



Vermont Transportation Alternatives

Fall 2020 Application Guide

Applications Due: Friday, November 27, 2020



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Transportation Alternatives Program - State Fiscal Year 2021 Program Timeline

- The Transportation Alternatives Program grant opportunity will be announced on Sept. 30, 2020
- A pre-application training workshops will be provided to potential applicants at the link below:
 - **Wednesday, October 14th, 2020 from 10:00am-11:30pm**
 - **Join webinar by clicking on the virtual meeting link at:**
<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>
 - **This presentation will also be available for reference at the above website.**

Note: It is strongly recommended that an official representative of the applicant attend this workshop. This year, the sessions will be provided as a webinar and attendees will meet virtually to fully understand requirements associated with federal-aid projects. **No password or pre-registration is required.** You can participate in the training from any computer connected to the internet by clicking on the link above.

- Applications are due Friday, November 27th, 2020. Electronic applications submittals are strongly recommended, but hardcopies are allowed. Applications are accepted in MS Word format, or can be converted to Adobe PDF format. If sent by hard-copy, 8 copies are required. See Application Guidelines – General Instructions below.
- Projects are selected by the TA grant committee. Awards are anticipated to be announced in **mid-February of 2020.**
- For questions or concerns, please contact Scott Robertson, Municipal Assistance Bureau TA Coordinator @ scott.robertson@vermont.gov or 802-793-2395.

Program Summary

Funding opportunities for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program are specified in the newly created FAST Act (“Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act”, Statutory citation: FAST Act § 1109; 23 U.S.C. 133(h)). The FAST Act eliminates the previous MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TA) and replaces it with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding for Transportation Alternatives. These changes, however, do not effectively change VTrans’ program or criteria. These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP. All projects must be developed in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations. All projects must demonstrate a strong transportation link.

The Transportation Alternatives program provides funding for the following eligible activities:

- A. Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
- B. Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.

- C. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
- D. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
- E. Community improvement activities, including--
 - (i) historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities
 - (ii) vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control; and
 - (iii) archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under this title.
- F. Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to--
 - (i) address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff, including activities described in sections 133(b)(11), 328(a), and 329; or
 - (ii) reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.

Note: Construction of salt sheds may be eligible under the environmental mitigation category. Eligibility for salt sheds will be considered on a case by case basis based on proximity of the existing storage location to a major water body (generally within 50 ft.). We recommend reviewing eligibility with VTrans prior to application submittal.

- G. The Safe Routes to School Program under Section 1404 (SAFETEA-LU), (23 U.S.C. 402 note).

Note: The *VTrans Enhancement to Transportation Projects Policy (the "Amenity Policy")* applies to these grants. Only items that are a "functional necessity", as defined in the link below, are eligible for reimbursement for these projects.

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/portal/documents/policies/60131-Enhancements-to-Transportation-Projects.pdf>.

Project Selection – Projects will be selected by a grant committee which includes representatives from: The VTrans Municipal Assistance Bureau, the VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian, Agency of Natural Resources, and Regional Planning Commission representatives.

Eligible Project Types – The TA program provides funds to eligible projects for these types of projects.

- Scoping (feasibility) studies
- Project design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction

Scoping Studies – Many projects that are funded for design and construction are the result of a formal scoping or feasibility study. You may wish to consider applying for a scoping study before you apply for funds to design

and construct a project. Scoping studies help rule out all unintended consequences, provide more accurate cost estimates, and provide more confidence that a project will be successfully completed. A scoping study will generally bolster support for a future TA application for design and construction funding. Activities of a study include:

- defining the purpose and need of the project
- identifying potential impacts on the environment
- initial review of potential right-of-way needs
- selecting preferred alternative solutions
- estimating project management, design, and construction costs.

Construction Projects – The TA Program does not fund design only projects. All projects, other than scoping studies, must advance to construction or there is a pay-back provision.

