

November 4th, 2021

Re: Vermont Route 22A Project Update

Thank you to everyone who has written in and expressed interest or concern about the VT Route 22A corridor. This is a vital local and regional route in our state, and we appreciate that the safety and mobility through here is critical. We hope this information about the projects currently under development within the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) will help the community understand the range of improvements that are planned and the timeframes we expect for completion. These range from planning studies, paving projects, to more extensive reconstruction and widening throughout the full length of the corridor from Fair Haven to Vergennes.

In the last week, the maintenance team began filling in some key locations with hot mix asphalt to help improve the pavement condition. These sections began in West Haven and the crews are working their way north as weather allows. These late season efforts can be completed by our maintenance crews as needs arise. We're also in the process of hiring a contractor to provide additional paving to fill in some of these sections between West Haven and Orwell which will take place in the spring of 2022.

VTrans has also programmed and accelerated a new paving project that will begin at the north end of the Fair Haven Village limits and extend approximately 15 miles north through Orwell to VT 73. This project will include centerline rumble strips in accordance with AOT policies, where appropriate. However, to expedite this project, there will be no additional widening or other treatments included which would require permitting or right-of-way acquisition with this project at this time. This project is expected to be constructed in 2022 to improve the condition of the pavement while we work through the design, permitting, and construction for the more substantial projects through this area.

Another project in the books, which is bigger and broader in scope, is the section from Orwell at VT 73, north to Addison which is approximately 20 miles. This reclamation project will include reconstruction of the roadway down to the subbase and will provide longer-term benefits within the existing footprint. The scope of this project is more substantial than the section from Fair Haven to Orwell, which means this project will take more time to complete. Construction of this segment is expected during 2025 and 2026.

Three other significant projects along the corridor are those that have been discussed in detail in the past from West Haven to Orwell. These projects include the widening of over 11 miles of VT Route 22A. Travel lanes will widen from 10 feet to 11 feet, and shoulders will widen from 2 feet to 6 feet. This will provide a 10-foot wider pavement surface (24 feet wide to 34 feet wide).

With anticipated construction on the above projects in the years of 2026 and 2027, we realize there is some concern over this schedule. However, it's important to know, we are required to follow a specific process for projects of this scale based on state and federal regulations.

These projects are currently under Conceptual Design, which is where the initial data is reviewed to be sure all design requirements are achievable. This phase allows a preliminary look at the project's impacts ranging from the roadway itself, to culverts which will be replaced, and other improvements needed through the corridor. Following the development of Conceptual Plans, the project development process follows these steps and approximate timelines:

- 502 Public Hearing
 - Key opportunity for the Agency and the community to exchange information about the proposed projects, including local concerns to get a better understanding of any additional needs of the project.
- Preliminary Plan Development – 1-2 years
 - Additional roadway and culvert design, traffic analysis, stormwater design, utility relocation design for subsurface and aerial utilities, further environmental analysis and permitting, construction phasing and traffic control planning.
 - Permitting needs on projects of this scale include a detailed stormwater design for treatment of additional runoff due to the widening of the road, mitigation for wetland impacts and impacts to any rare, threatened, and endangered species in the area, an Act 250 permit may be triggered, agricultural permits may be required, and many others that have potential for additional stakeholder involvement and processes.
- Right-of-Way (ROW) – 1-2 years
 - ROW plans will be developed highlighting any impacts outside of the state-owned ROW. All property owners throughout the projects (roughly 100 for the three total projects) will be approached during this phase for detailed discussions about temporary and/or permanent impacts to their properties. This full process includes the development of ROW Plans, Legal Document Preparation, Appraisal/Review, Waiver Valuation, Negotiation, and, if necessary, a Necessity Hearing and Condemnation proceedings. In projects of this scale, there are a lot of variables, and if a condemnation hearing is required, this can be a critical component to the project schedule.
- Final Design – <1 year
 - Final Plan Development includes additional detailed design, computing final quantities, and developing special provisions, notice to bidders, and additional contract language. Contract Plans are then developed based on the review of the final plans, specifications, and estimate package, and submitted for advertisement to the contracting community.

- Construction – 2-3 years (each project)
 - Construction of these projects will have a significant impact on this corridor due to the depth of excavation needed to reconstruct the road, the volume of traffic, and the scope of these projects. Construction phasing and further traffic control measures will need to be developed to minimize the impacts as much as possible and expedite construction through this area.

The final project we wanted to highlight is the Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study that is currently ongoing in collaboration with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC). This study is an extensive two-year process that has been initiated to evaluate alternatives to help alleviate concerns and impacts from truck volumes through downtown Vergennes. With appropriate alternatives identified, a future project will be able to be further evaluated for funding through the Vermont Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2) and programmed as a future project. The first public meeting as part of the process will be held November 4th at 6:30 PM. This was publicly advertised over the last few weeks through personal mailings, social media, and other state, regional, and municipal outreach. Additional information for this study can be found online here: <https://vergennespel.com/study-overview/>

While I understand the timeframe of the extensive projects is not going to meet all of our customer's expectations, we are doing everything we can to advance the more streamlined paving project and continuing to monitor the condition of this road to perform routine maintenance. These projects in total represent over \$50 million of investments to this corridor and will have significant impact on the condition of this heavily traveled state route. The schedule of all the projects will need to be carefully planned so that we're limiting the impact to the region, while also completing all of the projects from paving to widening, as efficiently as possible. If you would like additional information or want to discuss any of these points in more detail, please contact VTrans Chief Engineer, Ann Gammell at ann.gammell@vermont.gov and (802) 522-5719 or, Deputy Chief Engineer, Erin Parizo at erin.parizo@vermont.gov and (802) 279-1709.

Best regards,



Erin Parizo, P.E.
VTrans Highway Division Deputy Chief Engineer