

Vermont Traffic Committee
Approved Minutes of Meeting Held
August 28, 2019

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Thursday August 28, 2019. Committee Chair Joe Flynn called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM in the VTrans 25 Seat Conference Room, Dill Building, Berlin, Vermont. The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 PM.

Attendees:

Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation, Traffic Committee Chair
Wanda Minoli, Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, Traffic Committee Member
Capt. Mike Manley, Delegate for Commissioner of Public Safety, Traffic Committee Member
Leslie Welts, AAG, Traffic Committee Legal Advisor

Ian Degutis, VTrans Traffic Operations Engineer, Traffic Committee Coordinator

Neal L. McIntyre, Principal Flood Brook School, Londonderry (via phone)
David Jescavage, Town Administrator, Swanton VT
Kristin Hayes, Middlesex VT resident
Leonard Stell, Swanton Police
M. Dethloff, Middlesex VT resident
Albert M. Borne, Middlesex VT resident

Marcos Miller, VTrans Traffic Operations
Tyler Guazzoni, VTrans Traffic Operations
Kristin Driscoll, VTrans Traffic Operations
Derek Lyman, VTrans Traffic Signal Operations Engineer

Agenda Items Discussed

- **Londonderry VT-11, School Speed Limit:** Mr. Degutis explained that the town requested a school speed limit in the vicinity of Flood Brook School (K-8 serving Londonderry, Landgrove, Weston, and Peru and non-operating towns including Winhall and Stratton). This request was similar in nature to a 2015 request; at that time TC recommended installing flashing warning beacons but the town declined due to the cost-share. Mr. Degutis noted that the town had also requested a left turn lane which is out of Traffic Committee's purview and could possibly be looked at when a larger scale project goes through the area. The engineering study showed conditions have not changed since 2015 with very few crashes and an 85th percentile speed of 55 mph. Mr. Degutis also explained that VTrans recently installed additional warning signage in the area, including gate-posting signs to improve visibility. Traffic Operations recommendation remains the same as 2015, that flashing beacons be installed on the school zone signs, with cost shared between VTrans and the Town, but no school speed limit be implemented. Neal McIntyre, Flood Brook School principal voiced his concerns that there had been several near misses, that VT-11 is a major truck route and the school is the low point between two large hills where traffic picks up speed on either side in a 50 mph zone and often has trouble stopping for turning traffic. He stated that he felt that it was only a matter of time before an accident occurs.

Secretary Flynn asked if the principal was aware of any local conversations of why the beacons were not installed after the first study in 2015. Mr. McIntyre could only speculate that it was a funding issue. Commissioner Minoli asked if the student population had gone up since 2015. Mr. McIntyre answered that while he did not have the exact numbers from 2015, the population has risen about 25% since he began at the school in 2015. It was stated that about 55% bus and 45% are drop off. Capt. Manley asked how close the next speed limit change was. VTrans regional Traffic Investigator Marcos Miller answered that this is an isolated area and the next change was miles away in the village. AAG Welts asked if there had been a “Safe Routes to School” study. Although this program has recently been replaced, Mr. McIntyre indicated the school had worked with Municipal Assistance in 2014/2015 but no viable options were found and most families (and the school) try to keep students from walking and biking on VT-11 due to the speed and high volume of traffic. Secretary Flynn asked about the observation of speed enforcement or if Mr. McIntyre knew if the town had a contract for enforcement. Mr. McIntyre stated that there was a contract in place with VSP but was dissolved in 2016 due to lack of ability for VSP to cover the area. He mentioned that there had been very little enforcement since then. Commissioner Minoli asked a question to clarify when the beacons would run. Mr. Degutis stated that they would flash on school days during arrival and dismissal times. Traffic committee voted to implement a 40-mph school speed zone with beacons contingent on the town and/or school committing to the cost share.

