

**Vermont Traffic Committee
Final - Minutes of Meeting Held
December 20, 2021**

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Monday December 20, 2021. Committee Chair Joe Flynn called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm on a virtual Microsoft Teams call. A physical location was also available and open for anyone to attend in person at the VTrans Dill Building in Berlin, VT. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Attendees:

Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation, Traffic Committee Chair
Wanda Minoli, Commissioner of Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Traffic Committee Member
Jenny Ronis, Assistant Attorney General, Traffic Committee Legal Advisor

Ian Degutis, VTrans Traffic Operations Engineer, Traffic Committee Coordinator

Gina Vigneault, Town Clerk, Town of Norton and Unified Towns and Gores of Essex County
Anne Sullivan, Resident, Hinesburg
Bob Snarski, Safety Officer, Shrewsbury
Francis Wyatt, Selectboard Member, Shrewsbury
John O'Dowd, Resident, Shrewsbury
Joshua Schwartz, Mad River Valley Planning District, Waitsfield
Todd Odit, Town Manager, Hinesburg
Martha Sirjane, Resident, Shrewsbury

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

Agenda Items Discussed

- **Averill-Norton VT-114, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to reduce the existing 50 mph speed limit on VT-114 in the vicinity of the Averill/Norton Town line to 40 mph for approximately 0.7 miles. One speed study was conducted at milepoint 9.92 which showed the 85th percentile speeds to be about 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 1 crash in the last 5 years. Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain the existing 50 mph speed limit based on the speed study and doesn't believe reducing the speed limit will make any impact.

Gina Vigneault stated that people cross the street near the store to Lakeview Road and the bus stops there. There is also a hiking trail at the western end of Lakeview Road with parking on the opposite side of the road. Secretary Flynn is not surprised by the speed study and in his opinion, enforcement is an issue. People cross here a lot from the unofficial parking area to the trail head and it's hard to see cars coming when trying to turn off Lakeview Road. He stated concerns with 50 mph since the store and the intersection with Lakeview Road are hard to see ahead of time because of the long sweeping curves, especially with people crossing in the summer. Ms. Vigneault says they contract with the Sheriff's Department to do some enforcement especially in the summer. Mr. Degutis says the investigation was done a little later in the year right after the request came in so it might not have captured the peak season. One option is to table the item and do another study during next summer to capture the busiest time of the year to better evaluate some of the other considerations. Secretary Flynn moved to table the discussion to do a more comprehensive study next summer to show the busiest time of year as well as considering additional signage to the west to warn motorists of potential pedestrians crossing if that is acceptable to Ms. Vigneault, to which she stated her approval.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to table the discussion until late in the summer of 2022.

- **Hinesburg VT-116 (north), Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits along VT-116 and extend the 40 mph speed limit zone north about 0.6 miles to a point closer to Place Rd.

As part of the engineering study, Traffic Operations conducted 2 speed studies, which found the 85th percentile speeds to be 47 mph in the 50 mph zone 0.2 miles north of the signal, and 50 mph in the 50 mph zone 0.5 miles north of the signal.

There have been a total of 5 crashes in the past five years along this segment of road. Having good transitions that change with road character is a very important part of placing speed limits.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to extend the 40 mph zone north 0.26 miles to the beginning of the current passing zone near the crest of the hill.

Todd Odit, the town manager, wanted to thank Traffic Operations for the study and noted that the Town does not have any comments.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation proposed by Traffic Operations. (The motion was updated to address an incorrect statement in the initial motion; this record reflects the final, corrected motion.)

- **Hinesburg VT-116 (south), Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits along VT-116 and extend the current 40 mph zone south of the village. Mr. Degutis reminded the committee that this area came before Traffic Committee previously, prior to a development being completed here, but the speed limit is set based on what is currently there and not for what will be there. Since the development has been completed the town resubmitted their request to review this area which is about 0.75 miles long.

Mr. Degutis explained that the engineering study measured the 85th percentile speeds to be 55 mph in the 50 mph zone at milepoint 3.33, 0.3 miles north the speeds were 55 mph in the 50 mph zone, and 0.3 miles further north the speeds were 48 mph in the 40 mph zone. There has been one single vehicle crash in the last 5 years at this location.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to move the transition 400 feet south to better fit with the road character and create a better transition zone. Mr. Odit approves of the recommendation and Ms. Sullivan, who lives in the development, is pleased with the outcome and thanks the Traffic Committee.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation proposed by Traffic Operations.

- **Shrewsbury VT-103, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request was to review the speed limits along VT-103 in the village of Cuttingsville, to extend the 35 to the north to Spring Lake Rd and to the south to the town line.

As part of the engineering study, Traffic Operations conducted 5 speed studies, which found the 85th percentile speeds to be 50 mph in the 40 mph zone at milepoint 0.25, 44 mph in the 35 mph zone at milepoint 0.64, 43 mph in the 35 mph zone at milepoint 0.76, 48 mph in the 40 mph zone at milepoint 0.97, and 53 mph in the 50 mph zone at milepoint 1.36. There have been a total of 7 crashes in the 5 year period from 2015-2019 and 5 more in 2020, 2 of which were fatalities. Mr. Degutis explained that Traffic Operations' recommendation is to retain existing speed limits and consider additional enforcement since the speeds are well above the speed limits. People are already disobeying the speed limit and reducing speeds isn't going to improve this so more enforcement will make a better impact. When Mr. Degutis drove the road at the measured 85th percentile speeds it felt very fast and was very uncomfortable, while driving at the current speed limits was very appropriate for the road character and felt a comfortable pace.