Eligible Applicants – Below is a list of the eligible entities:

- a local government
- a regional transportation authority
- a transit agency (VT non-profit rural transit providers have been deemed eligible)
- a natural resource or public lands agency
- a school districts local education agency or school
- a tribal government
- any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation or recreational trails that the State determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of the legislation.

Reimbursement – The TA program is a reimbursement program. Sponsors submit invoices for completed work and VTrans reimburses the sponsor for the federal share of the total up to the award amount.

- **Payback Provision** – Before you apply you should understand that all projects must be completed or all federal funds will be required to be paid back.
- **Project funding limits** - Eligible applicants may apply for project funding up to \$300,000 in federal dollars. Scoping studies are typically awarded in the range of \$20,000 to \$50,000 total.
- **Project Match Requirements** – For scoping and construction projects, a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the total project cost must be provided by the Sponsor. At least half of the match must be in cash expenditures. Match from other federally funded programs may or may not be eligible to be used toward match for a TA grant so check with the program coordinator to confirm eligibility. In-kind goods and services are subject to approval by VTrans. Issuance of a grant award does not constitute approval of in-kind match proposed in an application. Once approved, in-kind goods, services or donations are treated the same as any other project cost.

Post Award Steps – After the project is awarded, the Sponsor, in collaboration with VTrans, finalizes a Scope of Work and enters into a Grant Agreement (GA) with VTrans. The GA identifies the responsibilities of both

parties and sets the maximum limiting amount of the grant award. By entering into the agreement, the Sponsor agrees to follow FHWA and VTrans requirements and will be responsible for the design and long-term maintenance of the improvement.

Project Management– The Vermont Transportation Alternatives Program is overseen by the VTrans Municipal Assistance Bureau – Local Projects Section. Each project is assigned a VTrans project supervisor who oversees and provides guidance to the Sponsor throughout the development of the project. Sponsors are also required to have a local project manager. Sponsors can either utilize a qualified staff member to carry out project management, or contract with a private consultant or their Regional Planning Commission. Municipal Project Managers (MPM’s) are responsible for the day-to-day management and administrative duties and advancing the project to completion. VTrans staff will provide the MPM with technical assistance in such areas as funding eligibility, procurement, right-of-way acquisition and environmental permitting to keep the project moving forward in a timely and compliant fashion and to ensure that the federal and state laws, policies and standards are followed.

- **Procurement Procedures for Services** – Services must be procured competitively (i.e., project management, design, construction inspection) per 23 CFR 635. MAB staff will assist the municipality as needed. For construction contracting, an invitation for bids is issued and an award is made based on the lowest responsive and responsible bid.
- **Audit Requirements** – Sponsors are responsible for complying with the Single Audit Act for the period during which their GA is open. This requires an annual reporting of financial information.

Municipal Assistance Bureau – Local Projects Guidebook – All projects are developed according to the guidelines published in the *Municipal Assistance Bureau – Local Projects Guidebook for Municipally Managed Projects*. The document appendices can be found at:

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/localprojects/general-information>

FHWA has an excellent web page available with additional information. It can be found at:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/>

Application Guidelines

Required Regional Planning Commission Support – All projects must receive a letter of support from their Regional Planning Commission (RPC). See appendix for contact information for the RPC in your region.

A support letter from the governing body of the applicant municipality or organization and an acknowledgement and source of the local match and commitment to future maintenance responsibility for construction projects is required (must be dated within 1 year of the application).

Required Notification to VTrans District Transportation Administrator – Projects located in or adjacent to a State maintained Right-of-way must submit a description of the project and/or plans to the District Transportation Administrator (DTA) in your region. The DTA oversees maintenance of the state highway system in their district. A copy of your correspondence to the DTA should be attached to your application. See appendix for a list and contact information for the DTA in your region. This requirement does not apply to Class 1 Town Highways.

