FONSI)
 - Finding of significant impact





Defining Purpose and Need



***“The purpose of the project** is to address the structural deficiencies of two rail-highway grade-separated bridges in downtown Middlebury where Main Street (VT 30/TH 2 Bridge 102) and Merchants Row (TH 8 Bridge 2) span the Vermont Western Rail Corridor track, to address rail safety concerns, and to provide appropriate vertical and horizontal rail clearances for the design service life of the structure(s) (100 years).”*

—Environmental Assessment
Section 1.4, Project Purpose





Project Need: *Existing Conditions*
Main Street Bridge



Project Need: *Existing Conditions*
Merchants Row Bridge



Project Need: *Existing Conditions*
Vermont Western Rail Corridor Tracks



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Fundamental Planning and Design Criteria



Community



Roadway design



Bridge



Railroad



Village Green



Stormwater/Drainage



Project Alternatives



No action



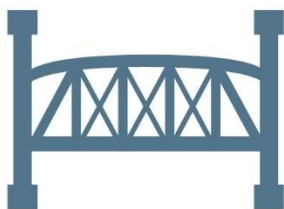
Bridge rehabilitation



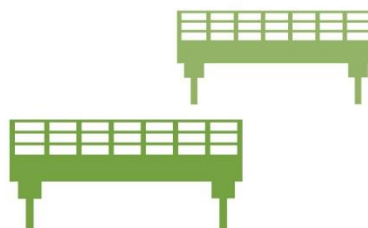
New bridge(s) on new
Downtown alignment



Eastern Rail bypass



Movable (lift) bridges



Two bridges



Tunnel



How were alternatives assessed?

- Purpose and need
- Public input
- Planning documents
- Historic resources
- Environmental resources/permitting
- Right-of-way (ROW)
- Cost



Environmental Assessment Process

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Selection of Proposed Action



No action



Bridge rehabilitation



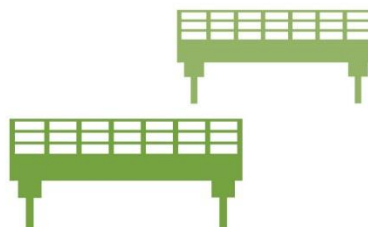
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Eastern Rail bypass



Movable (lift) bridges



Two bridges



Tunnel



Proposed Action Overview

Project Dimensions

Overall length: 3,550 feet

Tunnel length: 360 feet

Construction Area: 6.1 Acres



Proposed Action Overview

- Permanent construction
 - Structures
 - Highway
 - Railroad
 - Utilities
 - Landscaping
- Temporary works
 - Access roads
 - Support of excavation
 - Waste, borrow, and staging





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Resources Assessed: Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation

- Land use (*Section 3.1*)
- Traffic (*Section 3.2*)
- Wetlands (*Section 3.3*)
- Surface waters (*Section 3.4*)
- Groundwater and drinking water resources (*Section 3.5*)
- Floodplains and floodways (*Section 3.6*)
- Wildlife (*Section 3.7*)
- Threatened and endangered species (*Section 3.8*)
- Air quality (*Section 3.9*)
- Noise and vibration (*Section 3.10*)
- Parks, recreation, and conservation land (*Section 3.11*)
- Historic resources (*Section 3.12*)
- Archaeological resources (*Section 3.13*)
- Acquisitions (*Section 3.14*)
- Social and economic considerations (*Section 3.15*)
- Utilities and emergency services (*Section 3.16*)
- Hazardous/Contaminated materials (*Section 3.17*)



Resources Assessed: Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation

- Land use
- **Traffic (Mark Suennen)**
- Wetlands
- Surface waters
- Groundwater and drinking water resources
- Floodplains and floodways
- Wildlife
- Threatened and endangered species
- Air quality
- **Noise and vibration (Jason Ross)**
- Parks, recreation, and conservation land
- **Historic resources (Kaitlin O'Shea)**
- Archaeological resources
- Acquisitions
- **Social and economic considerations (Brad Ketterling)**
- Utilities and emergency services
- **Hazardous/Contaminated materials (Rachel Lomonaco)**



Traffic

- Regulatory context: No permits required
- Traffic evaluated:
 - Vehicles
 - Bicycles
 - Business/Residential access
 - Bus transit
 - Pedestrians
 - Parking
 - Railroad





