

**Vermont Traffic Committee
Final - Minutes of Meeting Held
April 29, 2021**

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Thursday April 29, 2021. Committee Chair Joe Flynn called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on a virtual Microsoft Teams call. The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 pm.

Attendees:

Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation, Traffic Committee Chair
Wanda Minoli, Commissioner of Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Traffic Committee Member
Lt. Tara Thomas, Delegate for Commissioner of Public Safety, Traffic Committee Member
Sven Fedorow, AAG, Traffic Committee Legal Advisor

Ian Degutis, VTrans Traffic Operations Engineer, Traffic Committee Coordinator

Benjamin Marks, Selectboard Member, Cornwall
Elizabeth Napier, Resident, Cornwall
Elizabeth Karnes Keefe, Resident, Cornwall
Mary Jane Broughton, Resident, Cornwall
Sarah Pelkey, Resident, Cornwall
Vicki Capitani, Selectboard Member, Dover
Wilbur Rice, Resident, Manchester
John O'Keefe, Town Manager, Manchester
Devon Neary, Transportation Planner, Rutland RPC

Kristin Driscoll, VTrans Traffic Operations
Joe Kelly, VTrans Traffic Operations
Stephanie Lemieux, VTrans Traffic Operations
Marcos Miller, VTrans Traffic Operations
Josh Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations
Todd Sears, VTrans Operations and Safety Bureau

Agenda Items Discussed

- **Cornwall VT-30, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits along Vermont Route 30 for approximately 1.7 miles between the intersection with Vermont 74 and Cider Mill Rd which is a geometrically challenging intersection. As part of the engineering study, Traffic Operations conducted three speed studies, which found the 85th percentile speed to be 47 mph in the 40 mph zone, and 52 and 54 mph in the 50 mph zone. Mr. Degutis explained that 85th percentile speed is the speed below which 85 percent of vehicles are moving, which is a standard measurement used in engineering review of speed limits. There has been a total of 12 crashes in the past five years along this segment of road, including five personal injuries and no fatalities.

Based on the 85th percentile speeds showing reasonable compliance with existing posted speed limit, and a detailed review of the causes of the crashes, Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the current speed limits and would suggest increasing enforcement in this area.

Secretary Flynn clarified with Mr. Degutis and Mr. Marks that the request was for a review and not a specific change in speed limits.

Mr. Marks said that the Selectboard has specific concerns along this stretch of highway. He believes that the speed limits play a part in the crashes since this is the most densely packed area in Cornwall and includes the town hall, the school, and a number of houses. The Morse Road intersection is also an area of concern and the Cider Mill Rd has a blind corner which makes it, in his opinion, the most dangerous intersection in town. The Selectboard was looking for an evaluation and any suggestions to improve the safety along this road. He also noted that there will also be some changes and development in this area coming soon, such as the village store being converted to a café and a new greenhouse opening for public business. He also added that residents wanted to build a gazebo on the town green but it was rejected by a Town board because of the proximity to the road and it would not be able to be utilized to its fullest.

Ms. Pelkey, who is a resident, would like to highlight that the village green across from the town hall is very underutilized. She is surprised that there is no mention of the elementary school such as a school speed limit, there are people who walk their kids to school and there are a lot of bicyclists. Mr. Degutis replied that the access to the school is off a town highway and not directly off the state highway, so it does not qualify for school zone signage according to VTrans practice.

Sec Flynn says that the letter that the residents wrote to the Selectboard noted that other towns in the area have lower village speed limits, but Cornwall does not.

Commissioner Minoli is curious when the two developments will be implemented, to which Mr. Marks said that the greenhouses are currently open and the construction on the town store has begun, will continue this summer and will potentially be opened next fall. Town green projects are not currently planned because of the previously rejected requests.

Lt. Thomas said it seems like there is a lot going on in this area and 12 crashes with five injuries is a lot from a law enforcement standpoint.

Secretary Flynn says that the vote will be on the study that has been done but indicated this should be the beginning of a conversation about this area.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation for no change at this time.

- **Cornwall VT-74, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to lower the speed limit on Vermont 74 near North Bingham and South Bingham Streets but did not request a specific speed. He explained that the engineering study measured the 85th percentile speed to be 52, 50, and 54 mph which shows good compliance. There have been three crashes in the past five years.

Based on the limited crash history and good compliance with the speed limit, Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the current speed limits and suggests the town increases enforcement. There will be signage upgrades for the curve and intersection as well as brush clearing to improve sign visibility.

Mr. Marks says that their own speed studies showed that they were unlikely to get a speed reduction and knows that the 85th percentile is widely accepted, but from the residents' point of view this means many people could be going much faster than the speed limit and it could result in no change. Many of the residents put up their own signs which did cause other residents to slow down to respect the wishes of their neighbors and has been more helpful than any other traffic calming measures. There is also a future subdivision off North Bingham Street which is expected to sell out so he would like the traffic committee to consider the increase in volume and turning movements at this intersection. He also believes the passing zone in this area is dangerous because there is a hill crest which is hard to see past, there was a crash at this location earlier this week.

Ms. Pelkey says that there is an increase of bikes and pedestrians in this area as well as kids in the area. She says that the 85th percentile does not make sense, the speed limit should not be as high, and she would like the Traffic Committee to pay attention to other factors other than the 85th percentile and the truck route.