Bob Snarski, safety officer for the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Department, stated that they had responded to numerous accidents in the area and says there are lots of tractor trailers, skiers and commuters who drive this road. From the south coming into town the road is posted at 40 mph and doesn't change to 35 until past the cemetery in the heart of the village. He expressed concerns about the intersection site distance in town and at Spring Lake Road.

John O'Dowd also expressed his concerns with speed and would like to see the speed limit lowered as that would make some drivers (and the drivers behind them) go slower. He also asked about camera enforced speed limits. Secretary Flynn stated that this topic is currently under discussions at in the Legislature.

Martha Sirjane, who runs the farm stand during the summer there expressed concerns about trying to turn on Spring Lake Road is a hazard and the only warning north of the intersection is a school bus sign. There are about 250 cars coming out of that road and it is a blind intersection.

When turning onto the Spring Lake Rd people are passing going 40 or 50 mph and if you don't get out of the lane fast enough you risk being rear ended. She also stated customer have expressed concerns about turning into the farmstand. (Note: Ms. Sirjane's audio connection was poor and at times difficult to hear.)

Mr. Wyatt has been trying to get enforcement for over a year but there is lack of manpower at the sheriff's department. He says that people use the speed limit as a gauge and always go 5 or 10 miles over the speed limit. There also should be a sign before the intersection to show people that there is something up ahead and a lower speed limit would let people safely turn off and get back on the road. Mr. Snarski stated that he thinks the flashing speed signs work well and catch people's attention.

Commissioner Minoli says 5 crashes with 2 fatalities in 2020 is significant and concerning and the speeds seem excessive especially in the reduced area. Commissioner Minoli asked if there is an alternative to make one rate of speed instead of having so many transitions. Secretary Flynn says that all but one study shows excessive speeds and to him this shows a disregard for the current speeds. Mr. Degutis thinks the transitions are properly placed based on the road characteristics and driving at the current speed limits is appropriate, but that there is poor compliance in this area.

The committee asked to clarify and have the Town's request stated again. The request is to reduce the speed limit through the whole area to 35 mph. Secretary Flynn indicated that due to the crash he would like to err on the side of safety. Scheduling the sheriffs sounds like it's been challenging but he would like the town to continue to try getting enforcement and use radar speed feedback signs (RSFSs). He proposed approving the towns initial request to lower the speed limit to 35 MPH and then conducting a follow-up study in a year.

The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to accept the towns initial request to reduce the speed limit.

- **Stockbridge VT-107, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the initial request from the town was to reduce the speed limit through the village of Gaysville in Stockbridge.

As part of the engineering study, Traffic Operations conducted 2 speed studies and found the 85th percentile speeds at milepoint 4.35 in the 50 mph zone to be 59, and at milepoint 4.51 also in the 50 mph zone to be 58 mph. In the past 5 years from 2016-2020 there have been 5 crashes, and none through the first half of 2021. There is significant truck traffic but with the village being set back from the road it's unlikely that a lower speed limit will get much compliance.

Mr. Degutis explained that Traffic Operations' recommendation is to increase enforcement and retain the existing speed limit. The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to approve Traffic Operations' recommendation.

- **Waitsfield VT-100, Speed Limit:**

Mr. Degutis explained that this request arose out of local concerns for pedestrian safety, and a cooperative effort between the Town and Agency to review safety through the villages of Waitsfield and Irasville. As part of this effort, Traffic Operations conducted some speed studies worked with the town to come up with some modest transition improvements, which the town has formally requested the Committee implement. As part of the engineering study, Traffic Operations conducted 5 speed studies which found the 85th percentile speeds from south to north to be 44 mph in the 40 mph zone, 36 mph in the 30 mph zone, 30 mph in the 30 mph zone, 36

mph in the 30 mph zone, and 48 mph in the 50 mph zone near Kenyons. This points towards generally good compliance but there have been a significant number of crashes. There have been a total of 44 crashes in the past five years along this segment of road, most of which were relatively minor but there was one fatality from what appears to be a distracted driver.

Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to extend the 40 mph zone on the south end of the village about 500 ft, push the 30/40 transition south to include Eagles Rd, and extend the 40 mph zone on the northerly side of the village approximately 0.4 miles north which would locate it just past Kenyon's. Joshua Schwartz, speaking on behalf of the Town, says this is consistent with the request from Waitsfield. The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to approve the towns request and Traffic Operations' recommendation.

- **Westmore VT-5A, No Parking Zone:**

Mr. Degutis explained that the request is to create a legal No Parking zone in the vicinity of the southern end of Lake Willoughby on VT 5A. There will be parking improvements constructed at the Lake Willoughby South End Recreation Area but people currently park along the road for summer recreation. There have been 0 crashes in the past five years from 2016-2020 and in early 2021 there was one sideswipe crash. Mr. Degutis explained Traffic Operations' recommendation is to create a No Parking zone on both sides of the road 800 feet south of the parking area to 650 feet north of boat ramp, to take effect once the parking area construction is completed so there will still be parking until there is a better alternative. The Traffic Committee unanimously voted to create a No Parking zone as recommended.

Additional Agenda Items:

- There are no secondary items.

Secretary Flynn adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.

Minutes prepared by Joshua Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations, and submitted via Ian Degutis, Traffic Operations Engineer/Traffic Committee Coordinator. Approved by email 1-3-2021