

**Vermont Traffic Committee  
Minutes of Meeting Held  
December 15, 2020**

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Tuesday December 15, 2020. Committee Chair Joe Flynn called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on a virtual Microsoft Teams call. The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 pm.

**Attendees:**

Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation, Traffic Committee Chair  
Anthony Facos, Delegate for 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

Bob Kancir, Resident, Bridgewater Corners  
Catherine McMains, Selectboard Member, Jericho  
Doug Tift, Resident, Fairlee  
Eric and Rita Brooks, Residents, Fairlee  
Jason Bacus, Chief of Police, Fairlee  
Tad Nunez, Town Administrator, Fairlee  
Josh Arneson, Town Manager, Richmond  
Nancy Robinson, Administrative Assistant, Bridgewater  
Peter Berger, Selectboard Member, Fairlee  
Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager, Westminster  
Todd Odit, Town Administrator, Jericho  
Wayne Howe, Selectboard Member, Jericho  
Zac Conaway, Selectboard Member, Groton  
Lynn Bertram, Selectboard Member, Bridgewater  
Roger Brown, Selectboard Member, Richmond

Marcos Miller, VTrans Traffic Operations  
Joe Kelly, VTrans Traffic Operations  
Stephanie Lemieux, Traffic Operations  
Kristin Driscoll, VTrans Traffic Operations  
Josh Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations  
James Baraw, VTrans Highway Safety  
Amy Bell, VTrans Policy and Planning  
Bill Jenkins, State Highway Safety Office  
Paul White, State Highway Safety Office

## Agenda Items Discussed

- **Bridgewater US-4, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that there were two requests that had been combined into one study. The first request was to review the speed limit on US-4 in Bridgewater Corners the vicinity of the VT-100A intersection and reduce the existing speed limit of 45 mph to 35 mph from Long Trail Brewing to the existing 35 mph transition. The second request was to reduce the current 35 mph speed limit in the village to 25 mph. Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study used nine spot speed studies and found the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds to be 52 mph in the 50 mph zone, 48 mph and 51 mph in the 45 mph zone, a range of 35 to 44 in the 35 mph zone, and 30 and 33 in the 25 mph zone. He explained that the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the speed at which 85% of vehicles are moving and speed limits should be set within 5 mph of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed in most cases. There are also relatively few crashes in the Bridgewater Corners area for the volume of traffic on the road.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to extend the 50/45 transition in Bridgewater Corners further west to better capture the curve and narrow bridge but does not recommend reducing the 45 mph speed limit based on the crash data and speed studies. The recommendation in the Village is to create a 30 mph speed zone encompassing the existing 25 mph zone and a portion of the 35 mph zone which would begin at the Woodstock Town Line and end just west of Gulf Coast Road creating more appropriate transition locations.

Mr. Kancir asked about study considerations based on the speed through the intersection with VT-100A due to large trucks turning at that intersection. He also noted that there are a lot of establishments in the area which create turning movements as well as snowmobiles in the winter and bicycles in the summer. He would also like the severity of the crashes taken into the account not just the number and referenced one specific crash involving two tractor trailers and a few parked cars.

Mr. Degutis explained that the speed studies consider land use as well as other factors and explained that drivers drive at speeds which they feel comfortable and even though there is an intersection, there are very few speed related crashes in the area. Secretary Flynn pointed out that even though the safety concerns are valid, the crash Mr. Kancir is referring to was caused by a medical condition and would not likely have been prevented by lower speeds.

Ms. Bertram believes the problem is that the speed limit changes too much in such a short segment of road. She strongly suggests the 25 mph zone to be extended from the town line to Gulf Coast Road where the recreation fields are located. There are no sidewalks in this area and children walk home from the bus stop at the former school and to the recreation fields. The speed limit here should not be increased because the former school is being rehabilitated into a daycare and a community center. She would also like a blinking yellow light to help to keep the children safe and would like it to be near the fire station. Secretary Flynn noted the flashing light could be revisited at a future time, and that the Town could request that possibly after the fire station is relocated and further assessments would be made. He also noted that changing the speed limit will not cause drivers to change their behavior but does agree that in general we strive to limit the number of speed limit changes.

Lt. Thomas asked why the busses do not drop children off at their homes instead of dropping them off at the former school to avoid walking along the road. Ms. Robinson explained that the former school is a pick up spot for the children to be bussed to and from. A lot of children are dropped off but some in the village do walk. A lot of the kids are walking to the recreation fields.

Mr. Degutis recapped the recommendation which would extend the 45 mph zone to the west approximately 0.3 miles to encompass the narrow bridge in Bridgewater Corners and create a new 30 mph zone which extends from just west of Gulf Coast road to the Woodstock town line and the other speed limits would remain the same.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to approve the recommendation as presented.

- **Groton US-302, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on US-302 on the west end of the village and extend the current 30 mph zone to Welton Rd which is approximately 0.4 miles. Currently the speed limit transitions from 50 to 40 mph near Welton Rd and then from 40 to 30 mph as the road enters the village setting. Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study measured the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed to be 45 mph in the current 40 mph zone and within the 30 mph zone the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was 39 mph, there was one crash in the area. Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the current speed limits.

Mr. Conaway expressed his concerns with seasonal speeding along this road. He also pointed out there is a bus stop which is difficult to see as well as commercial businesses and residential houses with children. He noted that he will be working with the Agency and Mr. Degutis on other strategies during a future project along US-302.