Ms. Keefe wanted to emphasize the blind spot at the intersection with Bingham Street due to the crest in the road. With more and more people using this road and turning at that intersection she is extremely worried. Ms. Broughton reminded us that it is difficult for the regular drivers and drivers that are not familiar with the area will not know to take such care when turning here. She also says that South Bingham Street has become a shortcut for truck drivers. Ms. Napier wanted us to know there are many bicycle tours in the area and a lot of them stop in this area for water. Secretary Flynn asked why there is a passing zone from one direction if visibility issues seem to be the same from both approaches. Mr. Degutis stated that the crest is on one side of the intersection so there is ample sight distance on one approach for passing but not on the other. Sec Flynn asked about creating a legal no passing zone. He also wanted the residents to know that when someone is speeding excessively, lowering the speed limit will not affect how they drive so the lowered speed limit might give the town a false sense of security. Lt. Thomas says that moving the passing zone away from the intersection would be a good idea and suggested thinking about installing a yellow flashing light or a 4 way stop. Mr. Degutis responded that the flashing light would likely not be warranted due to low crash volumes and similarly a 4-way stop would not be warranted because of traffic volumes. Mr. Degutis noted that the suggested warning sign improvements will be in place for the curve and the intersection.

Secretary Flynn said that we must consider that not everyone driving through is familiar with the road and from one direction he would have no idea that there is an intersection ahead and thinks that we should be considering some measure here. Mr. Degutis suggested extending the double

yellow line away from the intersection and installing an unsafe to pass warning sign at the end of the passing zone prior to the intersection and curve to alert drivers.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation for no change and to add signage, clear brush, and extend the double yellow line. The Committee also encourages the town to reach out in the future as future developments occur.

- **Dover VT-100, No Parking:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request for a legal No Parking zone in the vicinity of a new business that has created safety concerns with parking on the state highway. It is on the south end of VT 100 in Dover.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to create a No Parking zone in this area to avoid unsafe parking, in line with the request from the Town Selectboard and Police Chief, as well as supported by the VTrans Maintenance District.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to create a No Parking zone as recommended.

- **Manchester VT-30, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits on Vermont 30 from the Class 1 limits to the Dorset town line which is about 2 miles. There have been developments since the speed limits were last reviewed that need to be considered.

Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study found the 85th percentile speed to be 48 mph in the 40 mph zone north of the recreational access. In the 50 mph zone the measured speeds were 52, 52, and 50 mph. The 85th percentile speed was also measured in the 40 mph zone in Dorset to be 48 mph.

Mr. Degutis explained based on the roadway characteristics Traffic Operations' recommendation is to extend the 40 mph zone a short distance further north on the south end of the study area to better align the speed limit with the roadway character and encompass Partridge Hill; and to establish a 40 mph zone on the north end of the study, adjacent to a 40 mph zone in the next town, that would include the intersection with North Road to better align the speed limits and transition locations with roadway character.

Mr. O'Keefe is in support of the speed limit changes but wanted to make sure that it makes sense to keep the 50 mph zone. Mr. Rice reiterated that since we are cutting down the 50 mph zone does it still warrant existence. He says there are also 2 areas of concern and one of them is not included in the speed reduction even though there is a development, intersection and curve near North Rd. Mr. Degutis stated that a 2 mile stretch with an 85th percentile speed of 52 mph is long enough to retain the 50 mph and the recommendation does reduce the posted speed through the curve Mr. Rice mentioned in the proposed 40 mph zone.

Secretary Flynn would like to see some tree trimming along this road.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the proposal as recommended.

- **Pawlet VT-30, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits on Vermont 30 with an emphasis on pedestrian safety. The engineering study measured the 85th percentile speed to be 47 mph in the 40 mph zone to the south of the intersection, 45 mph in the 35 mph zone, and 43 mph in the 35 mph zone just before 50 mph transition. There have been 3 crashes in the area.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the current speed limits and encourages the Town to increase enforcement in the area due to the poor compliance. Traffic

Operations also recommended pursuing Bicycle and Pedestrian study grants to improve safety in the area. There are also some modest sign improvements that can be made in the area.

Mr. Neary of the Rutland County RPC wanted to update the committee that the town has received a bike and pedestrian grant for a scoping study beginning this summer and hopes that they will be able to use that in support of future funding opportunities. He hopes that they will gain enough information to revisit the speed limit reduction at a later date and mentioned his interest in radar speed feedback signs. Lt. Thomas encouraged Mr. Neary to consider the speed feedback signs which she believes to be very effective.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept Traffic Operations proposal as recommended.

- **Weathersfield VT-131, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on Vermont 131 near Victory Drive and Lavigne Road. The engineering study measured the 85th percentile speed to be 49 in the 40 mph zone just east of transition and 53 mph in both studies done in the 50 mph zone. There have been three reposted crashes and potentially two more crashes in recent months not captured in the data.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is extend the 40 mph zone west to include Lavigne Rd due to the challenging road geometry and make some minor signage improvements.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept Traffic Operations recommendation.

Additional Agenda Items:

Mr. Degutis introduced and briefly explained the following minor adjustments to certificates being placed before the Committee. There were no additional questions from the Committee on these items.

- Middlebury, VT-125, No Parking Certificate adjustment: This item is an administrative update to the certificate for the no parking zone based on realignment of the road changing mile points; the physical locations signs will not be moving.
- Newfane, VT-30, No Turns Certificate adjustment: This item is also an administrative update- the original certificate uses a town highway as reference which has since changed names, the update is to include mile point location information.
- Shrewsbury, VT-103, Speed Certificate adjustment: This item is to accommodate the relocation of a speed zone transition sign in front of a tree instead of behind the tree, to improve visibility and reduce maintenance effort required. The updated cert reflects the new position of the sign.

Secretary Flynn adjourned the meeting at 2:56 pm.

Minutes prepared by Joshua Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations, and submitted via Ian Degutis, Traffic Operations Engineer/Traffic Committee Coordinator.