Traffic

- Future traffic volumes
 - Status quo (No Action) = Proposed Action
- Permanent effects of Proposed Action
 - No change in capacity
 - No net change in available parking
 - Improvements to sidewalks and access
 - Improvements at Printers Alley



Temporary Traffic Impacts

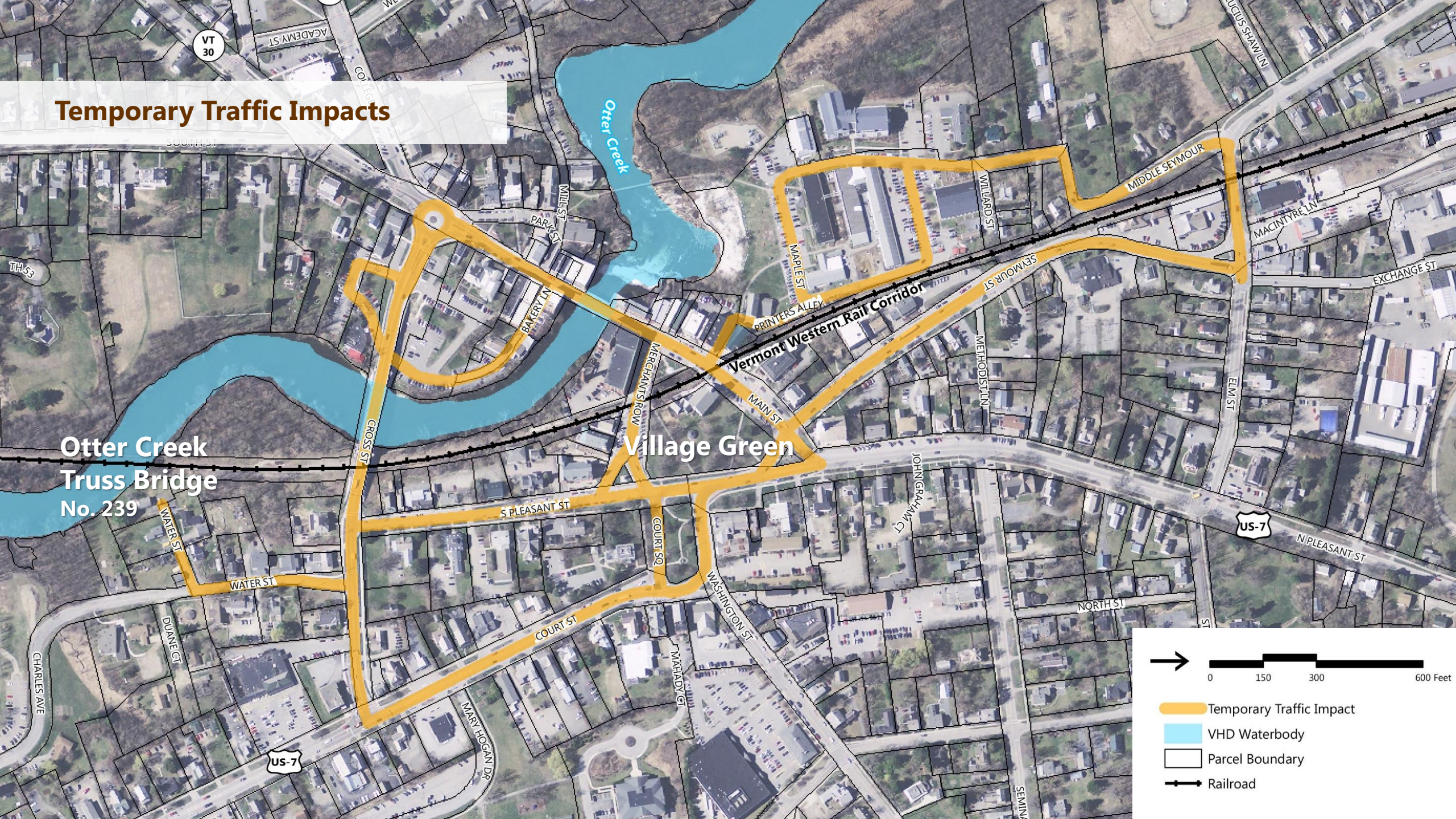
Otter Creek
Truss Bridge
No. 239

Village Green

Vermont Western Rail Corridor



- Temporary Traffic Impact
- VHD Waterbody
- Parcel Boundary
- Railroad





Traffic

- Temporary effects (construction effects)
 - 10-week full roadway, sidewalk, and rail closures
 - Printers Alley closed to vehicles (and occasionally pedestrians)
 - About 100 parking spaces closed or partially restricted
- Mitigation measures
 - Transportation Management Plan (TMP)
 - Detours established for vehicles, pedestrians, and rail traffic
 - Alternative parking options under consideration



