

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION TAKES ACTION AGAINST J.A. MCDONALD, INC.**

Barre, Vt. – The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) is actively investigating whistleblower allegations of willful, non-conforming construction services by contractor J.A. McDonald, Inc. pertaining to two bridges constructed by J.A. McDonald in Bennington on Route 279 and two bridges on I-91 in Guilford. The investigation has corroborated the allegations, but also confirmed there are no immediate safety concerns.

The agency has notified the company that the investigation has led AOT to conclude that J.A. McDonald is no longer eligible to work on additional AOT projects or on projects utilizing AOT grant funds. The company has also been made aware of the State's intent to pursue legal recourse under the state's laws prohibiting fraudulent activities and false claims. The State is also reviewing potential contract claims.

"Safety is the number-one concern of this agency and has been our top concern in this matter," said Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn. "While there is no immediate public safety concern, the agency will aggressively investigate any actions that allegedly violate our contracts, threaten the integrity of our infrastructure, or undermine the public trust."

Immediately following the whistleblower complaints, AOT bridge engineers evaluated the bridges and determined there were no immediate public safety concerns. Additionally, AOT hired an engineering consultant to further review the project designs and analyze the impacts. The engineers used ground-penetrating radar, ultrasonic tests, and conducted visual examinations. Based on the results of all the testing, the agency has concluded the affected bridges are safe and will remain safe for full traffic capacity. However, the construction practices, which were discoverable and confirmed only after invasive testing of the structures, will affect the longevity of the structures.

J.A. McDonald is currently contracted by the State to perform work in downtown Waterbury and Route 2 in Cabot, Vermont. AOT has assigned additional oversight to these projects to ensure the integrity of the work meets the contract requirements. Both contracts were awarded prior to confirmation of the allegations and do not include the type of construction involved in the bridge projects. The agency has determined that halting construction on these projects would cause significant and costly delays for the state, the communities and taxpayers. AOT will work to mitigate the impacts of this ongoing investigation, and ensuing legal action, on the communities.

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