General Instructions

- Please submit a completed application in MS Word format (or convert to Adobe PDF format) by e-mail to Scott.robertson@vermont.gov or furnish eight (8) hard copies of your complete application by the **deadline of November 27, 2020**. Also, attach separate pages as necessary such as support letters, any engineering plans, feasibility studies, reports, etc. Be sure to label each attachment with the project name. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.
- Address all questions and criteria as concisely as possible.
- The application form is available in a fillable MS Word format at the following website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt> or by e-mailing a request to: scott.robertson@vermont.gov

Application Instructions:

Sponsoring Organization – Only eligible applicants may apply. Provide the name and contact information of the person responsible for the application.

Amount Requested –Tell us how much federal funding you are seeking (no more than 80% of your total project estimate for construction projects or for scoping studies). There is a required local match of the federal funds awarded at a minimum of 20% of the total project cost for construction projects and for scoping studies. This can be confusing. If you are applying for \$300,000 in federal funds for a construction project, you will be required to have at least \$75,000 in local match. For example: Federal Award \$300,000 (80%) + Local Match \$75,000 (20%) = Total Project Cost = \$375,000 (100%). If you are applying for additional funds for an existing project, show the amount being requested for this grant in the PE, ROW, Construction, Construction Engineering, and Municipal Project Management rows included in the grant application. Also, be clear regarding total project cost and other funding amounts and sources in the *Additional Funding Comments* box below the project cost estimate section (application question no. 5).

Project General Location – Provide information where the proposed work will be done and identify the Regional Planning Commission. If your project is a linear in nature, such as a sidewalk or bike path, please be sure to tell us the approximate length. Check the boxes if the proposed project is located on or adjacent to a State maintained highway system.

Property Ownership – All federal aid projects require that the property be acquired for the public purpose - either through purchase in fee, easement, or condemnation in accordance with the federal Uniform Relocation Act. This includes acquisition of any temporary construction rights. A formal Right-of-way Clearance is issued by VTrans ROW Section upon review and confirmation that the effort satisfies the federal law. Please check the status of property ownership.

Funding Sources – Please list all sources of funding for this project and their corresponding dollar value. Provide information as to the source of the local match. TA projects are required to have at least half of the required local match in cash. In-kind donated services, donations for materials and construction services and donated property acquisitions may be eligible towards the required local match but are subject to approval. Award of a grant does not necessarily approve the proposed local match.

Application Scoring Criteria - Vermont TA grant applications are judged on how well they address the Selection Criteria. The criteria are listed below, with some TA information on how you might want to address those criteria, keeping in mind that each proposal is unique, and your responses should be based primarily on your research and knowledge of the specific project.

1. Please give a brief description of the project (be sure to indicate the primary facility type being applied for). In this section you should describe the project as concisely as possible. The application reviewer should be able to determine exactly what it is you are proposing in the first three sentences. Example #1: Construct 500 ft. of 5 ft. wide concrete sidewalk on the east side of Main Street beginning at Center Street and extending to Shady Lane. Example #2: Scoping/feasibility study for 400 ft. of 10 ft. wide bituminous shared use path on the east side of Main Street from 111 Main Street to the intersection of Center Street. The nature of a proposed project’s relationship to surface transportation should be discussed.

Score	Guidance
10	The description was concise, and the scope of the project was clear. The description included the type of project (scoping vs. construction), length and width of the project (if linear), as well as the primary surface material (if linear). The project has a strong relationship to surface transportation.
4	One of elements described above was missing
0	The project scope was not readily apparent and required further review of application material to determine the basic scope of what was proposed.

2. What is the feasibility of this project? Describe the extent of project development completed to date. Applications for scoping/feasibility studies will not be scored on this criterion. Address any issues, including environmental concerns, property ownership issues, or design challenges. Discuss whether the municipality will be willing to proceed to condemnation should property acquisitions be needed. Include any pertinent excerpts from completed feasibility documentation for the project. Discuss the long-term maintenance responsibilities and costs.

Score	Guidance
10	Some project design beyond scoping has already been completed (e.g. conceptual or preliminary plans)
6	A detailed scoping study has been completed for the proposed project which did not indicate any significant project development issues.
0	A scoping study was undertaken, but either lacked detail or identified significant project development challenges that may threaten the ability of the sponsor to complete the project or no scoping study was completed.