Noise and Vibration: Roadways

- Per VTrans policy, roadway noise not evaluated
 - Proposed Action would not increase capacity or substantially alter roadway alignment
- Future traffic will not increase with Proposed Action, so roadway noise will not change





Noise and Vibration: Trains

Permanent Project effects

- Replacing jointed track with continuous-welded rail will decrease noise and vibration
- Tunnel section will reduce noise in the Central Business District
- Lowering tracks and double-stack freight will not appreciably affect noise or vibration
- Higher allowable track speed could increase noise and vibration

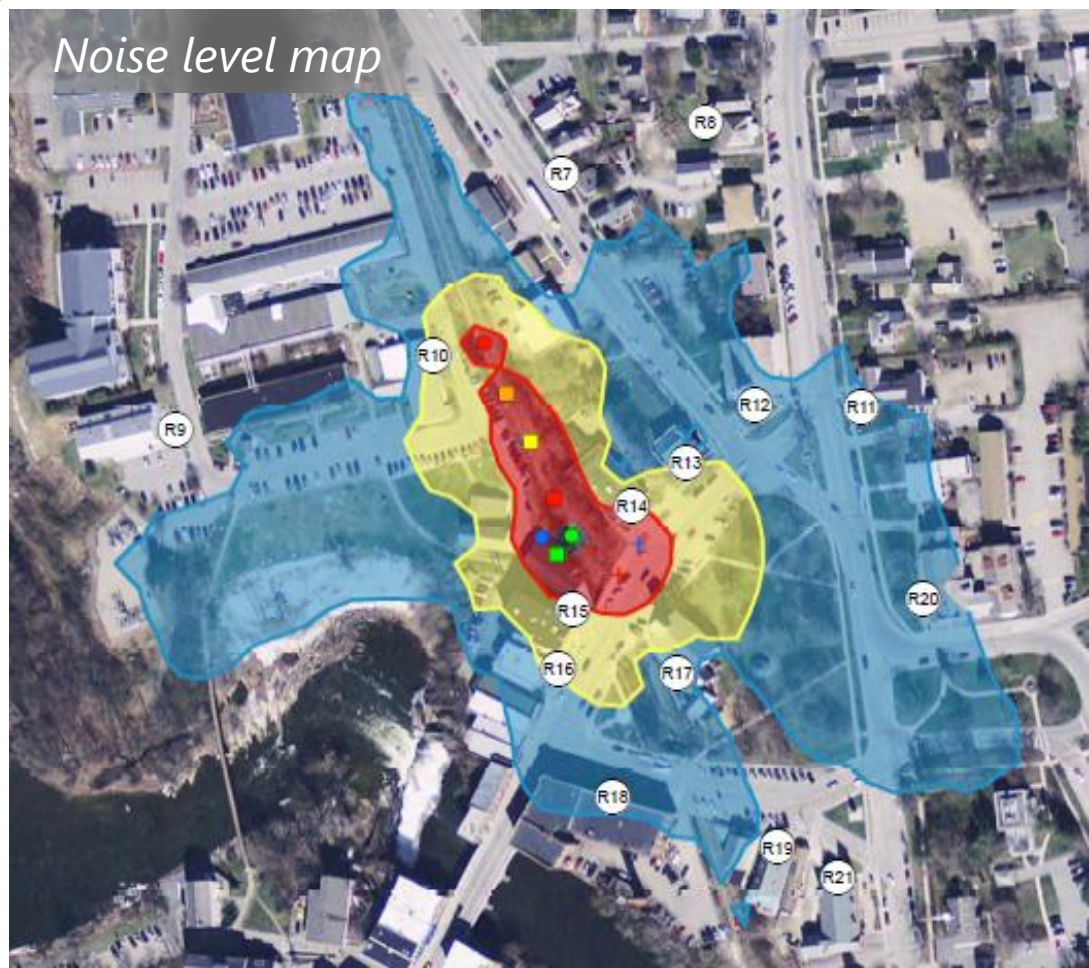
Impact assessment

- Per Federal Transit Administration guidelines, no train noise or vibration impact
- Overall future train noise will not increase compared to No-Action conditions
- Overall future vibration will not have a perceptible increase over No-Action conditions



