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State announces \$260k in grants to increase transportation options, improve water quality, and support vibrant community centers

Barre, Vt.— The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) today announced that the Better Connections program is accepting applications for grants totaling approximately \$260,000 bi-annually in planning funds to help cities and towns build stronger communities that are more livable and walkable.

“Transportation is critical to the economic vitality and overall health of our communities.” said Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn. “This program provides communities with resources to plan for resilient transportation systems and sets them on a path toward implementation.”

The program was on hold for the past year as the partner agencies worked to re-evaluate and improve the program. Interested parties outside of Chittenden County may apply by submitting a pre-application letter of intent by January 15, 2021. Grant applications are due February 19, 2021.

“The design of streets has a direct impact on whether Vermonters choose to use a car to meet their daily needs,” said Josh Hanford, Commissioner of Housing and Community Development. “This program empowers local leaders to design safe and pleasant streets that invite Vermonters of all ages to walk or bike to work, take a child to school, buy groceries, or meet a friend for lunch.”

In 2019, Better Connections funded three projects that are in progress:

- The Town of Fairlee created a Route 5 corridor plan to improve walking and biking infrastructure, better connecting the village and the Connecticut River and its recreational assets.
- The Town of Middlebury developed a downtown master plan to enhance the streetscape through green stormwater infrastructure, identify steps to improve the connection to Otter Creek, and revitalize the designated downtown.

- The Town of Northfield created a master plan to better connect Northfield's villages to one another, Norwich University, and their respective recreational centers by enhancing the streetscape and improving the water quality of the Dog River.

For more information, contact Jackie Cassino or Richard Amore (contact information listed above) and visit the [Better Connections website](#).

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