3. Will this project address a need identified in a local or regional planning document?

Score	Guidance
5	Project is specifically called out in a municipal planning document such as Town Plan, Capital Program, or Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan
2	Project is consistent with the municipal or regional plan.
0	No planning documentation provided to support project.

4. Does this project benefit a State Designated Center per the link below (i.e., downtowns, villages, or neighborhood growth centers recognized by the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development)? (10 Points Max.)

<http://maps.vermont.gov/ACCD/PlanningAtlas/index.html?viewer=PlanningAtlas>

Score	Guidance
10	All or part of proposed project is within the boundary of a State Designated Center
4	Proposed project leads up to, but is not within a State Designated Center
0	Proposed project is not connected to a State Designated Center

5. Provide a project cost estimate below (project costs below include both federal dollars and local dollars). Projects will be scored based on whether the cost appears realistic for the size and scope of the project. For scoping studies, use PE and Local Project Management lines only.

Note: If you are applying for additional funds for an existing project, show the amount being requested for this grant in the PE, ROW, Construction, Construction Engineering, and Municipal Project Management rows below. Also, be clear regarding total project cost and other funding amounts and sources in the additional funding comments box below.

Score	Guidance
10	Budget addresses all elements of project development and costs are consistent with VTrans Unit Cost Report or based on an engineer's estimate. Backup for construction costs is provided, including details about other funding involvements.
5	Budget is incomplete or moderately high or low compared to typical project costs
0	Budget is missing major elements, contains ineligible costs and/or does not provide any backup data

6. Select the eligibility category (A, B, C, or D) that best fits your project and answer the corresponding questions for that category (choose only one category).

A. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (10 Bonus points will be awarded for projects that are primarily bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

i. Will the project contribute to a system of pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities?

Score	Guidance
10	Proposed project fills in an important missing gap in an existing network of pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities.
8	Proposed project is the first of its kind in the community and is identified as a priority in a planned network.
5	Proposed project extends the limits of an existing network of pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities.
1	Proposed project primarily reconstructs existing facilities

ii. Will the project provide access to likely generators of pedestrian and/or bicyclist activity?

Score	Guidance
10	Project provides direct access to one or more of the following: school, densely developed neighborhood, large employer, downtown or village center. Include approximate number of students, employees, etc. for major generators. Address how the project will affect the transportation needs of young children, older adults, and persons with disabilities.
5	Project provides access to an outlying area
0	Project is in an isolated area with little or no development

iii. Will the project address a known, documented safety concern?

Score	Guidance
10	Supporting documentation of pedestrian and/or bicycle safety problems provided: VTrans bike/ped crash data, police reports, school reports, a safety audit report, etc.
4	General documentation of safety concerns provided
0	Anecdotal evidence or no documentation of safety concerns provided.

B. Community Improvement Activities (10 Points Max.)

(i) Explain how the project improves the economic wellbeing of the community and/or provide a benefit to State tourism? Describe how the project will enhance the economic vitality of the community, surrounding region, or the State in general.

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the potential for economic benefit to the community and/or benefit to State tourism.

(ii) Describe the anticipated impact to the public; degree of visibility, public exposure and/or public use.

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the potential for a significant impact / benefit to the public as well as the number of people that will benefit.

(iii) Answer one of the following (a, b, c, or d), based on the type of project:

a) Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas as related to scenic or historic sites as described in 23CFR 752.6. *To what extent will the project provide a view of a highly unique and scenic area?*

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the effectiveness of the overlook; importance and permanence of the site to be viewed. Photo documentation of the view should be included in the application.

- b) Preservation or rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities. Describe the historic significance of the historic transportation facility and the importance of the facility to the State.**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the strength of the relationship to a mode of transportation, historic significance of the site and the threat to the site if the project is not funded (urgency of the project). Please state whether the site is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

- c) Archeological planning and research related to impacts from a transportation project. Describe the associated transportation project and benefit of the proposed activities.**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the need/urgency of the research (no existing data available in the project area). Projects must show that the research plan is well thought out and meets federal standards. The project must be related to an impact from a transportation project eligible under United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 23 – Highways (includes road, bridge, and bikeway transportation projects).