Noise and Vibration: Construction (Temporary) Effects

- Federal Transit Administration noise and vibration guidelines
- Construction noise evaluated throughout study area during various phases of construction such as excavation, track construction
- Construction noise is not projected to exceed daytime limits
- Track construction at night may exceed FTA guidelines near residences on Middle Seymour Street





Noise and Vibration: Construction Mitigation

- Best management practices implemented to minimize noise
 - Equipment functioning properly
 - Locating equipment away from receptors, as possible
 - Using portable enclosures for small equipment (jackhammers and concrete saws)
 - Maintaining strong communications with the public about time and nature of construction activities
- Historic Structures Management Plan to minimize risk of vibration damage





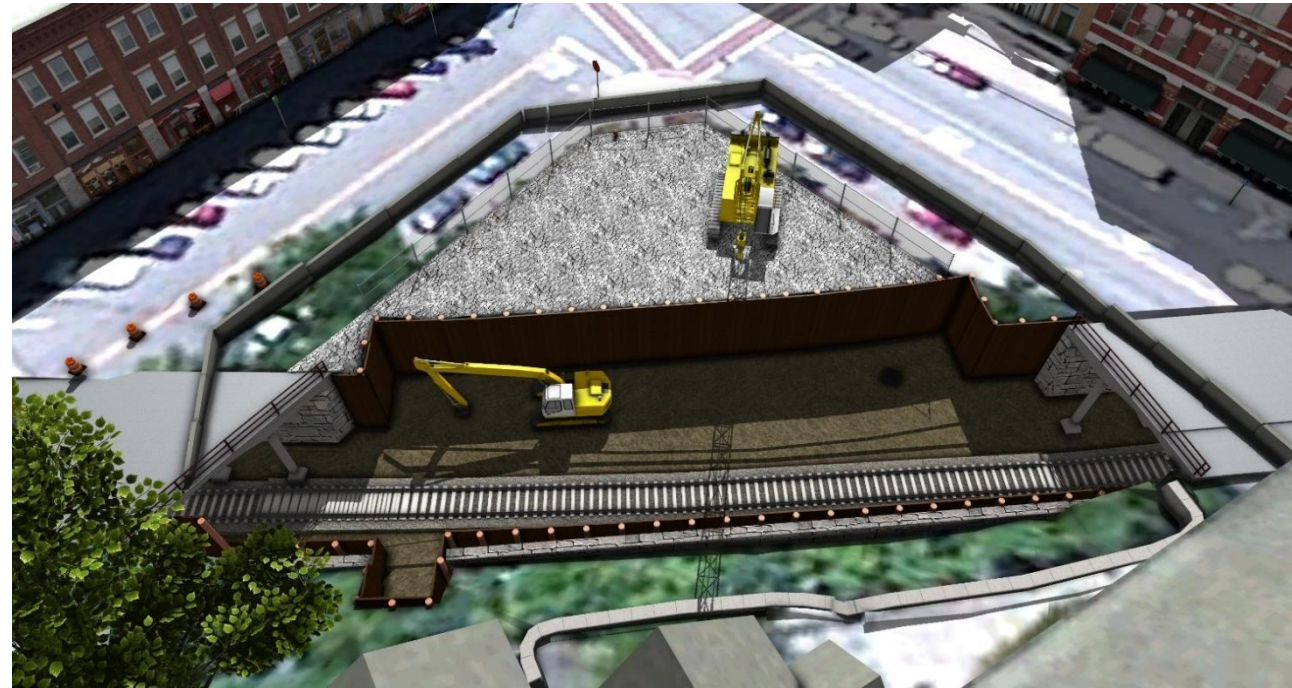
Hazardous/Contaminated Materials

- Resources present
 - Soil and groundwater
 - Detailed assessment of these resources overseen by VT DEC
 - No hazardous materials present
- Regulatory background
 - On-going oversight by VT DEC
 - Requirements apply to the management/disposal of materials



Hazardous/Contaminated Materials

- Effects of the completed project
 - Improve soil in the project area.
 - Improve shallow groundwater
- Construction (temporary) effects
 - Disturbance of contaminated materials
 - Construction phase dewatering