- **Middlesex VT-12, Speed Limit:** Mr. Degutis explained that the town requested to extend the speed zone and reduce the speed to 25-mph in the vicinity of Putnamville. Traffic Operations recommendation is to extend the 35-mph zone to the North approximately 900 feet. Speeds do not support lowering the limit below 35-mph. Kristin Hayes, resident of Putnamville, expressed concerns about the amount of accidents and the safety of her children as there is a bus stop in the area. The Committee asked about enforcement and the residents stated that the coverage was low, that the town contracted with the Sheriff for \$6,000.00. Secretary Flynn asked about a hidden drive sign or other advance warning signs. Mr. Degutis stated that VTrans does install hidden drive signs when warranted, usually at the request of the property owner as well as school bus stop ahead signs when requested by the bus company. It was noted that a sign project was currently going through the area that will be addressing the school bus stop signs and that this area may be limited due to ledge for a hidden drive sign, but that Traffic Operations would follow up on the issue. Albert Borne, resident of Putnamville, expressed concerns for the speed through the area noting the blind curves and number of accidents. He requested it be considered to lower the speed limit to 30-mph. Mr. Degutis noted that the crash history for the past 5 years shows that there have been 3 non reportable crashes, this area in not a high crash location. Marge Dethloff, resident of Putnamville, asked about transverse rumble strips. Mr. Degutis stated that the agency does not install these as they can be very noisy for residents and can cause a winter maintenance issue with the build up of ice. Secretary Flynn asked about radar speed feedback signs. Mr. Degutis explained that the town could request to install radar feedback signs through a permit for work in the right-of-way at their cost and Traffic Operations would relay that information to the town. Traffic Committee voted to extend the 35-mph speed zone as recommended. Secretary Flynn asked to add orange flags to the 35-mph signs to emphasize the change.

- **Swanton/Highgate US-7, Speed Limit:** Mr. Degutis explained that the town requested to lower the speed limit north of the Class 1 limit in Swanton on US-7. Traffic Operations recommendation is to create a 40-mph speed zone from the Class 1 limit approximately ½ a mile to a point 0.2 miles north of the town line in the town of Highgate. Chief Stell, Swanton Police, expressed his concerns about enforcement and the area being densely populated with elderly walking on US-7, he requested the speed limit be 30-mph from the Class 1 limit to the town line. Secretary Flynn asked if making it a 35-mph zone would make a difference. Capt. Manley stated that that may make enforcement harder and the general consciences in the room felt that a 10-mph drop in speed made people pay more attention than a 5-mph drop. Traffic Committee voted to create a 40-mph speed zone from the Class 1 limit to a point 0.2 miles north of the town line as recommended.
- **Waitsfield VT-100, No Passing:** Mr. Degutis explained that the town requested to make a formal no passing zone near Hartshorn Farm stand. This area is marked as a passing zone currently however it only barely meets the minimum sight distance requirements. Traffic Operations recommendation is to close the passing zone and paint a solid double-barrier yellow line, but not to create a formal no passing zone (with signs) as there is adequate sight distance and locating the “end no passing” sign becomes a challenge as there is not a safe passing area on either side. Traffic Committee voted to accept the recommendation, endorsing closing of the passing zone with a double-barrier yellow line, but not to create a No Passing Zone.
- **Waterville VT-109, Speed Limit:** Mr. Degutis explained that the Town had requested a school speed limit in the vicinity of Waterville Elementary School. The engineering study showed an 85th percentile speed of 53-mph and there have been two nonreportable crashes in a 5-year period. Traffic Operations recommendation is that flashing beacons be installed on the school zone signs, which would be a shared cost between VTrans and the Town, but not to create a school speed limit. Commissioner Minoli stated that this may be a consolidated school district and wondered if the student population had risen. This information was not provided by the town. It was noted that during observations there were only 4 students and 2 adults that were walking. Traffic Committee voted in favor of Traffic Operations recommendation not to create a school speed zone and to endorse beacons which could be installed at a shared cost between VTrans and the town.

Additional Agenda Items: Mr. Degutis gave a brief explanation of the remaining agenda items, all of which were minor adjustments to certificates:

- Colchester VT-2A – Combining two existing certs- administrative change only
- Ferrisburgh FSH – Short stretch (0.136mi/~700 ft) of state highway between a stop condition at US-7 and Class 1 (30-mph). Does not appear was ever intended to be a 50 mph, but need cert for 30-mph to install signs.
- Lyndon VT-114 & Lyndon VT-122 – Adjusting signs for better location to accommodate VAST trail and groomer.
- Ripton VT-125 – Adjusting cert to field location.
- St. Albans VT-36 – Two certs that met, triggered by mapping to eliminate possible discontinuity
- Wallingford US-7 – Adjusting cert to actual field location.