- d) Vegetation management in transportation rights of way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control. Describe the extent of the current problem; impact on the site and surrounding area.**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Projects will be scored based on the severity of the existing problem and the degree to which it has negatively impacted the surrounding area; Provide documentation of the existing problem.

C. Environmental Mitigation Activity Related to Stormwater and Highways

- i. Please describe how this application provides environmental mitigation relating to stormwater and highways. (10 points max.)**

Score	Guidance
0-10	A complete description was provided that is clear and well understood.

- ii. What information or data is provided to substantiate the current stormwater problem and associated environmental impacts? (10 points max.)**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Credible substantiating information was provided regarding the existing problem.

- iii. What substantiating data or information is provided to show that the proposed application is an effective and manageable solution to the problem? (10 points max.)**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Credible substantiating information was provided regarding the long-term solution to the problem.

D. Environmental Mitigation Activity Related to Wildlife

- i. **Please describe how this application will reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or will restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats. (10 points max.)**

Score	Guidance
0-10	A complete description was provided that is clear and well understood.

- ii. **What information or data is provided to substantiate the current stormwater problem and associated environmental impacts? (10 points max.)**

Score	Guidance
0-10	Credible substantiating information was provided regarding the existing problem.

- iii. **What substantiating data or information is provided to show that the proposed application is an effective and manageable solution to the problem? (10 points max.)**

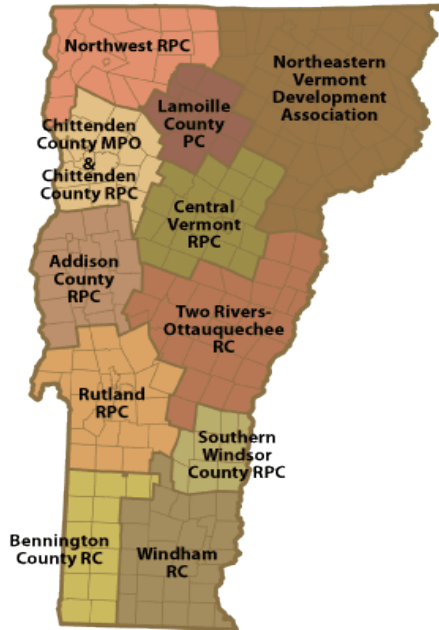
Score	Guidance
0-10	Credible substantiating information and data was provided regarding the long-term solution to the problem.

Submission Requirements – Submit applications in MS Word format. The applications can also be converted to Adobe PDF format if so desired. Submit applications by e-mail or furnish eight (8) hard copies of the application by the deadline of **November 27, 2020** to:

Scott Robertson, P.E. - Municipal Assistance Bureau - Proj. Mgr.
Vermont Agency of Transportation
Barre City Place | 219 North Main St. – 4th flr. | Barre, VT 05641
802-793-2395 | scott.robertson@vermont.gov