Hazardous/Contaminated Materials

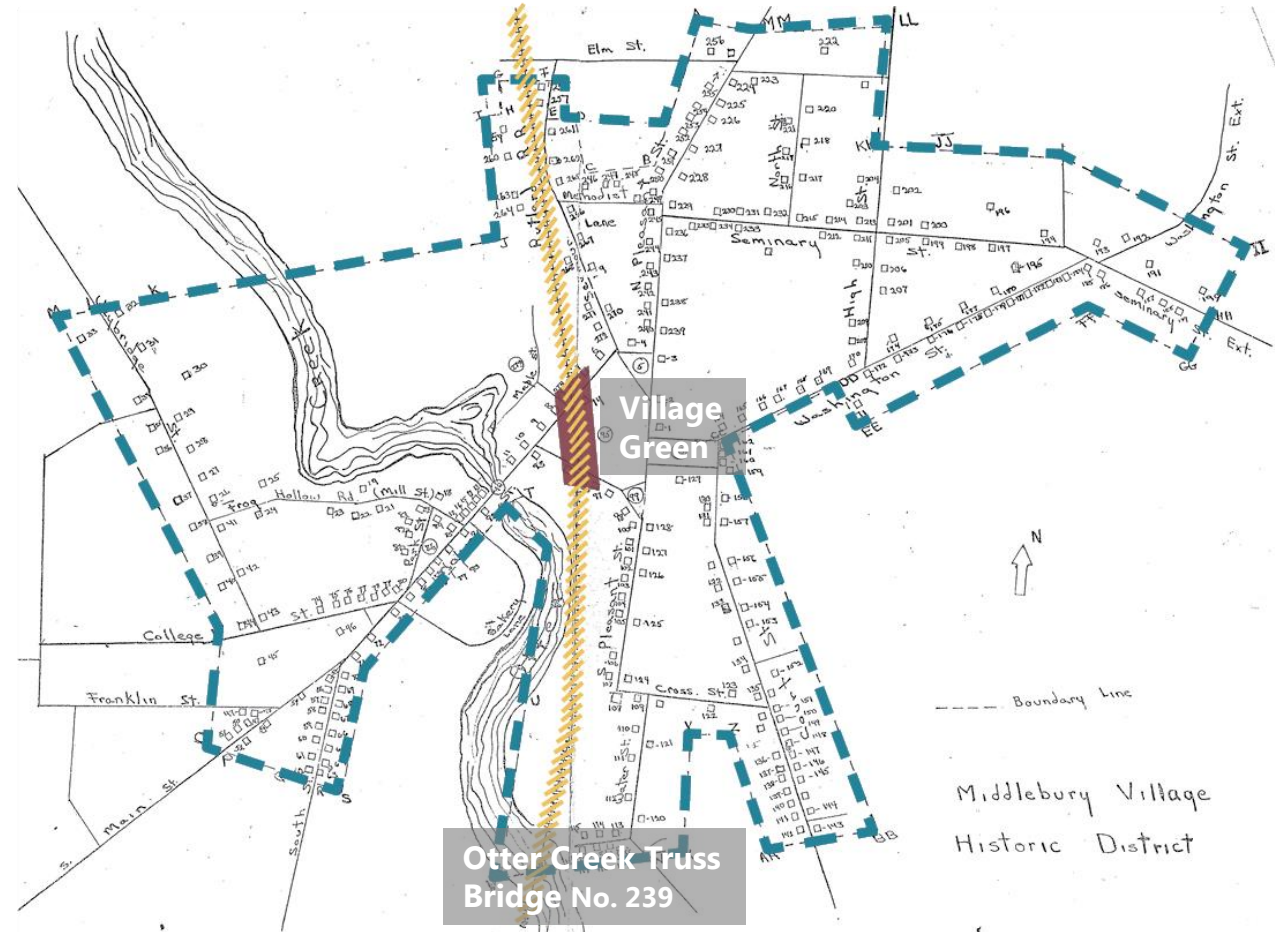
- Project mitigation
 - Corrective Action Plan
 - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit
 - Full-time monitoring personnel





Historic Resources

- Resources present
 - Middlebury Village Historic District
 - Rutland Railroad Historic District
- Regulatory background
 - Section 106
 - Section 4(f)



Middlebury Village Historic District/Rutland Railroad Historic District



Historic Resources

- Effects of completed project
 - Removal of historic bridges
 - Viewshed change
 - Reestablish historic Village Green (pre-railroad era)