Director Facos recommend using radar speed feedback signs in the future especially once the road is repaved. Secretary Flynn suggested extending the 30 mph a shorter distance than requested to 'meet in the middle' and consider the idea of moving the transition location approximately 0.2 miles westerly, in the vicinity of the barn that sits very close to the fog line (approximately mile point 6.16) and Lt. Thomas supported that idea.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted in support of Secretary Flynn's proposal.

- **Fairlee VT-244, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request is on VT-244 along Lake Fairlee around the curve at the north end of the lake where the current speed limit is 40 mph. Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study performed speed studies that found the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds ranging from 40-45 mph which is considered good compliance. Mr. Degutis stated that there have been three crashes in the area. Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the current speed limits and install signage improvements in advance and along the curve.

Eric Brooks would like to specify that that the area of concern is actually on the eastern exit of the curve where there have been three additional crashes which occurred in 2020 and do not appear on the crash report and asked why the advisory 30 mph speed limit is not the regulatory speed limit. Mr. Degutis explained that having multiple transitions makes it harder for drivers so using the advisory speed for small areas can warn drivers of the apparent curve or hazard ahead and notify them of a safe speed in the area without adding an additional speed limit. This is a federal standard. It is noted that because the crashes occurred so recently they are not in the crash reporting system.

The Fairlee Police Chief stated that there have been measured speeds in excess of 70 mph in this area and there are also pedestrians and cyclists that use this road. Mr. Tiffit added that this area is very steep and windy and the speed limit as you come out of the curve changes to 35 and would like a reduced speed ahead sign added and would also like to do another study to determine traffic calming measures and guardrails. It is noted that the change in speed Mr. Tiffit is referring to is actually the advisory warning speed as discussed above.

Mr. Berger notes that they have been in discussion with the Agency for setting up a Road Safety Audit that will occur in the spring of 2021.

Secretary Flynn suggests tabling the item until the Road Safety Audit has been completed in 2021.

Mr. Degutis recapped that the request is to reduce the speed limit along this stretch of road and the recommendation is to retain the current speed limit.

Secretary Flynn asked the Town if they would like to table the item until a time that the Road Safety Audit could be performed.

Mr. Berger supports the recommendation on behalf of the town to postpone the request until after the road safety audit.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to table the item.

- **Jericho VT-15, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on VT-15 from Lawrence Heights to Griswold Street. The current speed limit is 40 mph at the town line which transitions to 35 mph with a school zone of 25 mph when flashing.

Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study found the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed to be in relatively good compliance with posted limits but there are some geometric constraints that limit speeds in this area. He also stated that there have been several crashes in this area as well as a fatality recently. The challenge here is to find speed limits which match roadway characteristics without creating too many transitions.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation to reduce the speed limit from the Essex town line to 35 mph and create a 25 mph zone from approximately just west of Lawrence Heights to just east of Mill St where it would change back to 35 mph. The rest of the speed limits would not be changed.

The Town voiced their support for the recommendation.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation.

- **Westminster US-5, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on US-5 on the north side of Westminster village.

Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study measured the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed to be 45, 46, and 49 mph in the 40 mph zone but there have been 24 crashes in the area.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to change the speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph to tie in with the existing 35 mph zone to the south and suggests increasing enforcement.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation.

- **Williston-Richmond US-2, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on US-2 which is currently posted at 50 mph and reduce the speed limit to 40 mph to connect the 40 mph zones on either side. Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study measured the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds to be 51 and 52 mph in this zone which shows good compliance and noted that there have been 9 crashes in this area. Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retaining

the existing speed limit with a slight adjustment of the 40/50 mph transition in Richmond approximately one hundred feet to the west to better align with the curvature of the road.

Mr. Brown shared that there is a decent amount of bike and pedestrian activity as well as tractor traffic and this is a popular commuter path into Chittenden County. He wanted to know how the tractors and bicycles factor into the speed study. He also asked about the statistics and accuracy of using a one hour count.

Mr. Degutis explained that a non-peak hour is chosen to capture free flowing traffic and noted that studies show this is an accurate way to capture speed. This type of count also aligns well with the week-long pneumatic tube counts that are sometimes used. Ms. Driscoll who conducted the study stated that there were several cyclists the day the study was performed and based on her evaluation she would feel safe biking in this area. It was also noted that the farm equipment was in use on US-2 that day as well.

Secretary Flynn replied that this stretch of road has very good visibility and sight lines. By moving the 40 mph zone around the curve they will create better sight lines at the transition location. He also noted that even if a vote is taken today this item can still be looked in the future if there are any unique circumstances or changes. Director Facos suggested using radar speed feedback signs to collect data to determine if there are problem times so they can target enforcement and Secretary Flynn reiterated that they are willing to revisit this in the future. The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation as presented.

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

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limit on VT-30 and extend both ends of the current 35 mph zone. Traffic Operations considered reducing the 35 mph zone to 30 but determined that would not be appropriate due to the findings. Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study measured the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds to be 38 mph in the 35 mph zone and there were 6 crashes in this area, 5 of which are located in the 35 mph zone. Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to move the 40/35 transition on the south side of the village approximately 600 ft and to retain the 40 mph transition on the north side of the village. The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation.

**Additional Agenda Items:**

- No other agenda items were planned or discussed.

Secretary Flynn adjourned the meeting at 3:28 pm.

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