Appendix A – Regional Planning Commissions

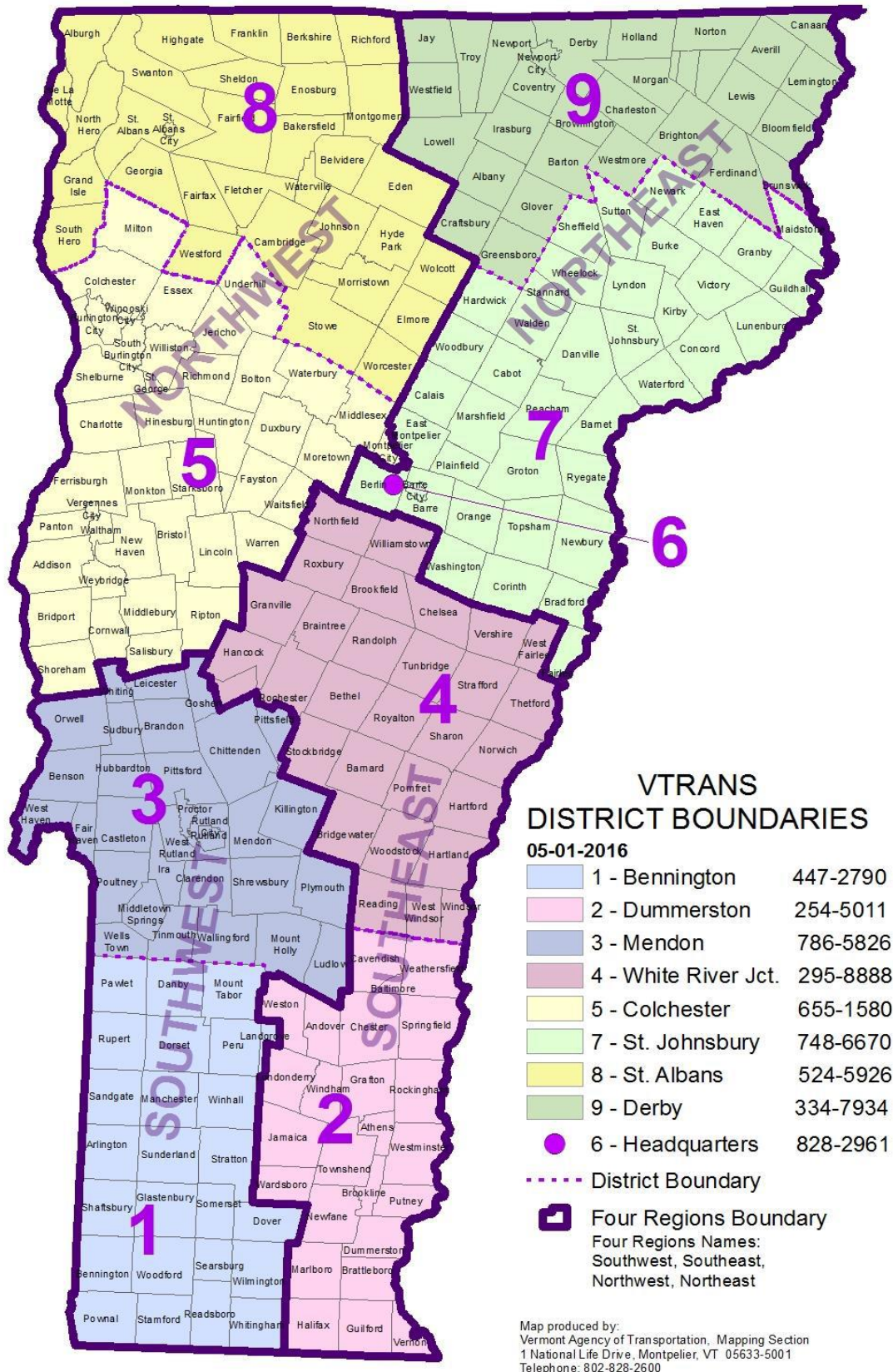
Vermont Regional Planning Commissions



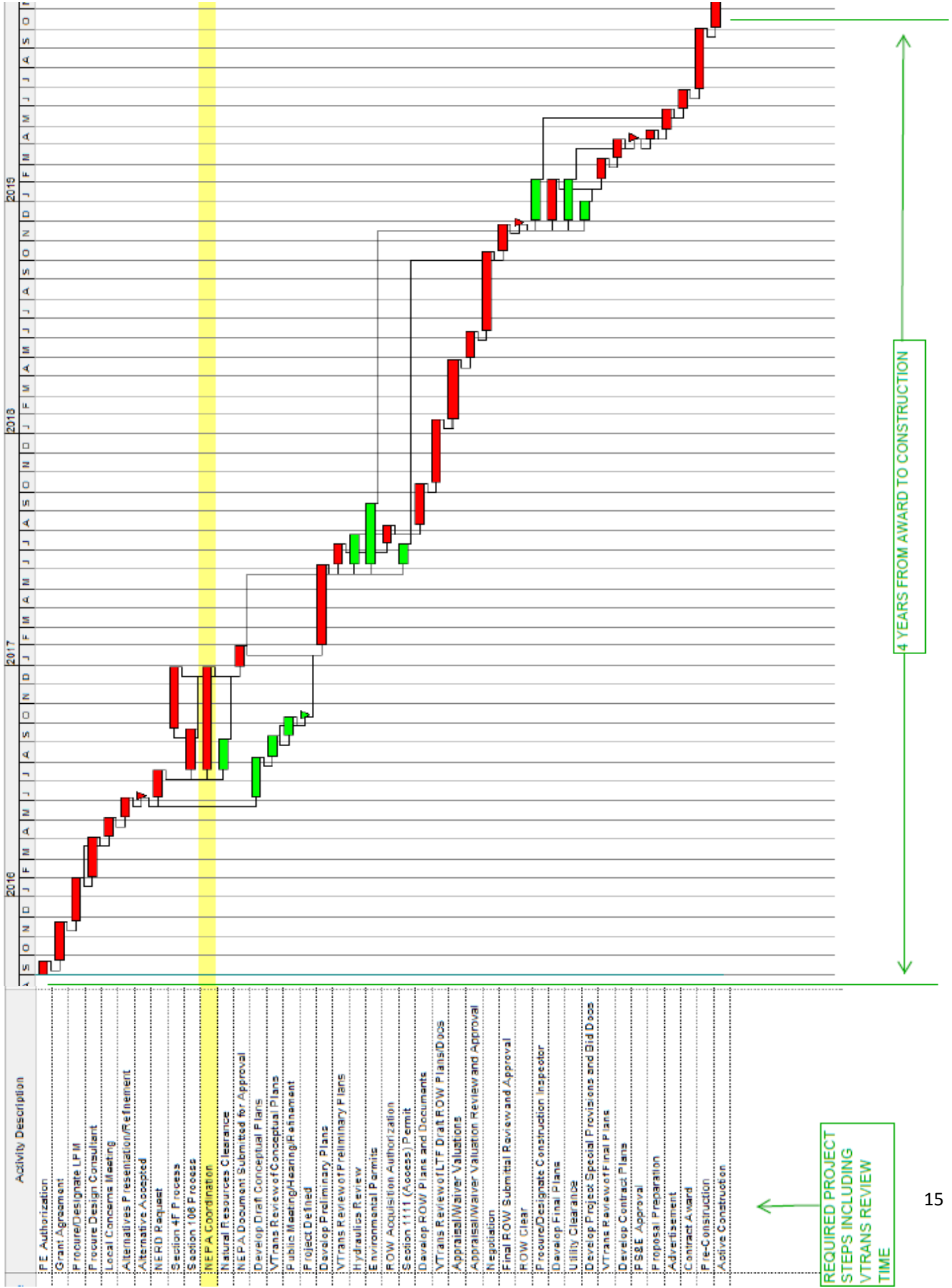
Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions are important resources for Vermont Transportation Alternatives applicants. It is important to obtain a letter of support from the Commission that represents your region of the State. Contact the Transportation Planners at the numbers listed below. For more information, go to the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies website at: vdpa.com.

Addison County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 388-3141
Bennington County Regional Commission	(802) 442-0713
Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	(802) 229-0389
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 846-4490
Lamoille County Planning Commission	(802) 888-4548
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	(802) 748-5181
Northwest Regional Planning Commission	(802) 524-5958
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	(802) 775-0871
Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 674-9201
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	(802) 457-3188
Windham Region Commission	(802) 257-4547

Appendix B – District Transportation Administrators



Projects\Shared\Mapping\MT\un20\Districts_2016_11\17.mxd



REQUIRED PROJECT STEPS INCLUDING VTRANS REVIEW TIME

4 YEARS FROM AWARD TO CONSTRUCTION

Appendix C - Typical Project Timeline