Historic Resources

- Construction Effects (Temporary)
 - Vibration during construction





Historic Resources

- Project mitigation
 - Photo documentation
 - Design of tunnel end caps
 - Salvage of bridge abutments and design of Village Green enhancements
 - Interpretive panels
 - National register historic district update





Social & Economic Considerations

- Project is located in commercial and cultural core of Middlebury
- Construction-related effects on businesses and accessibility a major concern
- Regulatory background
 - NEPA





Social & Economic Considerations

- Effects of Completed Project
 - Expanded Village Green
 - More green space
 - Event functionality
 - Pedestrian accessibility
 - Interpretive signage
 - Improved sidewalks and railings





Social & Economic Considerations

- Construction phase effects
 - Duration of construction
 - Limited accessibility during 10-week closure period
 - Church services, ADA compliance, and the elderly
 - Events in Village Green





Social & Economic Considerations

- Mitigation for construction phase effects
 - Train detour
 - Accelerated bridge construction vs. conventional
 - Accessibility plan (business/residences)
 - Learning from other communities
 - Project communications
 - Town efforts (Neighbors Together)



3 years before the onset of planned closure period



Resources Effects Summary from EA: **Completed Project**

Land use		Noise and vibration	
Traffic		Parks, recreation, and conservation land	
Wetlands		Historic resources	
Surface waters		Archaeological resources	
Groundwater and drinking water resources		Acquisitions	
Floodplains and floodways		Social and economic considerations	
Wildlife		Utilities and emergency services	
Threatened and endangered species		Hazardous/Contaminated materials	
Air quality			


















Beneficial effect

No effect

Adverse effect



Resources Effects Summary from EA: **Construction**

Land use		Noise and vibration	
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Beneficial effect

No effect

Adverse effect



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Public Comments

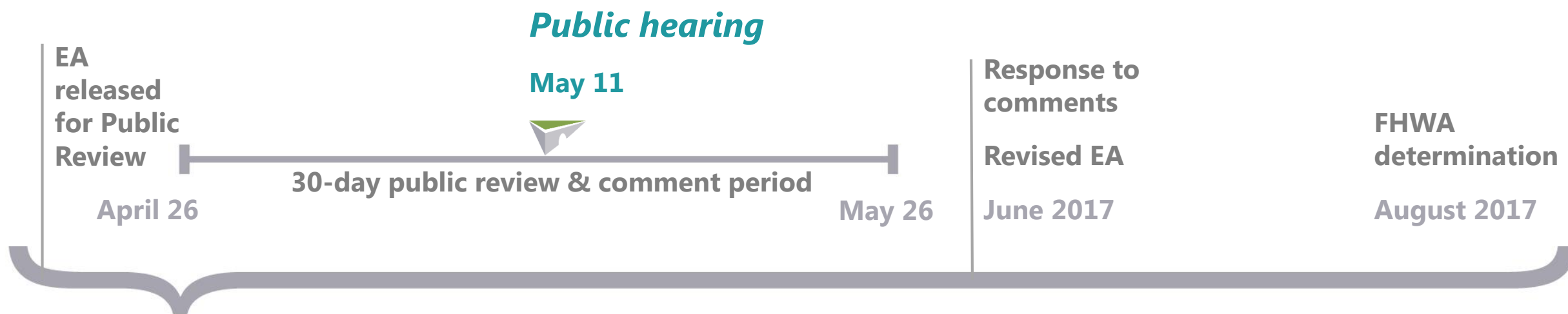
Thank you for your participation!

- When offering comments
 - Wait to be recognized before speaking
 - Approach microphone or wait for one to be handed to you
 - State your name and town of residence
 - Talk clearly and slowly (public hearing is being transcribed)
 - Keep comments 3 minutes or less
- Materials provided
 - Project informational summary and map
 - Comment sheet





Upcoming Next Steps



2017

2018

2019

2020

2021



Public Comments

- Locations to view EA:
 - Ilsley Public Library** | 75 Main Street
 - Town Manager's Office** | 77 Main Street
 - <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/projects/middlebury>
- Send comments by US Mail to:
 - Kenneth Sikora**, *Environmental Program Manager*
 - Federal Highway Administration
 - Federal Building, Suite 216
 - 87 State Street | Montpelier, VT 05602-9505
- Send comments by Email to: Middlebury@vhb.com

Comment period closes: **May 26, 2017**